

THE SHORT STORIES OF

B S J K

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SHORT STORY 6
2015
AN OCCULT OBLIGATION

DISCLAIMER:

Don't follow in my footsteps. Only the devil condones these things that I've done.

INTRO

My first memories of self-destruction were around the age of ten, when I was so ashamed of going to school that I faked any sickness so that I wouldn't have to face another round of self-debasement. One day my mother knew I was full of shit and forced me out. However, I was determined to avoid the guaranteed humiliation of my own feeble mind, so I ran around the house and crept back in where I hid inside a toy chest. All the while my father stomped about with his belt in hand. I remember balling-up my tiny stick-figure within that box full of sharp toys and suffered through the physical pain no matter how bad. Anything was better than being reminded of how stupid I was. I lay in that box and wished I could disappear, wished I could stay in the dark and never face my failures. It must have been an hour before I dragged myself out. No one had found me, but humiliation was ultimately unavoidable.

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When I was fifteen, I was walking home from school staring at my feet with the absolute certainty that there was no way I was ever going to get good enough exam results in order to secure any kind of respectable future. This would have been the first time that I consciously considered suicide as a credible option. I took some comfort in that. If it all turned to shit, I could just end it myself. Seemed logical. Later, I did in fact fail every subject exactly as I had dreaded. But the next year's classes simply continued, despite my prediction of how futile my efforts were, and knowing that I was merely delaying my inevitable demise.

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Nearly ten years later, early one morning, I was sitting in a park near the house of the girl I was stalking. My professional life was on a steady decline toward poverty, regardless of being the prodigy that everyone had such grandiose hopes for. I sat there in a chilly breeze beneath a steep hill resenting how I'd known that it would always come to this. I was doomed from day one.

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Born an idiot incapable of bettering my situation. Just another talented artist who'd end up starving to death in a ditch. All that fucking potential didn't equal jack-shit. And yet, by the next year, somehow, work had worked out – only after my business partner suffered a breakdown, sending us on separate paths. I always abandoned those closest just to survive. Later, I would look back and justify my cut-throat decisions with the instinct to escape.

Another five years went by, and I was lying fetal in my bed. I had been black-listed! Despite moving to Berlin, I was utterly alone with nowhere to turn. Again, I was the cause of another all-time-low, and saw no reason to continue. I had lied to and cheated on the ones I that loved, but no worse than anything they had done. The insult to injury was when I had in fact tried to 'do the right thing'. Yet in the end, I was the one who had been hung out to dry, leaving me without the slightest desire in seeing another day in that year that would never end. However, as I lay there, I heard a voice in my head – it wasn't the first time I'd heard him speak. Clear and focused, he asked me a simple question: How much trouble could I cause if I didn't die right now? Challenge accepted! I jumped out of bed and immediately began work on my intricate plans of malicious sabotage.

ACT I THE EXPOSITION

Six years later, during the year of our Lord 2014, while I was writing my trilogy of books, *Bark*, I had cut myself off from most people in order to focus completely. But the book was a two-way mirror. As the story reflected parts of myself, so too, I invoked the will of Bark into this plane of conscious reality. And in the first week of August, I found myself in the south of France with a research assignment, testing a Holy document written in the fifteenth century. I may have refused female contact on my celibate dedication to my sacrilegious art, but that didn't mean I had ever stopped fucking with them. I was staying in a very nice hotel in Bordeaux, where I had no intention of wasting my time. On the 3rd of August, the train east took only a couple of hours. Ah, summer in France, how very fucking romantic. I saw sun on the green hills while listening to the cute accent from the young lovers sitting across from me. The view over the vineyards was pretty as a fucking picture, but I was far too preoccupied with reading *The Book Of Sacred Magic*, to care about the triviality of sightseeing. The train pulled into a small town

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in the late afternoon, and as I glanced out my window and up the hillside at that stone steeple, I knew immediately that I had come to the right place. I'd never been here before, but you don't obsessively stalk a female, perform a blasphemous ritual, and provoke the elemental forces of Pandemonium without months of preparation.



First, I took a casual stroll up the narrow road to that chapel. I was surprised to find that it only took five minutes before I reached the locked front gates. Turning my back on the church, I looked down over the township baking in the sun. I was finally here. Watched as a young couple drove past and parked their convertible, it was obvious that they were heading to a dinner party at one of the large houses on the hill. Both of them stared back at me as I nodded from where I stood, dressed in all black. Black suit jacket, jeans, shirt, Wayfarers, and Chuck Taylors. No shit, I wasn't from around these parts, and no one I knew was aware that I'd just arrived. I loved having complete anonymity in a sweet little spot on the map under a scorcher of a brilliant fucking day.

Down the hill I went, knowing I'd return to that chapel soon enough, once the correct lunar darkness fell. Into the town I went. To the left of the

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train station, I followed the street past some modern apartment buildings. I decided not to take the most direct route, and cut down the skinny old streets, but then, within moments, I came out on the main road that turned toward my desired destination. I ignored it and headed around the adjacent road, only to come out immediately at the other end of that street. For fuck's sake, this town truly was fucking tiny! So, I strode down that Rue without further delay. In the shade of that gently curved street, I found myself standing outside a three-story apartment building. When using Google Maps Street-View to familiarize yourself with a distant city, it does nothing for depth-perception. On a digital screen, even in a 3D virtual world, this place had seemed at least twice the size. Experience first-hand was so much more right up in your face. My own two feet had walked this place much faster than my fingers ever had. However, what irritated the shit out of me, was the fact that this front door only had a lock with a digital-pad – no door bells or names.

Walking away from that building, I continued my merry little stroll down the street and back onto that main stretch that twisted and turned toward the train station. It was a miniature village with old alleys and tiled roofs, but it also had plenty of new stores packed with expensive shoes and fashion labels. This was France after all. I had already attained the knowledge that my subject was visiting her mother and sister in the next township, so figured that I still had some time to kill and ordered dinner at a big restaurant near the designer train station. There must have been something relatively important about this geographical location, to explain the recent cash-injection that had been shoved down the throat of this small community. Though, the history of this area held little of my interest. The steak was decent, and the evening air was pleasant. I sat outside and ordered another coffee. And just then, as I stirred in my five sugars, Amelia came walking from the train station. I couldn't help but smirk as I continued stirring my coffee. Watching her approach, I knew she was oblivious to my insidious little eyes. I had no intention of gaining her attention, quite the opposite. I wanted to see if I could come this close without her even noticing. Of course, like all good kids of this zeitgeist, she pulled out her iPhone and started tapping away as she passed within ten-feet. And I watched her go. Watched her ass in those tight jeans. This was not the time or the place. Not just yet.

I soon caught the train back to Bordeaux for a good night's sleep. While staring out of my highrise hotel window, I listened to Slipknot, *The Negative One*, for the first time, and knew that everything was going according to plan.

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Less than 24 hours later, I was on the train back to that quaint township, during which I finished reading *The Third Book Of Sacred Magic*. Upon arriving, I discovered that the little church was now lit up all golden and full of insinuations. I had some time until midnight, so I crossed the pedestrian overpass above the train tracks and stood on the road beneath that hillside. Scowling at the moon, I counted the minutes as random cars passed on by. No one confronted or questioned this stranger lurking out in the open. No one ever stopped me.

Beginning outside Amelia's front door with a box of chalk in my hand, I drew a small circle on the doorstep.



I then walked straight toward the church – a patrol car slowly passed me

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by, they circled around near the train station and passed me a second time, but I never saw them again – I made it to the church on the hill in less than fifteen minutes. Drew a circle on the asphalt around the letter ‘A’.

Back to her front door. Drew an upside-down triangle crossed-out below the circle.

Walked to the next point on the pentagram, into a courtyard near a shopping area. Drew an upside-down triangle crossed-out over the letter ‘M’.

Back to her front door. Drew a triangle crossed-out below the upside-down triangle crossed-out.

Walked to the next point, outside a large school building. Drew a triangle crossed-out over the letter ‘E’.

Back to her front door. Drew a triangle below the triangle crossed-out.

Walked to the next point, a quiet suburban neighborhood. Drew a triangle around the letter ‘L’.

Back to her front door. Drew an upside-down triangle below the triangle.

Walked to the fifth point, a parking lot in front of a hotel. Drew an upside-down triangle around the letter ‘I’.

Back to Amelia’s front door where I crossed-out the first circle – and then I heard someone moan. Looking up in the dim lamp light, I pictured Amelia in pain.

I returned one last time to that chapel on the hill where I completed the encircling pentagram and crossed-out the first circle over the letter ‘A’ and wrote a second ‘A’ below.

No one stopped me. It had taken a couple of hours to walk this town and mark out my territory while reciting invocations, and yet no one at all had asked me what the fuck I was doing? The jailers of men had even seen me, but here I was, back on that little hill overlooking what I’d just performed in those small hours. The masses sleep, while the unbridled freedom that society grants us all, allows villains to desecrate your doorsteps. But who gives a fuck?! I was merely walking in circles around the public streets of a small town in France. There was nothing suspicious about my behavior. Nothing suspicious at all!

Impatient though, I looked further up the hill. Continuing past the church, where the road thinned, I was led between fields of enormous sunflowers lit by the last lamppost beneath the black of the sky. Seriously, how fucking surreal could this shit really get? And where the fuck was Lucifer? No Morning Star gave me a sign. Motherfucker, why have you forsaken me? So, I just followed the path laid out before me. Onward I went. Over a slight rise

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to where the road forked. Two dirt tracks stretched into absolute darkness. Decisions, de-fucking-cisions. I was never right, so let's go left. All I found was gravel underfoot and crickets in the humid breeze. I hadn't thought it necessary to study the map this far from my goal, so I didn't have any clue as to where this road might lead, but I was curious to see what the almighty fucking indifference of the universe would send my way. The road soon leveled out and twisted around with the trees thickening above. Slowly stars started to emerge once I'd escaped the reaches of the civilized world. I heard only the rustle of trees. There wasn't anything else out here. Fucking typical. Pissed off, I turned around – and then my frustration exploded as I found three fucking roads behind me. It was utterly impossible to tell which one I had just come from. Turning around again, I noticed that I was standing in some dusty field surrounded by distant trees. I took the first road back, walking down whichever I was facing at the time. Fate shall fuck me one more time if it pleases. Almost immediately, I knew that I hadn't come from this direction. It went up and down, up and down, like I was crawling over the very spine of the great Thanatos. Soon, I heard animals on either side. I assumed they were cattle. Big and lumbering, they snorted as I passed them by. Eventually,

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I stopped and thought about that female. The objectified subject. The meat personification of all my blame. The individual deemed the worthiest of being the epitome of so much of my fucking disgust. I pictured her small apartment that I'd seen during our Skype conversations. Remembered how I had gained her home address with the mock-notion that I wanted to post her a birthday card. Why do people trust me? It's a dangerous world out there, full of sickfucks that will find you at any cost. But it's not enough simply finding her. That was elementary. I wanted her suffering – in every possible way!

The cattle then went silent, and I saw other forms creep through the obscurity out there. Slowly turning where I stood, I watched them surround me. Figures among the trees. An unknown number. Standing in a wide circle all around. The breeze smelt sweet with a hint of fresh hay, and those things didn't come any closer. They never did. Only ever here to watch. Watching whatever spite my greedy heart might dig out of my desolate mind. They wanted to know what I wanted. They knew me well, and I could hear the lesser of them circling on all fours, hungry to feed off of my visions. But when disembodied fiends confront you, stand your fucking ground!

What did I want?

I wanted to defile her!

They wanted specifics.

How exactly would I do this?

They needed to see it as I fucking saw it –

I was then back at Amelia's front door. A black duffel bag in my left hand. I stood in the middle of that alley and craned my head slowly from side to side. No one was around at this ungodly hour of the morning. So, I stood patiently, belittling the very idea of a chance-witness. A cat scampered across the distant intersection, as I reached into my bag and removed a small crow-bar. The glass of the locked front door was solid, but nothing a half decent yank couldn't break loose. Up the stairs I went, and those translucent hordes followed upon their invisible feet. They were already waiting at the end of that second-floor corridor, as I moved quietly in the dark and found what had to be Amelia's door. I don't have a photographic memory, but my ability to visualize architectural models has always served me well when in the homes of strange girls. The corridor light then came on for no reason. I glanced aside, watching those blackened devils fade a fraction of a moment later. I hadn't pressed the door bell, but it rang anyway. Then I heard them whisper as they shoved the back of my shoulder. Those motherfuckers could be real fucking pricks at times. I slipped the crow-bar into my back

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pocket as the doorbell rang again, rang by the hand of those unseen fucking assholes. Standing in that claustrophobic corridor, I waited while the doorbell persisted. Ringing over and over until there came movement from within the apartment. I had never heard Amelia's voice until then – she'd always refused to speak on Skype. I really hate language insecurities. I don't give a fuck if your pronunciation isn't perfect, just say my fucking name!

"It's me, Bruce," I said, staring into the bull's-eye of Amelia's peep-hole.

There was an elongated pause as my eyes drifted sideways.

Then the lock slowly turned, and the door was gently pulled inward. Amelia stood in black cotton panties and a skimpy pink singlet. Holding the door hesitantly, she stared back at me with her long dark hair coyly framing her glistening eyes. She was shocked by my unexpected appearance right on her doorstep, but with a charming smirk below my conceited glare, I whispered, "Come to daddy."

Smiling, Amelia exhaled, opening the door just enough for my lust to admire her thighs. "What are you doing here?"

I lied to her with ease, and she welcomed me in. Her front door opened directly into the kitchen. The bathroom was to my right, and she backed toward the main room of her small apartment. A lamp near her bed glowed around the curve of her rounded hips where she stood. I closed the door behind me but didn't bother locking it. I was in. Nothing could stop me now –

Looking up, I was suddenly back on that hill in the clearing beneath the stars. I heard grunting sounds as those intolerant shadows in the circle came a little closer. I could see them more vividly now. Their disfigured bodies were both humanoid and insectile. Most of their heads had unidentifiable outlines. One approached side-on, and I turned toward it. Its silhouetted head rose up as if gauging the validity of my convictions from where it crouched. My hands opened, and I wanted nothing more than for that thing to tear out my fucking sternum. Tilting its blackened posture, the creature sneered as something like tar ran out of its snout. The stench was like burnt plastic, and made me want to break its fucking neck –

Glancing to my left, I was back in Amelia's apartment. I heard scratching at the door behind me, so I lunged at her! She flinched as my arms smoothly slipped around her back, her face was only an inch in front my mine. Her lips opened, and after a moment of lingering in her big round eyes, we kissed. Her hands finally lay upon my back and she pulled me closer. The sounds from those things just outside of her door became irritating, so I twisted Amelia and shoved her face-first into the fucking wall! Stunned, she bounced off, as

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I grabbed the back of her skull, and pounded her head again into the wall! She yanked away, so I drove her back into the main room where she slammed onto the floor next to her bed. Grabbing her long hair, I pulled her head up. She was gagging and about to scream, until I punched her in the gut. She buckled, unable to breathe, and collapsed onto her side. It sounded like a dozen hungry dogs outside the apartment door, as I rose up, reaching for my duffel bag –

Yet I was still standing in the middle of that woodland road. The wind began to pick up, and I could see the gravel getting moist. Oily fluid was seeping right out of the earth. I could see enormous worms and headless serpents crawling up from the damp soil and writhing over each other. Soon, all the visible landscape became a slithering mess of tendrils undulating like the surface of an infested sea. The ground beneath my feet felt like a swamp, but I stood still as some kind of fifty-foot centipede with a massive skull-like head slowly emerged from the surrounding trees. Even in the dark, I could see the pig-sized parasites chewing on its back. That heavy breathing beast slowly moved in front of me until I found giant tentacles extending from its rear. Barbed whips with hundreds of mouths snapping all the way down to a hooked talon at each end. It was fucking magnificent –

Then I was opening Amelia's door and about to leave, when a rush of movement forced itself inside. A stampede of eel-like things swarmed across the ceiling and into the bedroom. The light in the corridor wasn't on anymore but I could still make out the shape of a skinned lion as it blocked the way, refusing to let me pass. Clinging to its fleshy hide was what might have been an infant human, if its head wasn't like that of a tapeworm. I shut the door without listening to whatever the fuck it was about to say, and I walked back into the bedroom. Amelia suddenly ran at me, swinging a small stool at my head. I grabbed the thin piece of furniture with one hand while my other jabbed straight into her windpipe! It's a shame, I had really wanted to hear her moan. Dropping to her knees, she gasped for air. I however, watched that hive of wet creatures consume the entire ceiling, staining everything they touched. Amelia rolled onto her back, and I reached for the Gerber multi-tool on my belt –

To my growing annoyance, I looked up and found that I was on that fucking hill again –

I focused on where I wanted to be, and then I was instantly dragging Amelia by her hair into the bathroom. Switching on the light, I watched her legs kick out. The door slammed shut as she knocked over a large box packed

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full of beauty products. Punching her in the kidney, I watched her go limp. That was when I got undressed. As soon as I was naked, I ripped off Amelia's underwear. She could barely breathe as I picked her up by the hair again, forcing her to kneel toward the shower cubical. With my knife, I reached around and slit her throat wide open! All the while, I glared at that plump ass of hers as blood sprayed across the shower. She suddenly lurched out of my grip. Dumping my knife in the nearby sink, I grabbed her by the armpits. Lifting Amelia's convulsing body up, I joined her in the shower. The curtain whipped shut, and I spun her pretty meat around so that her bloody paws could slap all over my fascinated face. That's right, darling, bleed the fuck all over me –

I blinked and discovered that the woods on that hill were now teeming with hundreds of those silhouettes all standing just a few feet away. Among those motionless individuals were more inhuman entities that attacked each other, shrieking as if they were bathed in acid –

Looking down, I stared at Amelia's blood-soaked feet between mine. I scanned her twitching body in my arms and sneered at the stink of iron that I've always found so fucking distasteful. Her arms hung loose at my sides while her matted hair curled about the dark splatter covering her little tits. I glanced only briefly at her teary eyes but couldn't resist the sight of her slashed thorax. The four-inch laceration bubbled as it continued pumping out the last of her homeostasis. Her inner flesh appeared black despite the bleaching neon light. Then, her chest heaved again before one final slurping noise welled up out of her severed trachea. Her crooked neck hung on a thoroughly unnatural angle, stretching open her mortal wound. It reminded me of prying open the labia of a girl's menstruating cunt. But this penetration was so much more arousing –

The next time I looked around the woods on the hill, there were these towering columns, like massive rib bones arching above and gradually rising further. Webbed entrails and other effluent fluids dripped from those looming structures as they reached up, blotting out the dwindling stars so that they might seal me in –

And then I turned the shower on. The steaming water burnt that female's blood from my face, while I held her feet lovingly against my chest. Amelia's body was upside down, her arms lying awkwardly about my feet as she rested on her shoulders, draining the last dregs of her hemoglobin, just like all those slaughtered animals from my childhood. My erection rubbed against her knees and I wanted to reach down and –

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I picked up a handful of dust and stones. Crouching on that farm road, I was once again completely alone. The woods were quiet as the gravel fell between my fingers in the moon light. There was nothing out there anymore. The ground was unmoved, and I'd never set foot in Amelia's home – yet I could still smell her wet hair. Why had I stopped? There was so much more I wanted to do to her fucking meat! So much more. The ritual was right there and waiting for my completion. Why the fuck had I stopped just after it had started to get good? Because the time wasn't right! I had to be systematic. You shouldn't rush these things. I must remember what I was aiming to achieve. Don't ruin the cake by opening the oven before it's done. Standing on that insignificant road in the middle of fuck-knows-where, I was suddenly filled with a calm sense of faith. A certainty that my irreverence would be rewarded. That this hard work would pay off. I've done the necessary deeds, but I must be patient and let the water freeze so that the ice could crack open what was hidden within. I then recalled what I'd been reading on the train by Abra-Melin the Mage, *"Their rage is so great and their grief so poignant, that there is in the world no evil which they be not ready to work, if God were to permit them, they being always attracted by the idea of the destruction of the Human Race."*

I turned and walked back the way I'd come. Without a second thought, my unconscious led me straight out of the woods, down the hill, and past that church with no regard. I went directly to the train station and I caught my ride back to Bordeaux at 4am that morning.

I liked this place. I'd see it again. Soon.

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Not long after I had returned to Berlin, in order to finish Part 3 of *Bark*, Amelia got in touch with me. It's interesting how the dynamics between individual bodies of chemicals can react counter-intuitively depending on the subtle catalyst. She suddenly seemed like a changed person and needed my advice. As a test, I admitted that I had visited her town, but she was oddly excited by the idea of seeing me in the flesh. It seemed as though those voices on the hill had been right all along. The spells I'd invoked had worked. I had always found it amusing to witness a formerly restrained female about-face and willingly strip herself of her own pride and panties once the devil crossed her transcendental threshold of last-minute-resistance. Amelia was now caught in my gravitational pull, and she didn't even know it.

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ACT II A SUPPOSITION

A couple of months later, another female left my flat crying. I eventually ignored her succession of text messages and crawled into bed at 2am on the morning of the 11th of December. But was awoken at 4am by my phone again. So, like anyone with an intolerance for rude awakenings, I put my phone on silent. It continued vibrating without end. My doorbell then rang. The things girls will do once you've rejected them will always reframe their reputation. Half asleep, I stumbled out of bed and buzzed her in. The instant I did so, I regretted it. I was too exhausted and had too much to do in the next days to sympathy-fuck anyone's brains out. So, I left my flat door locked, closed the inner door, and went back to bed. A moment later, my doorbell began an epic campaign of ringing the shit out of my life. I've had more than my fair share of females sobbing at my doorstep, but it's almost impossible getting them to leave once they're inside. I've said the most insulting, petty, and vulgar things right to the face of lovers in an attempt to get them to leave me the fuck alone. However, the best solution was simply not to let them in in the first place. I knew it was an obnoxious stunt to pull, especially after I had just buzzed her in through the door downstairs, but I was thinking of the greater good. I was a motherfucking saint. Saint Piece Of Shit. Yet the doorbell rang and rang. However, I once lived in an flat with a Drum 'n' Bass club in the basement. Every couple of months some dropkick would flip the fire-alarm, and then I'd have to evacuate the building, if only to escape the piercing alarm. On occasions though, I was known to say fuck it, and bury my head under a pillow. Sooner or later even fire alarms end. The doorbell unfortunately, just kept ringing like the alarm-clock from hell. My phone also continued humming away, and all this shit pissed me off even more. If I opened the door now, chances are, I'd just sodomize her whether she liked it or not. I chose the lesser of two evils, and got up, turned on some Wo Fat, *The Conjuring*, and made myself a cup of coffee. The ringing disappeared behind the riffs, as I sat at my desk and finished writing my last diary entry. The stress from completing my trilogy of books, *Bark*, had subsequently been replaced with a shit-load of other tasks in preparation for my upcoming secret expedition. A week ago, on the 5th of December, I successfully hosted my book release party, *Barkland*.

It was an exhibition of my artwork, where I read from my trilogy. Ten years had passed since I'd begun the first draft of *Bark*, and I felt of all my

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creations this was my motherfucking magnum opus. But now that *Bark* was done, I had to wrap up my life and focus on another personal discipline that had been building up for over a year now. It had always been in the back of my mind while I worked on *Bark*. Yet the seed had been planted earlier, ever since I wrote the Third Spell for my series of artwork, *Antimother Of God*. But then again, that had been the product of the years beforehand. Everything leads to something else. It's practically impossible to discover exactly what is the initial cause that sends any single event in motion. Yet we are the sum of our past actions, regardless of if we consciously decided our choices or not. Much of life just happens and we react with minimal preplanned thought, the reptile brain kicks in and we get swept along with our knee-jerks to given stimuli. I might think that I've been led here by *Bark* himself, yet the vast complexities that gave birth to *Bark* are beyond my cognitive capacity to comprehend. We exist here in the present tense, claiming it's from our own engineering, but that's mostly a fucking lie we tell ourselves to support the hope that ultimately, we're in control of our insignificant little fucking lives. The intricacies that brought me here were immense, however, we humans seek an easy narrative and like to simplify everything into: 'Y' led to 'Z', 'X'

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led to ‘Y’, and of course ‘W’ was the only reason that we arrived at ‘X’. But causality was never that fucking spelled out. We all stand on the shoulders of unrecognized giants. My whole life had led me to this current situation. It was inevitable. It was fate. I had no choice whether I wanted to continue down this path or not. Time had forced me here so far. Just like it had done so with everyone. The only shift in my thinking during this last year had been the acceptance of my optimum-trajectory. I wanted to know where this time-line would lead. I needed to know. I had to push the envelope until I found myself face to face with –

BAM!

I paused.

BAM! BAM!

Sitting still, I turned from my desk toward my locked door and reached for a hammer lying nearby.

BOOM!

It was like a fucking canon going off in my room! Fucking brutal! I would have been impressed if I wasn’t so fucking sleep-deprived. Two firemen, four cops, and two medics burst into my flat as I sat, leaning back in my desk chair. Gently placing my coffee down, I calmly sneered, “Can I help you?!”

A female officer approached through the bewildered men in their thick winter uniforms, and asked if I was okay?

Honestly, I’m fucking amazed at how restrained I was, as I answered her with a question, “Do I look okay to you?!”

After a few minutes of her interrogating my assumed suicidal intentions, I finished my coffee and was ‘invited’ to hospital. My only concern though, was who the fuck was going to fix my destroyed front door? I ignored Mara and another friend, Burroughs, huddling behind the cops as I was led outside. When the powers-that-be bust through your front door with all the civilized authority of righteous intent, the notion of resistance was unnecessary. They were just one-dimensional grunts working for The Man. Their might was right, so my only weapon was my wit. After all, they had to answer to someone, so take me to your fucking leader. I left my building surrounded by cops and walked onto the street bathed in red and blue flashing lights – I always knew that this day would come.

The ambulance ride was quiet. I relaxed while the medic chatted with the youngest cop about fußball, or currywurst, or whatever German emergency workers shoot the breeze about. I wished they’d forced me into handcuffs and then shoved me into the back of their patrol car. I’ve never been arrested, and

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I clearly wasn't now.

At the hospital the twenty-two-year-old cop was met by his partner, the thirty-three-year-old blonde female. I know their ages because we made polite small-talk as I was led into a doctor's office. At 5am, I was staring at two paintings on the wall, when a young, unshaven guy in a white coat came in. He shook my hand and sat at his desk. Introducing Doctor Nice-Guy. First off, he asked straight out if I had any suicidal thoughts.

Tilting my head, I stared directly in front of me and nodded, "The artwork on your walls makes me want to fucking kill myself, if that's what you mean."

The two cops couldn't help sniggering. The doctor also smiled. But I was serious. What fucking retarded, blind five-year-old cunt painted that shit? It was extreme in its fucking hideousness. The next line of questions was very much your run-of-the-mill, Do you know why you're here? Did you mean what you said to your friend? And are you aware that there are people who care deeply about you, blah, blah, fucking bullshit. When faced with a cross-examination that's looking to incriminate you, you have to remember that every word out of your mouth must be laced with figurative speech and nonspecific examples of other vague situations to back up your circular word-games. Never volunteer personal details, and always bitterly mock the allegations that brought you here. Accuse the accuser. Deflection and transference were your friends, and never, under any circumstances, ever fucking smile. I had been wronged. I didn't ask to be brought here. I wasn't crying for help. I was calm, rational, and in complete control of my hatred. Or was my hostility in charge of me at that point? Either way, I trusted my anger more than those jailers with the keys to my suppression. And yet, you must befriend your prosecutors. Engage in idle chit-chat and relate to them about how hard their job must be. So, in turn, I had my own questions about the process – like any sane person would concede as an act of empathy in order to gain trust. You must seem interested and actively involved in resolving this awkward misunderstanding. Remember, constantly maintain eye-contact. I would not back down from this challenge of dialectic conflict. However, there are those that will say things like, you're taking this a bit too far. Just be honest and you'll be fine. If you have nothing to hide, then it'll all work out in the end. Fuck that shit! It's freedom vs. control! I was only there because external forces sought to control me! The arrogance of others had deemed me incapable of making decisions for myself, like I'm a fucking invalid! If you care so little for your own personal freedom as to put your unquestioning faith in the justice and health system, then you're a sweetly naive catamite who

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deserves to be treated like the fucking bitch you are! I refused to surrender the responsibility to govern my own well-being.

Doctor Nice-Guy then wanted to talk with my two friends who had originally called the cops, so I was asked to sit in the waiting room. That was the first time I had ever had an armed escort watch while I took a piss. Taking a seat in the waiting room, I smooth-talked the two young cops. The boy seriously looked like a school kid dressed in a bullet-proof-vest, which I asked him about, and he kindly took it off and handed it over to me. Not so heavy. The blonde cop looked cute but rather tired, I do love a girl in a uniform. We reminisced about the old green police uniforms. I've met several cops socially, and I absolutely recommend it as the best way to destroy the facade of unconditional respect for the illusion that uniforms represent. Cops are normal, everyday people. People who were just as pathetic as everyone else. None of them were holier than thou. Those in authority weren't moral philosophers or overall good at heart. They cheat on lovers, seek better pay, and have as many biases as any old bigot. Cops are just doing whatever dirty work they're told to do. Individually, they're nothing more than conduits redirecting the mundane manure of human existence away from the pretty delusions of the status-quo. You don't need to be a genius to become a cop, you don't even need to be much older than a child, yet we civilians must obey their tone of voice or suffer the consequences. Suffer the consequences. The consequences. So, these were the consequences of my actions. I then wondered what the blonde looked like when she was on all fours. Was I wrong to be thinking about such things when I was in that kind of situation? No! I wasn't under arrest. I even asked them, and they confessed that it's not a crime to kill yourself in Germany. It's only after you're dead that the location becomes a crime scene, due to the fact there's some rotting bio-waste contaminating a residential area. So, I'd broken no laws. I'd done nothing wrong. I'd merely been harassed by a rejected female who'd made rash assumptions based on text messages taken out of fucking context! I would talk my way out of here. No one was going to fucking stop me.

However, when I saw Doctor Nice-Guy again, he shrugged and said that my two friends had convinced him that I'd say anything in order to get out of there. How very fucking perceptive of them. And then came the kicker: I had the 'choice' of staying here of my own free-will so that Doctor Nice-Guy's superiors could make a more thorough evaluation of my condition, or they would force me to stay. Oh, so many options. How could I decide? Either I stay or, hmm, I stay. How the world was my fucking oyster! If I refused

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the offer, the two cops would finally get to earn their paycheck and drag my ass away, and then, at some unknown later date, a judge from the courts would come along and make a whole new assessment of my predicament. So, I glared at Doctor Nice-Guy and said, “Better to free me from making the choices that I never had. Right kids let’s go and lock me up.”

While I was led to the elevators with the two cops marching behind, Doctor Nice-Guy tried to reassure me that I really, truly, honest-to-god did have a liberal, serious, and literal ‘choice’ about my situation. As we walked down the corridor we passed another cluster of armed cops surrounding some guy slouched on a stretcher. My initial thought toward him was one of condemnation. My eyes then glazed over as I realized that that’s exactly how any third-person would also view me. But then my anger reminded me of my past experiences in hospitals, and I spoke up, “It’s getting cold in here. Can’t wait to get my very own straitjacket.”

“You’re really sarcastic, aren’t you,” the blonde smiled next to me.

“Not at all.”

“Here, this is for you,” she said, handing me a sheet of paper with my case number and the address of a police station where I could pick up the key to the new lock on my front door.

“I think you’ve forgotten something,” I frowned, examining the front and back of that single piece of paper. “Where’s your phone number?”

The blonde grinned and I watched her glance out the windows at the first light of day. We all rode the lift up to the third floor where I was introduced to Shaggy, the scruffy male nurse. I then watched them lock that thick metal door and seal me in. Welcome to German psychiatric facilities 101. Shaggy was a soft-spoken chap who sat me down in an office, while a fifty-year-old, bald guy peered around the door at me. I was given the run-down about the ward and what would happen next: sometime before 10am I’d speak to the senior staff and they would decide my future. Shaggy then took my blood-pressure, which was a little high. I told him it was because I was so damn thrilled about that smell of lemon-scented disinfectant that didn’t quite mask the subtle aroma of bile and diarrhea. Soon I handed over select items of my personal property, after all, we don’t want to find Bruce hanging from his scarf in the toilets. I asked if they’d be putting me in a padded-cell. Shaggy smiled and said that they didn’t do that anymore, as padded-cells don’t actually stop people from hurting themselves. Gesturing toward the lounge at the end of the corridor, Shaggy said I was free to roam about the ward. The lounge windows overlooked the swans in the Kreuzberg canal, and as I

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took a seat, I found I was finally left to gather my thoughts without an escort. That was, until the patients slowly wandered in for breakfast. I sat watching the sun rise over the rooftops as more and more demented fucks came over to inspect the fresh meat. My only acknowledgment of those approaching patients was a scowl of building impertinence. But then a moment of clarity came over me, remembering my voluntary psychological assessment at the madhouse in 2011: I knew that these were my people! The imbeciles, the psychotics, and the deranged fucking lunatics, these were my equals. This was where I belonged, locked up and out of sight. Here I was treated like a fuck-up and was never expected to do anything but whittle my fucking time away. It wasn't so bad. Who needs free-expression, when you have a roof over your head, a clean bed, and three warm meals a day? What more could any battery-hen require in order to produce those golden eggs of cherished servitude. To make demands of entitlement was an elitist hubris of unrealistic presumptions about one's own worth. You must be grateful for simply being allowed to stay in such fine lodgings. You must give thanks to those all-powerful doctor-gods who giveth shelter but and could just as easily take it all away.

Some Turkish guy with the eyes of an inbred bovine took a seat across the table from me. He buttered a bun with chocolate pudding. Was that what passed as a healthy breakfast in the medical establishment these days. That's when I noticed the metal cutlery. So, they took my multi-tool from me for my own safety, and yet they handed out serrated knives for the crazies to mash up those revolting looking mushy peas. Who wants to make a prison-shank with me? Shaggy appeared again and asked why I wasn't eating. Restraining the impulse to snap at him, I got up and made myself a cup of gourmet hospital coffee. At the drink-stand I met a dumpy giant in an open bathrobe, with half of his hair missing in random patches. His thick mustache made me think that he might have once been the respectable Dean from some classy private school. That was before the temptation of being surrounded by underage girls in pleated mini-skirts drove him over the edge of sexual frustration. Now however, he struggled to decide on which spoon to use in his coffee that had already gone cold. Making my way back to the lounge, I noticed that most of the patients were huddled in an adjacent, smoking room. A group of hunched silhouettes peered back at me. I then passed an elderly, gypsy-like woman with most of her teeth missing and wrapped in a ragged shawl. She limped aside, and I expected that her inner thighs were laced with a myriad of self-inflicted lacerations after a lifetime on the streets. I took a seat, admiring the

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golden clouds, and knew that no matter what happened here, I would be in Scotland this time next week. That Turkish guy returned to his plate and began mimicking how I was sitting. Crossing my arms, I turned my chair away from that cunt, toward another window. In the smoking room, I watched mingling forms waiting for their meds to come along and blissfully sweep them away from this tedious routine of conscious arousal. My eyes had dried out from my lack of sleep, and those uncomfortable chairs made me want to smash my way through the windows. I then paid close attention to the window frames. They were securely sealed, just like the one and only doorway out of the ward. Whatever happened to emergency exits? If there was a fire in here, we would all fucked. And if those in charge planned on keeping me locked up for longer than the next interrogation, then I would have to find my own way out of this clinical cul-de-sac. The front door wasn't going to budge, but on the east wing, the building dropped away in terraces, one level at a time. If I could break a window over there, I could make a run for it. If I did, it would have to be before they doped me up and numbed my senses. I would have to escape today. But the glass could be reinforced. I might simply be trapped. So then, if these cunts did force me to stay, I would make their accommodating hospitality a fucking nightmare they'd soon regret. I'd destroy everything I could get my hands on. If I had no free-will, then I was willing to free my inner fucking psychopath. Suddenly a towering mongoloid stepped up next to me with what appeared to be a pregnant gut bulging out of his tiny t-shirt and bathrobe. His finger then poked my right shoulder like I was a steaming pile of dogshit. I raised an eye at this mono-brow, buck-toothed fuckwit, and he immediately retreated –

A vision then crossed my mind, I pictured this guy grabbing a butter-knife and hacking out my throat! I could see him tearing at my jugular while he howled like a baboon. Crashing to the floor, with blood pooling in my eye-sockets, I could still see him ripping my fucking windpipe apart and silencing my voice that was apparently never worth a damn –

But none of that happened. The fatass just wobbled away, leading my pupils toward a girl sitting to my left. She didn't look too messed up, apart from the ridiculous science-experiment that was her hair style. And then I noticed Nurse Shaggy. He needed to take some of my blood.

Young Doctor Unknown-Middle-Eastern-Ethnicity looked up, as I took off my jacket and hoody. Another patient was receiving an injection from Doctor Nerdy-Girl. I must be getting old, everyone on the staff looked like a bunch of interns that should, more appropriately, be frothing a latte in

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Starbucks. As Doctor Unknown-Middle-Eastern-Ethnicity took my blood, I had to ask, “Yeah, and what’s that for exactly?”

Doctor Unknown-Middle-Eastern-Ethnicity looked at me with blank eyes.

“I mean, I already told Doctor Nice-Guy that I don’t drink, smoke, or do drugs. Is this just to prove if I’m lying? Or is there some new test that can tell precisely how fucking crazy you are without even having to talk about all your suppressed juvenile clichés?”

Nurse Shaggy seemed amused from where he stood in the doorway.

Soon I was left alone with Doctor Nerdy-Girl, and I heard her say, “You don’t seem to trust anyone.”

“What? I love it here,” I said, staring out into the corridor. “It’s like a spontaneous vacation – but without any of that, you know, extraneous fun.”

“Your expression doesn’t look like you trust anyone.”

Tilting my head toward that female, while still holding the cotton wool against the vein in my arm, I replied, “This expression that you so aptly deciphered, is what I look like when I only get two fucking hours of sleep, and then find myself locked up in this dump like a common fucking criminal!”

Doctor Nerdy-Girl nodded her head and kept quiet. I bet she looked fucking hot in nothing but that white coat and knee-high socks.

Once the doctors were done with me, I ran into that normal-looking girl coming out of the bathroom after she had just showered, saying in a French accent, “Careful, it’s wet in there.”

Watching her hour-glass hips as she walked away, I read between the lines of what I knew she really meant. Despite everything, my prejudices still mechanically labelled everyone I came across based on appearances. The environment we find ourselves in changes everything – just like, conversely – the mood we happen to be in also changes everything. The external in relation to the internal. No one lives in a vacuum. I could look and behave like a good little lamb my entire life, but now that I was in here, my opinion was even more irrelevant than ever. The insane are automatically dismissed as deplorable and placated into easily categorized pigeonholes. Here I was looked down upon and spoken to like a child who must answer to the delegated father-figures of society. And yet, still I was trapped in a thought process that continually conspired against vulnerable females. I would never escape myself.

After another hour of brooding on my own, my ego-defenses had solidified. Given a little time to assess the morning’s events, the best persona I decided

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to proceed with was to wear the underdog-attitude on my sleeve. If I was to elude the guilty verdict, I must play the part of the kicked-wasp's-nest. I had my story straight, my fucking game-face on, and Abra-Melin the Mage in my mind, *"Also do not familiarise thyself with them; for they be not little pet dogs. Adopt a serious tone and an air of authority, make them obey thee, and be well ware of accepting the least offer which they shall make unto thee of themselves; and treat them as their Master."* Listen, motherfuckers, I've been dragged out of my home by the cops for nothing more than a misconstrued text message erroneously interpreted by a hysterical female! However, I knew that, in the end, if I could not out-smartass those cunts, then I deserved to have my good-for-nothing brains lobotomized until my cerebellum poured out of my nostrils like runny fucking eggs.

Finally, Nurse Shaggy came to collect me.

Seated at a table in another office, I asked each of my prosecutors for their names as I looked them right in the eye. Sitting opposite and taking notes on a computer was Doctor Unknown-Middle-Eastern-Ethnicity. Directly in front of me was Doctor Nerdy-Girl. Nurse Shaggy sat to my right, but it was Doctor Mother-Of-All-Cunts who sat to my left and did all of the talking with her apex-predator bedside-manner.

"So?! Why are you here?!" she barked.

"Still waiting to find that out!" I snapped back with equal belligerence. "What exactly am I being accused of?!"

Shaggy looked shocked by my hostility.

"You know exactly why!" Doctor Mother-Of-All-Cunts sneered.

"Then why the fuck are you asking something that you already fucking know?!"

She proceeded to repeat everything already gone over by Doctor Nice-Guy, until snot-nosed Doctor Mother-Of-All-Cunts slapped the table top, "If you don't stop yelling, and start having a rational conversation with me, then there is nothing more to say!"

I took breath, held it, and quietly replied. "You'll forgive my miserable attitude, but I have a tendency to become a tad bit grizzly if I lack the minimum daily amount of sleep that any adult human being requires. But you know, I didn't really have much choice in the matter, did I."

Doctor Mother-Of-All-Cunts wasn't interested in hearing my off-topic deposition. Instead, she demanded more answers as if she'd just found out that her own daughter had been raped by someone fitting my exact description. I did my best to metaphorically explain the context of the situation, but she

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impatiently belittled ‘context’ as completely irrelevant. I know Nietzsche said that god is dead, but did she just suggest that Einstein’s dead too? I guess her own infallible fiat was all she needed to prove his Theory Of General Relativity as obsolete. Doctor Mother-Of-All-Cunts wasn’t going to tolerate a word of my facetious insolence, and she yapped, “If you’re not going to help yourself, then there is little point in continuing!”

I shook my head at her one-liners, glared at Doctor Nerdy-Girl, and then at Nurse Shaggy like the subservient fucking subordinates they timidly played so fucking perfectly. Finally, I said, “Don’t you guys just love how fucking condescending she is?”

There is nothing so empowering as standing up to the face of authority and seeing how easily rattled Doctor Mother-Of-All-Cunts could become simply by refusing to treat her like anything more than the fucking bureaucrat she really fucking was. Respect that? Get the fuck out of here!

This whole interaction only took about five minutes before I paused again, and said, “I’ll always talk about subjects at the extreme end of the spectrum. If you can’t even talk about these things without the fear of reprisals, then how are you free to think about anything? Art is the one abstract environment where we should be safe to explore concepts no matter how uncomfortable they may seem. And you know, I’ve really enjoyed my time in this country, but there are some subjects you can’t even fucking talk about without being locked up in a place like this and having your very fucking sanity put on question! Am I supposed to fucking thank you for this shit?!”

“That’s it! Get out!” Doctor Mother-Of-All-Cunts yelled, slamming her notebook shut. “Don’t say anything more! Get out!”

I blinked and glanced at Shaggy. “That’s it? I’m free to go?”

“Yes! Get out!”

“Thank you very fucking much!” I stood straight up and immediately followed Shaggy out. He looked confused as he slowly led me back to the front desk so that I could collect my belongings. I was initially suspicious and checked the surrounding doors just in case I was jumped by other nurses with that legendary straitjacket before dragging me away to a mythical padded-cell. However, Shaggy just got out his keys and opened the ward door.

“Hey, listen,” he softly spoke. “If you need to, you can always come back.”

“Yeah, I don’t fucking think so.” And I walked the fuck out of there.

As soon as I stepped from of the elevator, I waved down the first taxi I saw. While being driven through the damp winter streets, I imagined Doctor

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Mother-Of-All-Cunts muttering to herself, “What a fucking piece of shit he was!”

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After picking up the key from the police station, I wandered through the cold wind toward my flat. Thinking about how I’d spoken to the doctors, I wondered if I’d over-reacted. Maybe I should have chilled the fuck out. They weren’t out to fuck me over, they only wanted to help... Help? Help?! Do I look like I need anyone’s fucking help?! I rely on myself! I won my fucking liberty without the fucking help of anyone else! But then the pressing question arose: who the fuck actually knew about this indiscreet little incident this morning? I had spent this whole year carefully avoiding discussion about my future plans, but this situation blew everything out of proportion. How irritatingly ironic. There may have been moments when I needed someone to confide in, yet now that I finally wanted time alone to focus and get the fuck out of here, I was forced to explain myself to a fucking committee! These cunts only gave a fuck when it was convenient for them. I didn’t want any psychiatric advice or even anyone’s short-lived attention-span! They were a year too late for that fucking bullshit!

Stumbling upstairs, I found that the hole in my front door had been temporarily patched and pad-locked shut, it was better than nothing. First thing I did was check that my equipment was still all there, items of ritualistic significance that the layman and average cop would have never fucking noticed. Then I made sure no one had interfered with my diaries – but of course not, or else I would have faced a whole litany of other infringements.

It wasn’t long before I heard a knocking and found an ex-girlfriend cautiously inching through my ruined front door. She looked like she’d just run a four-minute-mile as she found me at my desk drinking a coffee, much like when the cops had burst in. I wondered why she looked so freaked out. It wasn’t until a few days later that I learned that she too was at the hospital with Burroughs and Mara. Christ knows what the gossip was saying. But fuck them! I still had plausible-deniability on my side, and as long as I avoided any prying vultures before my departure, I’d stay on track. Abra-Melin the Mage then spoke to me, *“If aforesaid you have been a wicked, debauched, avaricious, luxurious and proud man, leave and flee from all these Vices. Consider that this was one of the principal reasons why Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, John, and other holy men retired into desert places, until that they had acquired this Holy Science and Magic; because where there are many people, many scandals do arise; and where scandal is, Sin cometh;*

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the which at length offendeth and driveth away the Angel of God, and the Way which leadeth unto Wisdom becometh closed unto ye. Fly as far as you can the conversation of men, and especially of such as in the past have been the companions of your debauches; or who have led you into sin. Ye shall therefore seek retirement as far as possible; until that ye shall have received that Grace of the Lord which ye ask.”



Another ex then showed up at my place. She apparently knew nothing about the misadventures from the morning. So, on my behalf, she phoned the cops, my landlord, and arranged for a locksmith to come over. That's when I found out that my home-insurance probably wouldn't even cover any of this shit. Awesome. No one ever considers the clean-up needed after the cops smash their way into a citizen's home. Like a one-night-stand: the authorities take you for a joy-ride, date-rape you, and then leave you with the fucking bill for dinner. Danke-fucking-schön! So fuck this farce of meddling do-gooders and their whimsical altruism! I wanted to take my baseball bat and finish what the fireman's ax had started, and fucking destroy my entire flat: throw furniture into the walls, shatter every fucking window, and burn the whole fucking building to its foundations! Who the fuck did those bell-

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curve-mediators think they were to judge me?! I repudiated their very fucking claim to dominion over my true-will. Especially now that I'd just walked out of their incarceration after lying straight to their gullible faces. Fuck their bullshit mantra of, "*It's for the best.*" If I could easily fool them in less than five fucking minutes, then fuck all their rational assessments! Was that the best they could do?! How was I meant to fucking respect any those fucking puppets?

Throughout the day, more and more resentment coated my teeth with the bile of my contempt. And after dinner, I finally looked at my phone and found a plethora of messages from Mara and others. Staring at the rain, I wondered what was the worst thing I could say to Mara right at that point?

"Come over."

And she did.

Once you've made a pact with the devil, dealing with people in the most powerful positions means little more than telling them exactly whatever horseshit they needed to hear. Cops, doctors, and females have no effect on you after you've accepted that there are much worse things waiting beneath the waters and tempting you closer with every hour. If you aren't willing to put your very fucking life on the scales to test your Negative Confessions, then you truly have no faith in yourself and you're already erased from both *The Book Of Life* and your own fucking *Book Of The Dead*.

ACT III THE SUBSTANTIATION

The train to Inverness ran late, so I missed the last bus, leaving no other option but to catch a taxi. While cruising away from the train station, I plugged in my headphones and watched the streets, listening to *Undenied*, by Portishead. Glaring out at all that nothingness beneath so much pouring rain, I saw only the center-lines with their cat-eyes leading the way. I didn't need to see Loch Ness to know when I was finally right next to it. The road ran parallel to that great chasm. I could see the black ridge on the other side of the glen below that overcast storm, but out there was a great serpent that ate all the faint remnants of light, and not a single reflection could escape its jaws. Shit was black as fuck that inhospitable evening where the devil was waiting. So, I had made it back here, even though little had gone to plan in those last days since talking my way out of hospital. A line that I'd written in my diary during the

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first quarter of this year came to mind, it was the classic self-doubt and crisis of faith: what if I'm wrong? If things had gone differently, if things had gone as I'd predicted them during this final week, then my convictions would have been validated and I would have simply gone through the motions as laid out according to my goals. But what had happened: I'd invited Mara over. And yet here I was, alone in a taxi heading south through all that wilderness. I had to. My true-will needed to know what was out there.

Forty-five minutes later, I was welcomed by the nice old lady at the hotel. After she showed me to my room, she recalled my face from my first visit last year. It was too late for the kitchen, but I had a pot of Earl Grey in the empty lounge and stared out the window. I was the only guest at the hotel that evening, and the old manager informed me that the loch pretty much shut down at this time of year. That was just what I wanted. The less people around the better. Not that there was anything to do here in the summer time. I'd brought a book with me, *The Great Archaeologists*, and flicked through the black & white photos of ancient stone monoliths and esteemed European scholars. The picture of Sir Henry Rawlinson on the rock of Behistun (1846), caught my attention. He was standing on the top rung of a ladder resting upon a ledge on a cliff face carved with Cuneiform inscriptions. A river stretched away in the background vista, while Rawlinson's own head was positioned above the high set horizon line. He had the whole world sprawled out behind him where he was so precariously perched, and yet all his focus was on that archaic text chiseled out of solid stone. Ah, that tendency we have to get lost in our work that seems so very fucking important at the time, can leave us negligent to the bigger picture. But you have to concentrate despite the difficulties if you ever want to achieve something. However, what does any of it matter if you end up naked and exposed to the elements. I found myself examining that image for a long time. I've been so busy, shut away focusing on my book that I had forgotten to take time and appreciate the little guy holding the ladder in place. We may be alone, but we're not. Rawlinson had his man-servant, just as I had the old lady making me pots of tea. How much credit can I take for arriving here, when I hadn't driven the taxi or even built the roads that brought me to this isolated spot. But if I alone hadn't made the effort to travel, then I wouldn't be drinking that Earl Grey right then. I was the one responsible for my actions, even if my unconscious was in control of me. It was a paradox that inflamed frustration, and yet, admittedly, also gave rise to inspiration. Suddenly, I missed Mara. I fucking missed her! This wasn't what I had planned! I wasn't fucking meant to miss anyone!

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The next morning, I woke in that king-size bed and took a moment before I realized where the fuck I was. Opening the curtains, I looked out upon the Holy Mountain Of Pigs crowned with snow. In my gut my fatalism knew exactly what needed to be done in those final twenty-four hours. It was truly fucking beautiful there.



When I opened my suitcase, I found Mara's pajama shirt that she'd given me, and I paused. Picking it up, I buried my face in her scent – just as my compass slipped out of the folds. The symbolism was blatant.

Once I went for my morning pot of tea, and sat on the chilly front porch, I discovered the crescent moon was watching me from above the summit of the mountain. I had never found time to venture up that side of the glen last year. Now the moon demanded I pay tribute. A car pulled into the parking lot and a small human strolled up into the hotel. He soon joined me on the porch and struck up a polite conversation about driving from Glasgow. He was just passing through, and I was fucking glad of it. I didn't need to humor strangers with idle small-talk. And then that thing happened again, when I stared at a person and wondered what the fuck I was actually looking at? These pasty

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creatures with their beady eyes and dull movements. Am I supposed to relate to this fucking meat-sculpture? Worse yet, I'm in fact trapped in the very same shoes as one of these biped shuffling, evolutionary bi-products. Jesus-fucking-Christ, just look at that pale skin sagging off its toneless muscles barely clinging to a hunched framework of bones no better than a bag of branches that would easily burn on a bonfire as its sizzling fat melted all over the coals of this rancid fucking landscape –

He then shook my hand, and I wished him a safe journey.

I needed to see the loch, so I wandered up the highway, past that petite graveyard, and all the way to those two stone pillars either side of the private driveway leading down to the water's edge – but I denied the direct route and continued along the road. Random traffic hurtled by as I stared to my right



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and found the loch emerging through the thick woods. Finally, out of the low clouds came the day's first direct sunlight.

I left the road and went straight down the hillside into all those skinny trees. The highway was a couple hundred yards above the loch, but I knew there was a small rowboat down there just waiting for me. I had to see it again with my own two fucking eyes. Upon climbing through the thicket, I came across an overgrown dirt track also running parallel to the loch. Dead leaves were one with the mud where I stopped still. Staring through the contorted trunks, I knew that I had to be patient. All my instruments for the ritual were still at the hotel. This was not the time to face the point of no return. Not now. Not just yet. Not until tomorrow. Turning to my left, I slowly followed the path until I came to a crumbling stone wall coated in moss. The highway was on the other side, and I looked up at that looming mountain. I was determined to climb that motherfucker before the day was out, so I headed back toward its feet. I passed the hotel and crossed the bridge over the river, when I came to a drain in the curb. The drizzling rain water echoed up from that hole in the asphalt, and after a few minutes I found myself transfixed by the voices speaking to me from below. Faces just under the surface peered back up. This fixation for murky waters was really beginning to get the better of me. I was suddenly in desperate need of seeing the loch immediately! The mountain could wait! Off the road I went, down a gravel driveway on the south-side of the river. No one lived over there. I wasn't going to be bothered by other humans. Though, through the trees, I could see that white manor house on the north bank, and I knew higher up on the forested hillside, was hidden The Old Grahams house. And then I was right at the water's edge. Dropping to my knees, both my hands sunk into that pristine water. Palms down, I stretched my fingers beneath the small lapping waves, feeling the frozen purity sink into my nervous system. I had never felt so welcome in my entire fucking life. It was calling me. I was overcome by an innate desire to walk right out into the loch and never turn back. There was a gravity on my back pushing me forward. An invisible tide drawing me in, despite the wind on my face. No! This was not the time! I stood up. Intense contradictions swirled throughout my chest. Losing my balance, I took a seat on the rocky shoreline and listened to that song by Ken Mode, *Romeo Must Never Know*. Those lyrics kept repeating, "*But this won't end. But this won't end. But this won't end. But this won't end.*" Damn right, I couldn't escape this fucking bullshit that fucked my skull every single fucking day! Still, I let my eyes drift across those waters at nothing, and just let my mind do its thing, until I heard the

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line, "*But don't quit.*"

Stepping up to the tip of that tiny peninsula at the mouth of the river, I turned toward the two boat sheds nestled within the bush. I recalled when I stood here last year and had my first real look into the steep depth of the water and how uneasy it made me feel at the time. Now however, it looked calm. The crystal water faded immediately into a sharp darkness – that suddenly screamed at me with a mindless noise that I could scarcely believe! No, that deafening shriek came from above. I glanced upward just as a gray fighter jet roared overhead and flew up the glen following the river. I stood still and looked back into those bottomless waters as a swarm of submerged faces leered at me with cataract eyes and rotten teeth. Countless emaciated bodies writhed against one another before a great undertow dragged them all a few feet deeper where the sunlight couldn't penetrate. Suddenly, a boney hand surged up toward my ankle – but the forces below pulled it back just before its fingertips could breach the surface. Those ugly fucks looked more like my mood than my own worthless reflection did. I stood there for a moment longer, examining the lock on the boat shed. If plan-A failed, I was confident that I could break into this shed with my hammer. Glaring up at the Holy Mountain Of Pigs, I watched mist roll over its icy cliffs as I made my way back through the thorns. In this changeable climate, the sun came and went within minutes. Turning my head, I watched a gathering of blackened figures following me in the woods on the other side of the river. Then I saw a vehicle pull up to the distant gate from the highway, and someone came walking in my direction. With a simple nod at the approaching stranger, he acknowledged my existence by returning the common courtesy. Wearing a workman's wet-weather gear, he must have been checking the small hydro-electrical facility. He didn't question me, and I didn't bother him. I belonged here. Yet while wandering back to the hotel for a lunchtime pot of Earl Grey, I reached the bridge and noticed a narrow gap between the rocks and the river itself. Barely a trickle of water inched its way down there, but it was cluttered with an assortment of trash that had been washed off the street over the years. There were plenty of branches, tourist litter, and several hubcaps. All it was missing was a collection of dead girls, lying naked and discarded upon those glistening stones. Their hair streaked across their bashed-in faces while their anemic limbs became more blue than pink as bones extended from their torn skin. I could see them down in that shadowy crack. They were all looking back up at me. Their white bodies seemed to glow against the black sheen of that little gorge. Lips parted, and their dead mouths murmured that

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I should join them. One of them was lying on a jagged section of rock, her bloody fingers rubbing a huge gash down her inner thigh. Fingers slipped into exposed muscle, slowly moving up toward her cunt –

A truck then roared by a few feet from my shoulder-blades, and I knew that I really needed a cup of tea. The cold was beginning to seep under my scarf.

While I sat in the lounge warming myself, I reflected over that night after the hospital. I had anticipated spending the last week in absolute solitude, concentrating my mind and finalizing some ceremonies. I was planning on tearing up all the carpet in my flat and painting a great version of the hermetic symbols tattooed on my back upon the floor. There I could sit in the center of my pentagram and meditate on the profane invocations I was preparing to perform. I wanted to mutilate chunks of raw meat while desecrating holy words and calling to those things unseen. But instead, I had invited Mara over. I text her to come to my place after I'd been out to dinner, and just as I was stepping up to my building, I saw her walking down the street. Waiting on the footpath, I watched as she marched straight up and slammed her arms around my body, hugging me tighter than I've ever been! Her head pressed hard against my chest as I squeezed her back. I had never assumed that she was capable of such a visceral interaction. She was known more for her introversion as opposed to engaging in any kind of physical contact with other human beings, especially with me, despite our recent history. The next days with Mara, however, was an experience of accelerated intimacy. Of course, the rumors of my hospitalization had run hog-wild. I suddenly heard from people saying some of the most ludicrous shit about what had supposedly happened to me. Ex-girlfriends took me aside and hinted at things that they were already aware of. I responded to their vague allegations by confirming and denying nothing. Mara stayed with me every night until the day of my departure. Memories of my last night with her crossed my mind. We watched, *Only Lovers Left Alive*, from the floor below my sofa, where I rode her bareback until the movie faded into the distance and all I cared about were her lips on mine. I hadn't felt needed like this is a long time. I'd been too much of a fucking whore before this year's celibacy and had forgotten how much I liked caring about someone other than myself. Ultimately, I knew that intimacy fucking mattered – it mattered to me! The next morning, I still had to pack my bags in my near empty apartment. I'd done a thorough job of getting rid of most of my possession and all of my art. Mara woke up first and laid on

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top of me as we listened to the quiet piano and violin of, Arvo Pärt, *Spiegel im Spiegel*. It's those little moments of skin on skin without saying a word that can mean the most. Since becoming an adult, I have never broken down and cried in the company of anyone until I had with Mara that week. You shouldn't underestimate the power of simply being there for someone when they truly need it. Eventually we got out of bed. Mara phoned her office and told them that she would be coming in late, and then, while I was kneeling next to my suitcase, she shoved me onto the floor, pinning me down, not wanting to let me leave. She was only little, but I found it impossible to move her. It was like my own strength was unwilling to push her away. Because I didn't want to let her go! But all things must end, and she reluctantly walked me to the Ostkreuz train station. There, she asked if she could come all the way to the airport. I couldn't refuse her. So, she phoned for a taxi and then called her office again, telling them she wouldn't be coming to work at all. During the taxi ride, she took a bunch of selfies with me, and I couldn't help wondering what the fucking hell I was doing? Why the fuck was I leaving her? But I was trapped on a course I couldn't escape at that point. Events had been set in motion that I was unable and unwilling to reset. My true-will was on autopilot and I was merely a passenger enjoying all the torment of this sudden emotional connection despite my best defenses. Abra-Melin the Mage then rang through my head, "*Ponder the matter then well before commencing, and only begin this Operation with the firm intention of carrying it out unto the end, for no man can make a mock of the Lord with impunity.*" Mara watched from behind the glass walls as I went through security at the airport. The moment I headed up the stairs and out of her sight, I plugged in my MP3 player and listened to Slipknot, *The Devil In I*. The line, "*Some of us are destined to be outlived,*" resonated as I drifted through Duty Free and barely made it to my flight on time. The cunt at the departure gate looked at me with feverish impatience, until my glare of disgust made her shut the fuck up. That was not a day that anyone wanted to fuck with me on. The flight was a blur of both: what the fuck was I doing?! And: I must remember that I am the architect of my own fate! The train from the Christmas-decorated, Edinburgh station was late for departure. While waiting there, I pulled out the handmade, paperback book that an ex had made just two days before. It was full of last minute farewells from friends who had suddenly learned of my leaving. One had written how she'd thought I would probably think this was a lame thing to do, but I didn't think that at all. In fact, I recalled what Christopher Hitchens had said in one of his last interviews, "*If you ever*

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wonder whether to write to anyone, always do, because you'd be surprised by how much of a difference it can make. Here's a regret, I regret not doing it more often myself."

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Looking at the clock in the lounge, it was precisely 1:45pm when I marched out of the hotel and toward the Holy Mountain Of Pigs. It was now silhouetted by a fresh blue sky and didn't look so threatening. I had calculated that I would only need about an hour to stroll up to the top. That left me plenty of time to get back down before it got dark around 4pm. Not a problem. Famous last words. Across the bridge I went before following a country road that travelled off to the right, away from the highway. According to the map that I'd picked up at the hotel, this road would stretch around the mountain and snake its way up to the summit. It wasn't until I continued along the road that I realized just how wide that mountain really was. Still, I was in no rush. The woods were quiet. I had the steep forest to my left, the river to my right. There were a couple of cabins near the highway, but soon the asphalt on the road turned to gravel. Huge swamp-like puddles consumed dips in the path, though, it was those barely visible patches of ice that were the most hazardous. I walked past dozens of little waterfalls draining off the damp ambiance of this entire place. Some streams were significantly larger, and after a time, I came to a small wooden bridge over a pouring torrent where fallen trees crisscrossed each other. The map indicated that the dirt road should finally lead away from the river and up into the mountain. Until then, I hadn't gained elevation in the slightest. If I hadn't had the map on me, I'd have doubted that this road ever led up to anything. While listening to Soundgarden, *Mailman*, I climbed the steep path and began wondering why I was so insistent on climbing this fucker, when ultimately, I'd come here to face the waters. Was I running away from my intentions? Was I getting cold feet? No, the water had to wait until tomorrow when all the numbers were in alignment. The challenge of scaling that mountain was for the here and now, while I was still here right now. When I came to a hairpin-bend in the road, it marked the halfway point on the map. But it had already taken over an hour to make it this far up the slope. From that angle the whole mountain seemed to have doubled in size. Turning 360°, I saw no other evidence of human existence. I was on my own out there, and the further I went, the more I felt at home.

Once I was trudging through the snow, I conceded that dress shoes were not the most appropriate footwear for tackling mountains. I was wrapped

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up warmly but looked more like I was off to the ballet than hiking barren landscapes. At least for the most part the road continued upward, and with every twist in the forest, I hoped to spot the peak, though, I was only faced with more of the same frigid trees. The snow thinned out, being replaced with that treacherous ice, and I was starting to heat up from all this marching. There were multiple hoof prints in the snow, ranging from tiny clusters, to as big as my palm. And then I came across a single mark that was either a random formation in the snow, or a fucking velociraptor footprint. The sky wasn't dark but completely overcast. If the shrouding woods didn't open up soon, I was going to miss the sunset long before even reaching the end of that fucking road. That idea pissed me off, and I moved faster with more perseverance. I remembered once saying to someone after I had finished writing *Bark*, that there's a lot purpose in pressure. Then, to my contemptuous relief, the forest opened up toward a bleak expanse of rock and snow. I could see a towering antenna station at the peak, but the road mocked me as it slowly zigzagged up the slope. Out there, away from the trees, I was exposed to the ruthless wind that was more than fucking chilly on my frosted fucking eyeballs. My breathing had become vicious as I fought the gales and stumbled up that

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rough-as-guts track that was anything but civilized for my once polished shoes. But at least I got to watch the sun go down in all its infernal glory.



There was no time to fuck around at that point. I could see the end of the line, so I started running through the particularly deep pockets of snow. I wasn't even slightly tired. And then suddenly, I came around one last bend, and there I was, right on the top of the Holy fucking Mountain Of Pigs. At last, Loch Ness stretched out below. But I still couldn't see that whole body of water. This area of the summit was not the outcropped ridge that I had looked up at this morning where the crescent moon hung above. That was still out to the north-east of where I stood and where no man-made path led. If I wanted a better view of the loch in its entirety, then I'd have to leave the end of the road and cross that naked wilderness. By then it was exactly 4pm. I had assumed that the sky would have been a total blackout, but for no discernible reason, Ra was on my side that evening. If I left now, it would take another two hours to make it back to the hotel, and I probably could do with whatever light there was remaining. But I wasn't about to turn back. I needed to know what was out there. What had the moon wanted to show me.

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Nearly an hour later, I finally began stumbling back down the mountain. Night had arrived just as the gale force winds grew in strength. I took cues from what was written in *The Book Of Sacred Magic*, and began reciting my own twisted ritual. First, I thanked the Holy Mountain Of Pigs for the grace in which it had granted me from birth to now. Then, I confessed what a sinning piece of shit I had been, and humbly asked the Mountain's pardon. Finally, I appealed to the Mountain, asking it to guide and reveal unto me that which I could not see, My Unholy Guardian Devil. These words had to be spoken with absolute resolve or else you're just fooling yourself. As Abra-Melin the Mage had said, "*Know ye that although in the beginning your prayer be but feeble, it will suffice, provided that ye understand how to demand the Grace of the Lord with love and a true heart, whence it must be that such a prayer cometh forth. Also it serveth nothing to speak without devotion, without attention, and without intelligence; nor yet to pronounce it with the mouth alone, without a true intent; nor yet read it as do the ignorant and the impious. But it is absolutely necessary that your prayer should issue from the midst of your heart, because simply setting down prayers in writing, the hearing of them*

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will in no way explain unto you how really to pray.” As I tripped in the dark, with the wind clawing at my shaved skull, I saw those figures slowly arise out of that desolate mountain range. I was half-way between the summit and the woods when they appeared, but I kept walking at a calm pace. More and more of those things crawled upward like slabs of granite out of the snow. They were not the same as my past visions of ethereal beings. These figures were all very much humanoid and draped in long black, over-sized burqas that blew like enormous silk flags. While scanning the thousands of silhouettes across the ridge, I persisted with my oration and watched thousands more of those veiled individuals cover the whole slope of the mountain. There were so many sheets blowing in the wind that they blotted out the earth before the absence of the sun could do its worst. I kept going downhill, listening to all those bitter voices that confronted my oration. They questioned my deceptions and inquired further about the unknown conspiracies that I had kept hidden from even their kind. They lined the road on both sides like a huge crowd glaring at my descent, but none stood on the path itself. They wanted to watch me go down and hit rock bottom like there was no fucking tomorrow. Finally, however, I marched into the looming arms of the forest, and not once did I look back. I suddenly stopped dead in my tracks as that singular celestial voice stated as clearly as if I had uttered the words myself, “You’re being duped by the oxytocin!” I had nothing to say to this. The voice was right. So, I continued down the middle of that snow-clogged road. It was safer to walk on the weeds that grew out of the center-line than to sink into one of the many frozen puddles on both sides of the gravel road. In fact, if it wasn’t for the snow on the road, the whole environment would’ve been an utter blackness beneath a ghastly shade of blue that was getting darker by the minute. I’d hoped the downward trek would’ve been faster than the climb, but again this fucking place was vastly more extensive than I had any idea of. There were moments when I saw those things standing on the edge of the road with hideous fingers aching to drag me aside. More prestigious spirits circled me like buzzards, talking with overlapping insinuations about what I had seen on the mountain top, back out on the ridge, where the moon had laid temptation. Those voices taunted me with that which was unavoidable. Then they tested Mara. “What if she hadn’t distracted you? What if you were left to your own devices? What then?” Again, I had no answer. “Nothing has changed! Their meat is just as revolting as ever! And you yourself haven’t changed at all!” Listening, I stumbled on through that snow and over uneven ground. It felt like I was barefoot, and I scorned myself for wearing such

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inappropriate footwear. Despite my once cocky attitude about climbing this rock, my energy was now draining at an exponential rate. Going downhill seemed grotesquely worse than my evening stroll upward into the heart of self-loathing. Suddenly I found myself speaking to the woods again, “To say, ‘what if,’ is irrelevant. These events did happen. To say, ‘things would be different if these things hadn’t happened,’ is living in denial.”

Mara’s voice then came to me, saying that one bit of logic that had made all the fucking difference in the world, “*You can’t let your past dictate how you live now.*”

What was once is no more. And yet it’s still part of you. But if you can’t move on, then you’re already dead, just like those ghosts that follow you. So, live in the now and adapt. Then, just ahead, in that clearing on the mountainside, I saw the hairpin turn in the road. Glancing across the valley under the night, I was alone again. None of those veiled figures were there anymore. I had to face the great below by myself – just the way I’d fucking planned it. But I wasn’t out of the cold yet. My stumbling became more like a barely controlled fall as I rambled down the road, and at last, out of that fucking snow. I needed to rest once I reached that little wooden bridge. Staring up at the stars, I pulled out my phone. It was officially night. There, I text Mara. I needed to know that she was still alive. She replied almost instantly. Studying one of the photos that she had taken in the taxi to the airport, I set it as the home-screen on my phone, and I knew I wasn’t alone anymore. I had all the fucking light I needed to get out of there. And as ridiculously fucking romantic as it may sound, Mara’s face literally lit my way out of that darkness. The glow from my phone however, wasn’t bright enough to light up those deadly sections of ice. At one point I slipped and found myself right in the fucking middle of a huge area of slick-as-snot bullshit. I was exhausted, yet there wasn’t any other option but to tread with extreme caution and just keep going. Walking like a blind man, I stared into the vacant black as I used my peripheral vision to make out the vague shape of the road from my phone’s faint illumination. Until suddenly I splashed into a fucking puddle! It was that epic pool that I’d seen on my way up, when I could make out the shallow spots that I could jump to. Now though, it was one great big mirror shining black on black. Either side of the swamped road, the ditches were flooded. The steep bank up the hill was a dense mesh of branches, while the downhill slope dropped away into the river. So, it was time to bite the bullet and walk on through. Frozen wet feet, here we come. And then I still had more stumbling along that endless fucking road. My pace was slowing

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down. Whenever I thought I was reaching the highway, the cruelty of my own fatigue would lower my blood pressure upon every bend in the road that only led to more of that same old nothingness.

When I finally stepped through the hotel's front door, the cheery old lady greeted me with a kindly smile, "Oh, I was beginning to worry. Where did you get up to then?"

Slumping into a chair next to the bar, I took a breath and uttered, "Up to the top of the mountain."

The old lady laughed heartily, "And I thought you were here to relax."

Staring at my ruined dress shoes, I was impressed that the shredded soles were still intact.

"You must be starving," the manager said, heading toward the kitchen. "So, what did you see up there?"

"Saw The Old Grahams place," I replied, as my head rested back against the wall.

The old lady paused in the doorway. Turning slightly toward me, she whispered, "Impossible."

I watched her continue into the kitchen, before I dragged myself upstairs and took a hot shower. Once I had raised my body temperature, I sat naked on the bed, inspecting the dozens of tiny scratches that twisted around my legs: the only physical evidence of what I had seen over the edge of the cliff at the summit of the mountain.

After a healthy steak and some warm Christmas pudding, I sat alone in the lounge and stared out the window at the downpour. The usually jolly old lady brought a fresh pot of Earl Grey with a rather perturbed expression. She couldn't keep it quiet, "How do you know about the Grahams?"

I was feeling rejuvenated from dinner, but her question left me confused. "What's her name, the girl working here last summer, Rachel, she invited me in."

"Who?"

"Rachel. The little waitress. She was writing some university paper while house-sitting at The Old Grahams."

"Last summer?"

"Not this last summer. Last year's summer. 2013. When I first came here."

"The Old Grahams place?"

"Yeah. So?" I frowned. "Do you know the owners?"

The old manager smiled thinly, and then walked away. "Enjoy your tea." Rubbing both palms over my face, I looked out the window. The mountain

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was staring back at me, but all I saw were the headlights as a car pulled out of the parking lot. Three old folks had accompanied me in the hotel's restaurant for dinner, and they were now off before the weather went ballistic. That left: the cook, the old manager, two young local chaps at the bar, and me. Until more headlights appeared at the crossroads and slowly drove into the parking lot. A few minutes into sipping my tea, the front door opened. In came a short Iranian guy, followed by his smoking hot, trophy-wife. His gold rings and her Louboutin heels made me wonder if there was a Lamborghini Aventador sitting out there in the dark. Listening through the glass door, I heard the manager welcome the new guests for the night. I caught the eye of the wife on her way up the stairs, just as the two local lads drunkenly exited the building.

Not long afterward, the cook left for the night. The manager then locked up the restaurant and asked me to turn out the lights before I went to my room. I watched her little car putter away, and then I switched off all the lights except for one lamp next to the door. Sitting in the warm lounge with my feet on the coffee table and the window ahead, I heard the two new guests walking on the creaky floorboards in the room directly above. I would have an early start tomorrow, and yet, despite my venture up the mountain, I had absolutely no need for sleep. Walking about the woods had reminded me of how much I loved standing in the middle of great landscapes and staring over pale horizons. It made me want to visit other countries that I'd never been to and explore majestic valleys laden with lush forests and bathed in dew. A door then slammed shut upstairs, and I blinked myself the fuck out of my wanton day-dreaming. Glancing at the staircase, I crossed my arms and lingered on the thought of that Iranian woman. But that only drew my eyes higher still, back up to the mountain –

Once I had decided to leave the dead-end road at the summit, I found the ridge less than easy to traverse. The spot that I'd assumed would look down over the loch had seemed only to be a few hundred yards from the end of the road, but like everything on that fucker, it was much further. Out there, the gusts coming up the mountainside forced me to close my overcoat and pull up my scarf. That was when, I noticed what I had thought was a rat run past my feet and up ahead. Another larger thing scurried past. It definitely wasn't a rodent. Their gray flesh and exposed spines lurched across the bleak ridge toward that rise that I too was seeking. More and more of those vile little creatures swarmed past, until something to my left caught my eye. Across the river, among the woods on the other hillside, was that stoney block that I remembered all too well: The Old Grahams house. It was the reflection

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of the setting sun upon its multitude of gaunt windows that had caught my attention, and so I stopped to stare. I had liked that ruin, but mostly I'd loved all the fornication with that cute little Scottish girl, Rachel. For a moment it felt as if I was still over there. That I'd never left. That I was in fact, staring back at myself. I could still smell the crooked passageways that led in circles. Another one of those four-legged pests ran by my leg, but when I looked toward the end of the ridge, there was nothing out there. Nothing at all. Just an empty plot of land with cliffs all around. Glancing back at that castle-like house on the other hill, I watched as the clouds clotted, and the reflection of the sun dwindled away. The Old Grahams, and indeed that whole forest, then became an impenetrable shade of black. Slowly, as I approached the edge of those snowy cliffs, that chasm opened up beneath me. Loch Ness lay spread out in either direction like a perfect laceration in the throat of the Earth. Suddenly the ground under my feet shifted and I wrenched backward, but all those tiny faceless creatures with armored flesh lurched out of the growing shadows and pounced upon my legs! Hundreds of those frenzied little things raced around my feet, their claws digging at my shins. It felt as if I was sinking in quicksand made of skinned cats. That mound of swarming creatures then unified and went tight about my knees, locking my legs in one place. Standing there above the cliff, I was unable to retreat or turn away as the wind calmed down. A putrid silence moved over the mountain before I heard a faint clatter. That view across the loch was unrivaled, but the quiet rattle coming from over the edge of the cliff was more than a little distracting. Those infernal critters clung to my legs as an unshakeable mass that seemed to be caught in a slow-motion spiral, churning gradually around my legs and tightening their grip whenever I went to move. So, standing trapped, I watched the loch as strange ripples began to appear. Long waves formed from something just below the surface. They were wakes coming from both the north and south ends. Just as those waves neared each other, that clattering noise revealed itself to be a modest beast with pointed horns and hair that stank of rotten eggs. A black Billy goat quietly tip-toed up that impossible cliff until it came trotting my way. It then turned and stared down at the loch. While it stood in front of me, I could clearly see a brutal cavity in its skull between its two old horns, as if someone had driven a hatchet into its head and now maggots festered within that repugnant gash. I knew the name of my kin, and Azazel knew me by my deeds. We both watched the loch with its unnatural currents, as a great wind suddenly blew up from the cliff –

I was back at Amelia's front door. Then I was moving up her stairs.

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Suddenly, I was outside the door of her apartment. And then I was naked in her shower, her dead body upside down as every last drop of blood drained out of her slashed throat. Disorientated, I dropped her legs and she slumped awkwardly about the basin of the shower. The hot water scorched my face as I twisted, claspng at the tiled walls. I was completely off balance and needed to catch my breath. How the fuck was I back in France? These were supposed to be my visions, but it seemed that I was no longer in charge of that clairvoyance anymore. Things with bigger pictures had forced me to return. Or was this what I had wanted all along? Of course it was! My heart rate eased, and I soon adjusted to my situation. Ignoring the carcass at my feet, I proceeded to wash her blood from of my tattooed skin. Using her soap, I casually scrubbed myself clean until I stood peaceful beneath the nozzle and let the heat massage the back of my shoulders. Opening my eyes, I glared hatefully at Amelia's slaughtered posture. Her usually tanned flesh was now almost as white as mine. I then wanted to know what the exact color her large intestine was. Drying myself first, I used a second fluffy white towel to wipe down Amelia's limp form. Hardly a pink stain seeped from her slit throat anymore, as I picked her up. She was like a plucked chicken that had just been cleaned before the roasting. Lifting her up, I sat her flaccid figure upon the washing machine where she slumped forward making it easy to dry her long smooth hair. Grabbing either side of her face, I looked into her drowsy but dead eyes. However, it was her loose jaw and parted lips that drew me inward. With Amelia's body slung over my shoulder, I moved into her bedroom, and ripped her blanket away before dumping her body in the middle of the bed. She bounced clumsily, while I removed a hacksaw from my duffel bag. Sweeping the messy hair away from her pretty face, I couldn't help myself from fingering that huge laceration in her throat. Reaching deep inside, I turned my fingers until I could stroke the back of her tongue. Opening her mouth, I began kissing her. Using my fingertips to manipulate her tongue, she reciprocated my intentions. But then, in a burst of anger, I pulled away, replacing my fingers with the teeth of the hacksaw that immediately dug through muscle, arteries, and bone. I cut her fucking head off in a few seconds and it dropped onto the bed like a discarded dumpling – her expression unmoved. I sat back on my knees, still naked and staring at how bizarre it all seemed. Looking at a decapitated girl lying on white sheets without a speck of blood anywhere, the canvass seemed too sterile for my liking. As if she really was made of porcelain, and once broken, her essence simply evaporated without a sign. How idealistic of me. I knew better. She

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was nothing but pure filth on the inside. Slamming her head back so that it faced me, I pulled her lightweight body around onto her stomach with the stump of her neck downward and her ass up. She'd often spoken about how she was excited by absolutely any kind of sexual act – except anal! Glaring at the passive demeanor upon her beheaded face, I recalled the day that she heard about my hospital incident, and how she suddenly wouldn't stop texting me and sending photos of her crying because she didn't want me to kill myself. Her final attempt to gain my attention was a desperate offering of her backdoor-virginity, if only I'd stay. How very fucking tempting. But then, staring at her bleached anus, I took her up on that offer and rammed my erection balls-deep down her dead rectum –

Looking up, I was suddenly back on the mountain top. The goat was now circling my incarceration within the clutches of those little beasts. It was the battering wind that drew my eyes toward those enormous water tornadoes that stretched upward from the surface of the loch. At first, I counted three of those twisting funnels. But as I fought against the gales, I realized the entire loch was breaking apart, spilling forth more of those massive tentacles reaching skyward. They weren't tornadoes at all, but the sibling serpents of Apep coming from below the earth like giant fingers prying open this primeval crack between our worlds. The waves from the loch shattered against both sides of the glen with horrendous detonations that wiped the hillsides clean of trees. Another colossal worm rose from the waters and crashed into the mountainside, ripping huge chunks of stone down into the loch! The largest of these tendrils passed above my vantage point and into the storm clouds. I'd never seen red lightning until that moment. It was like the heavens were made of ash and these gigantic serpents were the burning pillars of a kingdom that every god had forsaken. The thunder that followed was a relentless artillery of both tremendous explosions and the voices of titans loosed to rape this land which they themselves had created –

As I violently sodomized Amelia's corpse, those screaming devils followed me into that realm too. A hundred-thousand shrieking voices all vomited forth from Amelia's own sweet little mouth. Her severed head scowled at me. Despite her mutilation, she was very much alive as I ejaculated into her desecrated meat –

The whole mountain shook when that crimson lightning struck all around me with immense arcs shredding the ridge! So, as those tentacles reached upward, the lightning slashed back down in return –

Suddenly Amelia's headless body thrashed out. She shoved back, and I

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was cast off the bed and onto the floor. Her body then attacked, her claws going for my throat. Grabbing both her wrists, I struggled with her as she pinned me upon my back. Her hands choking me while I grabbed at her moist stump of a neck –

The eruptions in the storm clouds broke open as monumental slabs of stone fell from the sky! Rocks the size of hills dropped out of the darkness and hailed upon the mountain ranges. And then I realized that the surrounding ground was no longer comprised of mud and stone, but of a hundred million butchered bodies that all writhed in torment. These mountains were made from the damned –

I broke off Amelia's left arm at the elbow! It simply snapped free like she was made of china, and the flesh within looked like jagged glass. She however, persisted to wrestle until I swung her figure around and ripped her right arm off at the fucking shoulder! This time something like sand came gushing from the wound –

The whole loch was being destroyed when I was grabbed from behind. I was caught in the grip of some forty-foot-tall caterpillar-like creature that towered above with a hundred hands holding me still as it continued to crawl up my spine –

Throwing Amelia's dismembered body aside, I spat at her perpetually screaming face, but she just attacked again. Running, her body pounded me against the wall before she kned me directly in the balls! Collapsing, I was then kicked in the face and stomped on my ribs! She might have only been a torso with two legs, but she sure did whip my fucking ass as she slammed a heel right into my jaw –

The goat was approaching as more stone fell from the burning sky. On either side of Azazel, I found a new figure. To his left was a bloody female with a hole right through her face, another hole in her chest, and a third fist-size hole passing straight through her belly. To the goat's right was a boy with arms twice the length of his body and he was covered with grotesque parasites that were so many in number that they seemed like a heavy weight upon his shoulders. He, the whore, and the goat came closer –

I finally grabbed one of Amelia's ankles and yanked it out from under her. But she lurched, leaped, and landed like a spring chicken upon both my palms. Pinning my hands to the floor, she crouched down above my head – just to open up her asshole and shit out an enema's worth of my own cum all over my face –

Azazel then rushed at me, thrusting both horns into my chest! The pain

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was pretty much what you could imagine, like you were a dartboard that someone had just thrown a chainsaw at! The goat continued bucking and ripped into my ribcage while all those hands on my back held me firm in place. That female came up from my left and grabbed my throat so that she could start scalping me! And if that shit wasn't bad enough, that deformed kid then began eating my right hand several fingers at a fucking time –

After I blinked my own cum out of my eyes, I saw Amelia's perfect asshole stretch wider than a peach. It was like she was prolapsing her bowels all over me. However, the dripping flesh that extended from her anus moved of its own intuition. While I still fought to free my hands, that elephant-like trunk of a worm slithered across my drenched face –

Even as I felt that faceless female drag the skin from my skull and tap her fingertips against the bare bone, I glared over the loch as the ridge on the other side began moving further away! The tectonic plates that made-up the fault-line of the loch itself were being wrenched apart. A gateway was opening and destroying itself in the process –

As that abominable extremity protruded from Amelia's rectum, it peeled its own tip back like an infected foreskin, where dozens of needle-like tendrils burst toward my face! I however, forced my left foot up between us, and shoved her the fuck away –

The smoke that consumed the entire sky then cleared as the flames of hell broke through above! The sky was an endless mass of explosions, as if the very surface of sun was suddenly only a mile above the loch –

Amelia's disfigured body crawled away as I moved after it. Watching that thick worm retreat back within her orifice, I grabbed her waist and threw her into a wall! She fell to the floor where I broke off both of her legs at the knees with my bare hands! Again, her flesh on the inside seemed to be made of crumbling glass, and soon her limbless body twisted on the bed beneath her now weeping face –

The goat was vomiting on my chest, while that devil boy continued to eat my right arm, having it elbow-deep down his swollen throat. And the demonic whore pressed both hands against my skull with enough pressure to crack it and slowly grind the splintered bones together! The blood in my eyes was all I could see from then on –

Back on Amelia's bed, I punched at her carcass, and her head reacting as if it was still attached. Then, as I plunged my fingers right into her dripping asshole, the French accent of her human voice returned, and she begged me to stop. I drove on through. Pushing inward, I shoved all of my fingers from

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both hands into her ass. I wanted what she had kept hidden within –

I could feel that whore on my side picking fragments from my skull as she exposed my repugnant fucking brains. Snapping off shards of bone, she stabbed the slithers into my own gray matter. And I had thought that migraines were bad. The heat from the sheer volume of flames above scorched the entire landscape. Burning the mountains, the beasts, and myself. Yet somehow, I remained conscious of everything happening to me and going on all around –

Locking my hands inside Amelia's rectum, I arched my back and split her carcass in two! Ripping her torso apart, I watched, salivating as her bloodless flesh tore unevenly all the way to her lungs. There, that giant worm was spilled upon the bed. It was still writhing savagely inside her entrails. The moment I ripped her bowels open, Amelia screamed like never before as her own sewer soaked my palms. I splashed her dysentery across my face, painting myself with all of her impurities, until I realized that I had suddenly submerged completely within that puddle of her shit –

It was a null void, cold and suffocating. I was free-floating in absolute effluence. Yet I opened my eyes and saw a dim haze. There was no direction here. No up or down. It was a space without space. Nonexistence condensed, and I was crushed under a gravitational force coming from every direction. But I saw a glimmer through all that smothering darkness. The shimmering idea of a possibility. That I wasn't alone. Of all those I had ever loved, it was this unforeseen face that came to me here. The face of the new. And then I realized where I was. I was drowning in the loch. This was all there was: the devils, the damned, and the dead. An infinite abyss consisting of countless atrocities. The very fluid that I was trapped in was alive. A ubiquitously mutating substance that devoured itself from all dimensions at once. I was both the water and the one drowning in it. Watching myself from the outside, while at the same time, I also felt the agony of the water tearing into my corrupted windpipe. The water was dissolving my meat, while simultaneously regenerating my molecules just so they could be torn apart once again. Eternal self-resurrecting immolation. But then that shimmer glistened off my naked flesh and I immediately understood what it said to me: that darkness had created light for its perverse amusement! From one hell to another, I was just the conduit giving form to the deformed and formless. And there was so much more yet to sully. So, I swam upward, toward a reason to live. I swam toward the light of defilement –

Dragging myself out of that glassy carcass, I fell off the bed onto the floor, staining everything I touched. catching my breath, I stood, looking at

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Amelia's brutalized body. She finally lay motionless, spread-eagle with her limbs detached and head removed. Instead of blood, her skin was smeared in her own feces. This was the pinnacle of the sacrifice that I'd always been seeking to create, destroy, and utterly fucking desecrate –

Then I looked aside, past the edge of that Holy Mountain Of Pigs and saw rain clouds gently fade over the southern end of the loch. All was quiet, and the night was coming. I needed to leave immediately if I was ever going to make it back to the hotel alive –

“Can't sleep?” a voice softly spoke from behind, and I glanced up at that young Iranian woman leaning against the door frame.

“Not tonight,” I replied, looking back out the window.

“Were we too loud for you?” she asked, as she eased into the lounge and sat upon another sofa. I didn't have a sympathetic ear for this chick's domestic troubles, as she said, “Why do we do these things to each other?”

Glaring at her gorgeous lips in the reflection of the window, I replied, “We do these things 'cause they're uncomfortable. We hurt the ones we love in order to better ourselves by expanding our borders. We have to gain new territory or else we fucking stagnant!”

After a few moments, the woman stood and stepped up behind me. Leaning down next to my head, she whispered into my left ear, “To the water you shall return.”

She kissed me on the side of my head before pointing out the window at a distant light burning on top of the mountain, but I however, only stared at the tattooed hieroglyphs on the palm of her hand.

“You know exactly what must be done,” she said, crouching behind my sofa. Pulling out a golden dagger with a wavy blade, she reached both arms in front of my face where she gently stabbed the center of her left palm until blood coated it. She then pushed me forward so that she could pull up my shirt and press her hand flat against the center of the big pentagram tattoo in the middle of my back. The fire on the mountain top instantly vanished, and the woman got up and walked out. Marching upstairs, she stared at me with murderous eyes before she was gone. I sat topless for a while as I felt the blood on my spine gradually dry. Pulling out my phone, I then text Mara and told her that I'd be returning to Berlin. Her excitement at my statement was only matched by my solidarity for what had to be done. This wasn't over yet, I still had to survive my own worst nightmare.

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A few hours later, I left the hotel with several aluminum shafts protruding

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from the zipper of my bag that was slung over my shoulder. It was the morning of the 18th of December. The rain had thinned to nearly nothing, and the sun was approaching but you wouldn't have thought so. With damp shoes and bruised feet, I headed down the road toward those two stone pillars at the entrance to that private driveway. It was pitch black with a chilly breeze, but it still wasn't even close to how freezing that Christ-awful wind could get the moment you turned the wrong corner in Berlin. It was a different kind of cold here, familiar, like that road that led me without effort through the darkness and down toward the loch. It looked as if it could have been midnight, but the first birds soon began to sing. There were several small motor boats tied up at the mouth of the river, but I ignored them. The loch lay to my right, a pond to my left, as I quietly walked away from the river and toward that tiny fisherman's shack sitting next to a stone table. This had been one of the spots where I'd befouled The Holy Bible last year. Beyond, lay a section of the shoreline that had a stone barrier protecting a small marina from the bigger waves. Only two rowboats were moored there, just as I had anticipated. I stood for a little while facing the loch as I inhaled the morning air, and again recalled Abra-Melin the Mage, "*And we should take the greatest care, and keep ourselves as we would from a deadly poison, from commencing this Operation at all, if we have not made a firm resolution to carry it through to the end.*" It was strange how I didn't feel any sense of impending doom despite my plans. I had organized everything perfectly. It had been over a year since I had begun preparing for this occasion, and I was impressed by how precisely executed I had performed every single task. No detail had been taken for granted. I even had backup routes to every aspect of this morning, but so far it was as if the universe was steering me toward the inevitable. We little men like to claim our dominance over the bigger picture, but just because I could witness greater forces at work, didn't mean those fundamental elements were aligned just for me. Objectively, I was merely a piece of shit swirling down the toilet of what would have always happened regardless of my presence. Why fear the preordained. So, I opened my bag and grabbed my hammer and a tiny pen-light. After I'd smashed the lock securing that chain-link anchor to the shore, I pulled out my collapsible canoe paddles. Extending them into two individual ores, I pushed the rowboat off from the shore and began rowing quietly away from dry land. The sound of gentle water lapping against a hull had always been soothing. Glancing over my shoulder, I guided the boat through the stone barriers and toward the first light of day. A meek blueish glow bled above the ridge on the east-side of the loch. It seemed

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that the further out I went, the opposite shore still grew no closer, and the marina soon disappeared into a mass of black indifference. The breeze was firm, and the waves became choppy, though nothing that the sturdy little boat couldn't handle. Once I was a decent distance out, I stopped and looked to my right, away to the north. Then to my left, to the south. Both ends of the loch appeared identical. My only guide was the faint morning star, and so I continued across that vast expanse of death. My feeble swimming ability and an innate childhood fear of being alone on the open water remained at the back of my mind, and yet my pulse had only raised from the effort needed to row the boat. This was right where I was meant to be. And soon, for no conscious reason, I pulled in the oars. With the morning light at my back, I began my blasphemous oration. I didn't come all the way out here just to appease some mythical promise of atonement. I came to commit atrocious sacrilege! How many gods of war can I offend under one crescent moon!

It took nearly an hour to conclude my obscene rite, white sitting naked in the middle of the loch. My repudiation toward the light was my only resilience against the cold. I then knelt at the aft of the rowboat and stared down into the obsidian water, through my reflection and at my fears that were at least seven-hundred-feet deep. Reaching in, I splashed my face with the icy water, before I washed my whole body while reciting my hateful incantations. The cocktail of animal blood that I'd used to write the names of demons upon my skin streaked down my pale body and dripped into the loch. Get the scent in the air and let it sink into the depth below. When conjuring that which you hide from even yourself, you must expect the worst. I can't say what exactly grabbed my arm and pulled me into the water, but I'm pretty sure it was me – the me who'd swam toward the light of defilement –

Spinning, I twisted through all that black water of absolute effluence. You know, they aren't kidding when they say falling into freezing water is like being stabbed with a hundred knives all at once. I had no fucking idea which way was what, but when that thing wrapped itself about my throat, it at least slowed my death-spiral. Instead, it choked me like a rag doll, until my own fingers dug into that alien flesh all the way to my knuckles. As I ripped that noose from my neck, I caught a glimpse of it against the dim light shimmering through the water above. It was that same arm-length worm that had crawled out of Amelia's asshole during my vision. Then suddenly, as I clung to that bleeding creature, something much, much larger swam past. It was impossible to see what it was, though all I really cared about at that point was getting some fucking oxygen. That thing then swam above, and I

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was lost in total fucking darkness! There was no silhouette of the rowboat or anything anymore. It was as if I had been swallowed by whatever the fuck I'd finally offended with my profanities –

Once more I was back in Amelia's apartment. I knelt over her spread-eagle carcass and slowly reached inside her pelvis that was split in two, pulling open the stringy membranes that covered her uterus. Glaring at that mutilated corpse that had once be a twenty-year-old girl, I asked myself what the fuck was I doing? Seriously, what the fuck was I really going to do now? Stay here and rot with this fucking corpse, or back out and leave the way I'd come so that I could pretend that none of this had ever happened, or was I going to follow-through with what I truly fucking wanted? There was nothing out there, nothing back the way I'd come, and nothing further ahead. It was an all-saturating waste of fucking time. What the fuck was wrong with me? I'd given up everything, so what the fuck was left to achieve? All I had was my naked ass, and whatever the fuck I made of myself. No one else was here to condone or condemn my actions or inaction. It all depended on me. I'd thrown out my material possession, severed ties with everyone I'd ever known, and gone to the point self-destruction in the name of this art of desecration in order to seek out my Unholy Guardian Devil. Yet I could sink within the waters of my obsessions and no one would ever find my insignificant flesh. Or perhaps this was what I needed in order to discover true gratitude from undeserved intimacy that I'd rejected for so long. Could I, at last, appreciate what little I actually had left? After all, when completely desperate, you have to face the hard choices alone, and discover what you stand for. So, I knelt in isolation, looking down at that uterus in my bare hands, and then took a great big fucking bite out of life! Swallowing that meat with a delirious fascination, I instantly choked –

I was drowning in the loch! Reaching upward, I grabbed onto an arm, I'm pretty sure it was my arm from the me who'd just been washing the blood off at the back of the boat. The me who then dragged himself out of the freezing water felt like I was on fire once I crashed back into the boat. The steep cliffs of black then began to groan. Gasping for air while shivering like a rattle snake, I looked toward that glow above the ridge. I caught my breath and watched as two golden cracks appeared in the cliffs on the eastern bank. A light came streaming out from within as the fractures in the stone stretched up and toward each other. The point where those two massive cracks joined was directly below the rising sun. Within that enormous 'A' shaped triangle, the space opened up revealing a place where devils ruled with impunity!

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I sat holding my frozen self as I stared through that passageway, and the vision effected more than just my retina. Great serpents and countless entities then spilled into the loch! I was transfixed, but once the wake from those things entering the loch stuck the boat, I snapped out of it. Grabbing the oars, I had no intention of becoming a feast for devils, and I rowed with a determination back toward the little marina. The sky gradually lit up and that giant passageway faded from recognition, but I pushed on harder toward the shore. I wasn't going to risk how tangible those beasts had become now that they had escape into this realm. Once I secured the anchor back to the iron stake on the shoreline, I wasn't cold in the slightest anymore. Casually dressing, I was mesmerized by that water with all its arcane secrets. It seemed like a miracle that this place had allowed me to leave after what I'd just seen. But then again, I wondered if that passageway had even noticed that I was there at all, just like no one paid any attention to the demodex that thrived upon their eyelashes.

While walking up the private driveway, a white pickup truck headed toward me. Some uptight caretaker behind the wheel started complaining that I shouldn't be here, but I ignored his unimportant little face as I walked away. My eyes have been replaced with the coals that fuel the abysmal pits of Hades. The suffering of men is to be laughed at like the menial peasants they make of themselves!

Soon, I took a scolding hot shower, ordered a fresh pot of Earl Grey, and then grabbed my bag and left the hotel again. This time I headed to the south-side of the river. Mist had settled about the mountain top, as I marched around the highway with on one final ritual on my mind. Crossing the bridge, I continued around the highway, and then down that overgrown path toward the loch. Suddenly I turned right, left the trail, and climbed down an embankment. There was something calling me down there. The shoreline was littered with the bones of dead animals that spoke through the trees. This was an ideal altar. I opened my bag and removed a freshly written spell, along with a compass and square. Taking my magnetic compass, I found east and aligned the sheet of paper below the two tools resting upon a flat slab of stone. I then grabbed a deer skull and forced it to bear witness. Holding up the photographs of those past eight reigning females, I proceeded to burn them systematically while recalling deeds I'd done deliberately out of malice to each and every one of them. Dropping the ashes into the water, I saw their pretty faces smolder away as I stared across the loch at that place where the

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passageway had shown itself. The bondage rope that I'd tied myself with during the rituals upon the rowboat, was then thrown into the water, discarding that which I had restrained myself with. I screwed the oars together into one long paddle before I cast them away, expelling the fear which I had faced. Again, I knelt and baptized myself with that cold water, cleansing my past indiscretions and making room for greater malignity. It was hushed out there on the water's edge. There was no interference from visions or devils, just the lulled waves at my feet, and that gentle voice questioning how I'd proceed from this point onward?



Making my way around the shore, I came to the end of that peninsular at the mouth of the river. It seemed that I was still very much alive despite every

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fate that I'd tempted. Listening to, *Lateralus*, from Tool, I considered how suited that song was for the situation. "*And following our will and wind we may just go where no one's been. We'll ride the spiral to the end and may just go where no one's been. Spiral out. Keep going.*" But again, as I stood there, I felt the water calling me stronger than ever. I couldn't turn my head away from the surface of the loch, it was like something invisible had its hands on my skull and was pulling me in. Suddenly, I thought of that woman's bloody handprint on my spine, and I spun away from the water and marched up the hillside. As soon as I approached the woods, I saw those blackened figures standing within the tree-line. They were just standing, lingering, watching. They would never leave me alone. So, I pulled out my phone. I had promised Mara that if she heard from me before midday on the 18th, then she would see me again. She answered by needing a photo for proof of my condition. But these pictures are so inadequate at depicting the experience. No one else saw what I'd done in those woods and under the water. Because only I have ever been there for me.

I was sipping on a cup of tea when that Iranian couple came downstairs to checkout. The woman looked dumbstruck once she saw me. Her husband however, continued outside with the suitcases.

"You're supposed to be dead!" she whispered, with terror behind her breath.

"You know what they say," I coined. "Can't keep a good horse down."

"This is wrong!" she insisted, backing out and shaking her head all the way.

I watched her standing with crossed arms in the parking lot, while the events from the last twenty-four hours swirled through my head. What were my current options: head to France and take up Amelia on her offer to take her up the ass. Or head back to Berlin and the one who'd been there when I needed it the most. Listening to, *Down There By The Train*, from Tom Waits, I was then without one doubt. "*I've never asked forgiveness and I've never said a prayer. I've never given of myself and I've never truly cared. And I've hurt the ones who loved me and I'm still raising Cain. I've taken the low road and if you've done the same, meet me down there by the train, down there where the train goes slow.*"

EPILOGUE

On the 23rd of December, I stepped foot back in my old flat in Berlin. There,

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on the desk, was another square and compass lying on my would-be suicide note. Mara later admitted that she had read it on the morning of my departure. She said she wanted to burn it now. If all things were equal, then what the fuck was I doing back here?! I'm supposed to be dead, but it seems that fate has other plans for my true-will. It was only after I rearranged the few pieces of furniture I had left, that I noticed an odd stain in the corner of my ceiling. At first, I thought it was a small wasp's nest, but it was something else. Pointing it out to Mara, she didn't know what I was talking about. She then insisted that I seek professional therapy for the things that I see in my head. But these visions tell me otherwise. I cannot kill that which I am indivisible from.

Bruce



SHORT STORY 7
2015
RELATIONSHIPS AND THEIR DISCONTENTS

DISCLAIMER:

There is no such thing as an objective experience. You cannot read this anymore objectively than I can write it.

She came walking down that sunny, cobble-stone street and directly toward me. The color of all those trees in the cool breeze held my attention for a few moments longer, before the curvature of her hips redirected my retina.

“Was machen Sie hier?!” she demanded, crossing her skinny arms beneath the shade of that overhanging canopy.

Slowly stepping up to that twenty-something-year-old, I examined her formal, sheer black dress from where I stood. I leaned in closer and took a laborious sniff of that serious blonde. I smelt nothing. Nothing at all. But how many hot meals have I had without tasting a single fucking thing. You’re all the same numbing insignificance.

“Sie sind spät!” she snarled, while recoiling from my hunched posture. “Komm, beeilen Sie sich! Sonst werden Sie ihn nie wieder sehen!”

That pale girl in blackened heels, then marched off around the ruins of an iron gate that was thickly coated in bushy vines. While watching her tight ass disappear up that private driveway surrounded by enormous branches of every possible leaf variety, I heard a mandolin creeping through the bird calls in that overlapping foliage. I ignored the departing footsteps of that snotty little bitch. Moving away from the driveway, I continued a few paces along that country road to where the forest gave way to a view across a quaint vista. Although this was Potsdam, just south of Berlin, I pictured *The Wind In The Willows*. There was a long, descending field of grass, boarded by clusters of trees, above a small glistening lake. A shallow ridge lay beyond, and there I counted all of three houses. I could just imagine a cute little woodland bunny strolling down that gentle hillside on his hind legs with a tiny fishing rod slung over his shoulder. His best friend, Mr. Dragonfly circling Mr. Bunny as they laughed about good, decent small-talk, and neither had a single fuck to give that day. I wanted to join them. But ah, the pathetic fallacy! Nature was whatever the fuck it had to be, regardless of any of my human delusions of escaping the bonds of circumstance. Yet what the fuck was I without those unavoidable associations? All experiences were tainted by past encounters. I

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was not and will never be a clean-slate. Without that accumulation of junk-thought, I would, quite simply, not be me. After all, I'm just a filter. A piece of meat filtering between the internal and external world. A fucking foul-mouthed filter interpreting whatever I perceived, and then expelling solipsist shit that was hell-bent on seeing what the fuck I could get away with. There was no soul behind the eyes of Bruce Stirling John Knox. No individuality, no identity that mattered except manipulation. Like Alan Watts said, "*To be is to deceive.*"

A car came quietly rolling up that remote road. Turning my back on the sun, I watched a black Rolls-Royce cruise smoothly toward that one and only driveway. As pretty as the landscape had been, it still held no competition against a girl in pantyhose and expensive stilettos. Curiosity got the better of me, so I followed the car, though really, I only followed that impatient blonde. The path immediately twisted, turned, and steepened significantly compared to the previous terrain that my ramblings had taken me. I'd traveled to Potsdam less than a handful of times in the past ten years, yet my slant on the place was always the same: a small town of rich and reclusive old fucks who considered themselves too good to live within the actual shadow of Berlin itself. And as



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I came through those neat hedges, I looked up at a building perched on top of a slab of granite at the summit of the hill. Again, I was reminded of how old-money seemed as detached from the rest of civilization as civilization was to the natural order of things. The house was like a giant stone block, three-stories-high, with big windows locked behind lace curtains and iron bars. It seemed like a mini, first-class state-prison. The gravel beneath my dress shoes curved up to the foundations, where steps carved their way through a tall iron fence and up to the front door. Yet there was no one around. Even the Rolls had vanished – until a hand touched my shoulder! I nearly broke my own fucking neck as I whipped around! My first thought pinned this elderly chick as a dead-ringer for Kylie Minogue’s doppelganger. I was glad my Wayfarers concealed my freaked-out expression of: seriously-where-the-fuck-did-you-just-come-from?! As she walked passed, I noticed her weird limp, and realized that she was burdened with a prosthetic leg under her chic black dress – no twerking for this fifty-five-year-old MILF.

“You’re not meant to be here, are you?” she spoke in perfect English, while glancing over her shoulder. Gently circling around, she eventually confronted me face to face.

“In what sense?” I asked.

“In the sense that you’re clearly not German.”

“Take that as a compliment.”

“It wasn’t intended as one.”

“Won’t let it keep me up at night.”

“Explain yourself. What are you doing here?”

“Same reason as you, cutie pie.”

“I’ve never seen you before in my life.”

“Should get out more.”

Ms. Kylie paused but smiled.

I smiled back.

“How were you acquainted with the recently departed?”

“You look pretty good for a corpse.”

The petite woman was taken aback. “You have no idea who I am, do you.”

“That makes two of us.”

“Come!” She twisted and held out her elbow. “Escort me.”

“Okay, but this doesn’t mean we’re swapping spit in the shower.”

She chuckled with salacious delight, and then, with arm in arm, we scaled the steep front steps. When in unusual situations, you’re only whatever the fuck you appear to be in the present tense pretense. People had a tendency to

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fill in the blanks as long as you seemed like you had the god-given right to be exactly where you stood your fucking ground. Others will capitulate to your lack of volunteered information, because the vast majority of assholes really don't give a flying fuck about your Kafkaesque, background sob-story. We're all just psychic-victims fulfilling some bullshit succinct role someone else sees us as. Strangers are all reduced to simple conceptualizations that the eye of the beholder easily compartmentalizes. Whether you liked it or not, once that first impression had been made, it was almost impossible to get anyone to accept you as any different. But why not let that gullible assumption work in your favor, and parasitically maneuver those blindly willing to let down their guard without even knowing diddle-squat about the wolf wiping his ass on their sheepskin rugs. So, fuck it. I had time to kill, let's see how far this day might lead me astray.

It was a funeral. Or the reception. Or both combined. Who's to say what's the normal protocol when it comes to displaying the dead in their own home. The people in that room looked like they were from that top 1%, yet I would have assumed that the mere idea of such an archaic ceremony was miles below their highbrow intolerance levels. Anyway, there I was, standing in that ornate lounge draped in antique gloom and becoming increasingly claustrophobic from all the ancient furniture buried beneath countless foreign trinkets and dust-clogged memorabilia. There was barely space to stand despite the room's vast size. The dead body itself wasn't lying in a coffin, instead, upon some kind of grand platter, like a goose about to be served up. He was surrounded decoratively by flowers, ornaments, and an oil painting of the Spanish Inquisition. The deceased gentleman lay upon his final throne of imperial oddities wearing a tuxedo from what looked like the nineteenth century. There was an array of military medals upon his chest, along with a formal sash, while a slender sword was sheathed and rested upon his torso in both veiny hands. He'd been a big guy, well over six-foot-tall, and somewhere in his sixties when he'd kicked his diamond-encrusted-bucket. Even though I was standing a good thirty feet from the dead man, the extensive scars across his entire face were clearly visible, giving his nose a jagged disfigurement that made it appear as if his flesh was made of shattered marble. Apart from Ms. Kylie and myself, there were only three others, not including the dead meat. An old dignified chap was dragging on a cigarette as if he'd just run in the front door. The smoke seemed to be the only thing keeping his bones upright. A large chunk of a woman with even larger black hair, and a million jewels around her nonexistent neck, was seated upon an

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entire sofa. She stared sideways at the relics towering next to her. The last old guy stood in an expensive charcoal suit. He glared out a window with both hands behind his back while he arched forward as if he were about to pass out. Ms. Kylie then left my elbow and moved slowly toward the carcass that seemed like some life-size parody of a wedding cake placed on top of that pyramid of museum artifacts. While she paid her respects, I noticed a glass cabinet containing several metallic disks with geometrical symbols etched into them, very much like something Dr. John Dee would have created. I was about to take a closer inspection, when someone else passed by the doorway. It was one of those so fleeting glimpses, but the hook was cast and sunk into my unconscious. The next thing I knew, I was returning to that catacomb of a corridor, where I saw a little maid slip around a distant corner just as she glanced directly back at me. For some reason I stopped. This was a trap! She was the bait. But then my fatalism kicked in and I remembered: fuck it. So, I strolled on down that corridor. Glancing at melancholic paintings of desolate landscapes in elaborate frames, I took a deep breath and found that the dry air in that old house was delicious. Suddenly that little maid marched back around the corner and straight into me! Glass shattered on the hardwood floor, and we both lurched backward. An angry grin crossed my face. The little maid retreated, spouting, es-tut-mir-leid-this, es-tut-mir-leid-that, es-tut-mir-leid-for-every-fucking-thing-under-the-sun. I wasn't, however, sorry for jackshit. But then, a battery of German audacity came shouting down the corridor! Turning my captivated eyes away from that little maid with her hypnotic hips, I glanced spitefully at that miserable fucking cunt still blabbing at the jowls and stomping closer. His guy had midget-like legs and a swollen head that made him seem grotesquely off balance. I then spotted a small bronze statue of a Greek athlete nearby, as the urge to crack open that prick's fucking skull filled my ventricle – when Ms. Kylie stepped up and placed her palm on his shoulder. Much like I myself had done outside, that furious little German froze in his tracks and snapped his head to attention. I was curious what she had said to that human-Chihuahua, as he didn't breathe another word after that. He just sneered his bubblegum-pink grimace in my vague direction before storming off. Ms. Kylie gestured for me with her outstretched hand. It was funny how she was now my number one advocate. I was suddenly above incrimination simply because she liked my company. Rolling my jaw, I thought about that cute little maid with her timid voice, but then Ms. Kylie spoke up, “Would you care to go for a ride?”

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Looking across the Brandenburg countryside, I saw heavy clouds approach and had no idea in which direction the Mercedes was heading. Glancing at Ms. Kylie on my left, I took note of the rigid way in which her index finger typed her smartphone as if she had just learned the alphabet. She may have been in her fifties, but she sure was a foxy little number. I especially enjoyed her perfect posture and her aristocrat eyes. But how she sat so upright in that beige backseat was beyond me. I stretched out with my elbow on the door-frame. Our body-language said plenty about the both of us. Who you think you were was irrelevant in the face of the perception of others. How you portrayed your actions was what really mattered, as in the end, just like your dead body on display, that was all that people saw. The soup of bullshit thoughts and capricious impulses inside of your head meant nothing if you didn't actualize any of it. What adds or subtracts from your attraction, boiled down to what you allowed others to see within the context of the given situation. You had to adapt to the appropriate environment with a shrewdness of understanding how best to manipulate your opponents. Remember, no matter how much your best buddy says he's on your side, or how much your lover claims she loves you, every ideal had an exception given a long enough track-record of human behavior. Ms. Kylie then looked up and smiled beautifully at me. I just slowly turned my head toward the passing scenery. Her Mercedes-Benz soon left the main road, and before we reached a big wooden gate, Ms. Kylie told the driver to pull over. Apparently only her voice was good enough for the intercom. Sitting where I was, I gave a languished scowl at that huge, red-brick mansion lying just beyond the trees. I then watched Ms. Kylie's prosthetic leg stretch back into the car. Her stockings covered the molded metal, but her tight dress accentuated the hinges. She stared at my intrusive gaze, and I slowly extended my inspection all the way to her full breasts, and then up to her dignified pout. I've only seen a few elderly ladies worth a closer look, and this was definitely the best of them. We both shared that mutual moment of transfixed temptation, before the car gently pulled up to that enshrouded building.

"Wait here," Ms. Kylie whispered, stepping out.

What, and no pat on the head like the good little dog she fucking expected of me? Fuck that shit! Exiting the vehicle, I watched that tiny female limp toward the arched front door. Glancing up at those tall, cathedral-styled windows on the second floor, my eyes were then drawn toward a significant area of the roof that had been blackened from fire and was left yawning. However, I had had enough of this stranger's company, and walked away. It

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had been an early start to the day, and my eyes were drying out beneath my sunglasses. Strolling away in no particular direction, I knew that no matter how lost I might get, there was always plenty more motherfuckers ahead of me. This wasn't a desert, this was central Europe! In no way could I avoid human interference. I might climb a fence and cross the next field and head down into a forest, but soon enough it would all end with another road leading me toward more human settlements. This wasn't even the countryside, this was just those empty spaces between city states. It never ended. I was trapped here. Trapped again. Had I returned to my former life last December just for more of this inconsolable misanthropy?! It seemed like a good idea at the time, coming back to rebuild. And so far, it had worked. But at a cost. A price measured in euros. As for the toll on my personality, well, as Mara liked to criticize, only during December had I truly seemed honest. 'Seemed' being the operative word there. Yet her constant nagging since then, during the honeymoon of our relationship, served only to denigrate everything we had done together. But hey, no lover I've ever sodomized had been above calling me a piece of shit on a regular basis. Still, she wondered why I resorted to my old wicked ways. Every new relationship inevitably became just like every

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past one. Therefore, according to my petulant lover, if I'm the defining factor in the destruction of my past, then I must be the one at fault! It wasn't long before the black Mercedes came creeping up beside me.

"What do you think you're doing?" Ms. Kylie asked, through her open window. "Hurry up. Get in. We don't have all day."

Yeah, fuck this walking shit! I climbed back into the car and saw that Ms. Kylie now had a leather satchel upon her lap. As we drove off, I asked, "Where to?"

"Unfortunately, we must invite one more guest for dinner. I owe him that much." She looked less than thrilled about her duty-bound errand and continued talking about the last-minute arrangements for tonight's event.

However, I zoned-out, thinking about that little maid with all her es-tut-mir-leids. I hoped for another look at her penitent posture. The more I thought about the little maid, the more her image built up a resentment for coming along on this ride.

Once we reached the front gates of another reclusive son of a bitch, Ms. Kylie again exited the vehicle, this time saying, "Are you coming?"

The car remained at the gate, while we walked up the drive way. This



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house was taller than the previous. It was five-floors-high with bright white woodwork. We didn't even make it to the front door when a servant in a black suit came marching toward us with a silver platter in hand. Ms. Kylie stopped dead in her tracks as the butler silently held up the platter with its domed lid. Suddenly out of character, Ms. Kylie stared anxiously at the platter. So, I faked a fleeting smirk at the butler and lifted the shiny lid myself. Well, shit on me! I couldn't help it, I roared with gut-wrenching laughter at that sight of a maggot-infested deer fetus! But then the putrid stench slapped me across the face, and I spun away, manically trying to vomit that stink out of my flared nostrils! "Jesus-fucking-Christ! I can taste it!"

Ms. Kylie slammed the lid over the fleshy mess before handing the leather satchel over to the butler. She immediately walked away, leaving me standing on the driveway, still blowing snot out my violated nasal cavity. I squinted at this weird exchange, as my thirst for coffee really began to leave a bad taste at the back of my maggot-flavored mouth.

The black Mercedes with its appetizing leather, soon drove through the forest roads again, and became a sedative to my defenses. I'd always loved being taken for a drive, especially considering that the temperamental weather was once again turning the color of a doomsday prophecy. The last road-trip I had taken was through Israel, just over a month ago. I'd found the Holy Land to be a fascinating example of civilized contradictions. Just like my reasons for going. Mara wanted to introduce me to her family, which was itself a sign of how serious it was getting between us. So, I played the part of the decent-suitor seeking the blessing of those I needed no validation from. I could be a good boyfriend and play the game.

At the start of April, I had been invited to a pajama party by Commi-Star, a fat-titted burlesque icon who'd always reciprocated my flirtatious innuendos. Half-way through the evening, I was getting some air on the street with some young artists and old whores, when one of the local drag queens gave me the queer-eye after I mentioned that I was about to travel to Israel. The queen's shock was mostly directly toward the fact that I had managed to date a Russian Jew, until he sternly questioned what exactly I would be doing while in the Holy Land? This perturbed me. What was he accusing me of? Mara then joined us for some fresh air, and that's when I learned that this drag also happened to be a jolly old Jew. I never could tell ethnic groups apart, or even subcultures, or whatever specific fucking genre of music I was listening to anymore. The more people talked about their delusions of equality the

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more everyone was so fucking desperate to categorize exactly what type of social-elitist-scum they identified with. Heading back into the party, I soon found myself in a bedroom with all those girls in nothing but bathrobes. A boylesque performer who was fresh of the boat, also brought up the topic of what my Israeli plans were. However, he abruptly ended the conversation by quipping, “Well, when you’re over there, try not to be a dick!”

Try not to be a dick?! I didn’t even fucking know this fag! Who the fuck was he to assume if I might go dick-out or not?! Why would he even suggest such a thing?! Did I look like a dick?! Did he think that I alone could seriously start World War III by just being a little dick during my brief time in the Middle-fucking-East?! Or was it more localized than that, did I have to watch my fucking mouth whenever I was in the untouchable vicinity of any precious fucking Jews?! Was my girlfriend included?! Or was this fag merely suggesting that my own personal sense of humor was a wee bit ignorant, ever so slightly intolerant, and perhaps a touch on the possibly insensitive side?! Bitch, please! I couldn’t even tell a Jew from a Turk from a Russian from a Mongolian from a Korean from a Filipino from a lady-boy. Besides, according to evolution, ultimately, we all came from China, like all of our fucking clothes did! Or were we all eventually becoming Chinese? Was I a dick for asking? One thing was for sure, I was far too much of a cultural-Bolshevik ever to be associated with Nazis, you dimwitted Philistine!

On the 12th of April, for our fourth day in Tel-Aviv, we planned a trip to Jerusalem, but first we had to fuck the rain away. The unseasonal weather soon turned to shit again, as our GPS accidently led us on the scenic route through the mountains in the West Bank, where razor-wire fenced us in on either side of the highway. Mara’s concern about our location seemed understandable once she explained how the locals would check license-plates to see if you’re Israeli or not. Though, once we came out of the mountains, the clouds cleared, and the blue sky welcomed us into the Muslim sector of Jerusalem. We circled the Old City before finding an underground parking-lot. Surrounding the Jaffa Gate were glorified window displays of capitalism at its finest. Ralph Lauren, Versace, and Christian Dior glistened in the sunshine. Esprit, Adidas, and Zara lined the polished pavement, while Calvin Klein, Marc Jacobs, and Giorgio Armani sipped on coffee in that pristine arcade. To be honest, I don’t really know why, but I was sickened by that repugnant stench of profit. What can I say, Jesus had days like this? But of course, the three wise-business-men-of-marketing relished the phenomenon

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of supply-and-demand. Wherever there were large numbers of humans seeking spirituality, there will always be those loyal disciples of commerce. Who needs a golden calf when you have a Lacoste logo on your fat fucking tit! We entered the Old City of Jerusalem through the Damascus Gate into the Christian Quarter. Narrow streets were cluttered with tiny stores selling everything from butchered carcasses to cheap Persian scarves. Our sense of direction grew misguided the further we went into that labyrinth of alleyways thick with multicultural incense. The stink of burning perfume was fortunately dulled once the rain returned. Perhaps the city itself didn't want us finding the Church Of The Holy Sepulcher, for we kept coming across dead-ends with



dead-bolted doors. Yet the crucifix upon the church's highest point mocked us from behind stone walls. I felt so rejected, shunned even, like god didn't

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care for the likes of a cunt like me.

We next found ourselves in the Jewish Quarter as the rain intensified. That's about all I have to say about that. The Jewish Quarter was not so remarkable. Bland, but definitely in much better architectural condition than the rest of the city. We totally skipped the Armenian Quarter, not out of callous, but because seriously, who gives a shit about the motherfucking Armenians? Leaving a courtyard, we found ourselves huddling under the umbrella upon the summit of a staircase overlooking the distant Temple Mount. I could smell the history in that chilled air as I scanned the clouds. My eyes followed the tight-knit settlements that covering the hills and stretching up to the Mount Of Olives above that golden Dome Of The Rock. Below, we looked upon the Western Wall itself.



Mara and I descended that myriad of stairs, until we entered the empty expanse in front of the Western Wall. There, we had to part ways as, after all, the feminist movement didn't mean a thing around these parts. If there were any women's rights activists about, they were all packed into their significantly smaller portion of the worshiping zone. As I strolled through the drizzle, with the evening encroaching, I glared up at that arrangement

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of uneven blocks of stone. I saw three-thousand-years of war and suffering pouring over every fucking inch of it. So, this was the only surviving remains of the Second Temple. It was just a weed-infested foundation. If humble-pie was what you were looking for, then Bingo was god's name-o! Yet where the fuck were the devotees? Was a little rain enough to keep the masses of touring pilgrims locked up in their five-star fucking hotels?! However, like a wet day at Disneyland, the wet weather made it incredibly convenient for a sour-face infidel to have the whole Western Wall to himself. It wasn't until I was standing beneath that cliff of pale stone slabs, that I remembered that the pious flocked here not only to pray, but also wrote laundry lists of ransom demands on pieces of paper, that they stuffed into the cracks. Not wanting to seem peculiar, I plucked one of my *Bark* stickers from my pocket. Folding it, I then reached into the deepest gash in the rock and buried my message among the papier-mâché of a million other unanswered prayers. Scowling upward with the rain in my eyes, I winked at god – when movement caught my attention and I glanced to the left. There was an arch in the stone that extended westward from the Western Wall. A gaggle of Orthodox Jews gathered within the shelter, and I understood why the men had dibs on this particular side of the wall. Into the depth I wandered and discovered a hovel that was part sanctuary and part library. I may have been dressed in black with the hoody under my suit jacket pulled up over my head, but I still stood out like a sore thumb compared the strict uniformity of the Orthodox. I needed a white shirt in order to complete the look. As I made my way through that sauna of earnest Old Testament penguins nodding fervently toward an inanimate wall, I found the whole situation rather amusing. Perhaps it was the irony of someone like me standing uninhabited in such a holy environment. Or, was it due to the observation: that the only time a man truly seemed to respect a single thing was when he was preoccupied with his stringent prayer – that was, until he finished. Then, just like a whore, he returned to his petty life of a sinner. But shit, you needed the contrast in order to see the hilarious futility of everything we hold precious. How did the Joker-Paradox go: The Jester's job was to remind the King that it's all a fucking game, and yet, at the same time, he encouraged the King to keep on acting as if it's not a game at all! So, I walked through the oblivious Orthodox with my Teflon impunity. For the devil feels no pain stepping upon your holy ground. It is the light that must make the effort to hold back the shadows! And then, at the far end of the library, out stepped an old rabbi in black robes. Two weeks earlier, in the middle of the night, that same guy had been standing in the

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middle of the street outside Mara's building, staring at me with sunken eyes. I had ignored the catatonic prick at the time, but at the Western Wall, that bizarre old buzzard stared straight back at my hesitation. It was definitely the same guy. I clearly remembered his loose eyelids that glistened as if he had just been crying. Once again, like on the Berlin street, he didn't move, just locked eyes with me and barely even blinked. He seems at home surrounded by all those other fanatics, where the rituals of the other Jews finally drew my attention. Turning away, I watched some Moses-wannabe slowly wrap leather straps around his left arm, before placing a wooden cube upon his forehead. Groups already in prayer, joined in with others at the chorus in of some song. Focusing on an intricately carved altar in front of yet another big-bearded rabbi, I wondered if this was what went down in every synagogue. I had never been to a synagogue, yet there I was, in Israel, standing in the very heart of Judaism. Maybe Mara should be a good Jew and take me along to a local service on the next Sabbath. To my left, I saw that my stalker was still watching me. Perhaps I was being paranoid. Though, ever since spending time with Mara, and listening to the stories about high-profile spooks and international security-threats, I seemed to have become a tad bit susceptible to the Jewish-condition – believing that everyone's out to get me!

When I left that alcove of cattle-car-packed Jews, I suddenly realized that I hadn't arranged a rendezvous with Mara before we had separated at the wall. Glancing across the twilight at the armed soldiers guarding the entrance to the courtyard, I knew that Mara wouldn't have gone far. And within a minute, I spotted her stomping through the rain. She was none too pleased about my momentary disappearance. I will forever remain in awe of how the tiniest storm in a teacup could metastasize into a malignant exchange of artillery within the briefest of intervals. No matter how much you assure a female of your credible intentions, no comprehensible explanation will ever suffice. Drama requires a malicious agenda with deliberate a set of actions. Because if I hadn't vindictively decided to abandon her, then it was just an inadvertent miscalculation, and you can't righteously blame someone for an honest mistake. Not true! Blame can always find an excuse to shit on you. So, when she demanded I apologize, I simply refused to take sole responsibility for our parting ways without deciding where to meet, and then the mood went stale. As we drove away from that Holy City into the night, I remembered how much I cherished these kinds of hostile discourse. Only during serious relationships have I ever indulged in such spiteful interactions. Some say, "*Relationships are about surviving the tough times.*" I say, they're about

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provoking the extremes in each other, both the good emotions and the real fucking bad ones too! Only a lover has ever managed to bring out the worst in me, which is, by all accounts, the very best of what I am: unadulterated hatred! Perhaps that was my problem. Just like how the Western Wall represented the pigheaded-psyche of the dogmatic, I had an impassable mental block that was worshiped every time it was run into.

Israel had at first seemed to be a miniscule country, that was until the seventh day, when we drove south of Tel-Aviv. I'd never been to a desert before, and I found it fucking beautiful. The vegetation slowly faded into a landscape the likes of which I imagined a primordial planet once resembled. I wanted to keep going further and drive until we ran out of dirt and came to the very fucking end of everything. Yet over each crest on the horizon, there was always so much more. As dominant as we homo-sapiens liked to think we are, that place was so much greater with its apathetic grandeur. We haven't even scraped the surface of our infinite potential at contaminating these realms of emptiness. I wanted more nuclear disasters, more environmental pollution, and more toxic spills, until the icecaps melt, drowning this entire cuntinuing world in suffocating misery! The depth of the desert showed me the enormity of my own barren existence. But this appreciation was of my own doing. The road didn't see these things, nor was it responsible for enlightening me. The desert was just one more affirmation, showing me how envious I was of all those horrors I had yet to achieve. The brighter the sun, the more focused your shadow becomes. Mara drove for hours, with the rock formations growing more arid with craggy ranges either side. Suddenly we came around a bend and were right at the edge of Makhtesh Ramon, where the ground simply dropped away, exposing the very ribs of the planet. As the car cruised down the northern cliff, my eyes took a while adjusting to the severe scale of that landscape below. The size of that rift was magnificent –

Disembodied, I saw it all. The clouds tore open as a thunderous sound shattered the sky! A huge ring of ominous clouds expanded as though a neutron bomb had just detonated in the stratosphere. The blast-wave slowed down but the sky itself faded as if night was bleeding through the shattered atmosphere. The very fabric of reality was straining to hold its integrity as that blackened stain stretched above. Even though the gales swept up mountainous plumes of dust, I saw the great fall of a tiny shape of white light piercing the huge smoke-ring. Despite the insignificant size of that celestial being, the force with which he was expelled from the grace of god sent ripples throughout every atom in the heavens above and below. Shock-waves of disrupted air

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continued expanding from his most indignant descent. The closer to the surface of the world he got, the more violent the storm increased. This was not the destruction of innocence. It was willing corruption! All that havoc was caused by a collision between an ethereal dimension violating this plane of crude material. Elemental forces failed to hold the continuity of time and order as suddenly, in mid fall, that shell of light encasing the Morning Star burst open and burned for the last time! A naked form of grotesque derision plunged with a new kind of fire incinerating his splendor. Engulfed in his very first flames of damnation, a devil struck the Earth with such an impact that for a moment it seemed as if nothing had happened, like he had disintegrated upon contact. But then the entire desert buckled! The sand bulged all the way to the horizon in a terrific upheaval! A second later, the swollen landscape cracked open into a million burning mountains! That diabolic clash with this young world caused such a tremendous explosion that it set the whole sky on fire! The expulsion of the defeated cut a hole straight into this land with such a ferocity that the very penetration made room for the foundations of hell itself –



The car pulled onto the side of the highway at the bottom of that gigantic

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basin, where the cyclone-like winds were still relentless. Standing in the middle of that boundless vista beneath the beating sun, a daunting thought arose: if the car broke down, we might as well be on the fucking moon. Yet, for thousands of years people had no choice but to walk these hostile wastelands. Though, fuck walking out here without any nice smooth roads leading the way. Still, people had done it. The fucking balls on those cunts! As we drove on, I quietly watched as we traveled over mountains only to face more of the same endless rock. Those who had the fucking gumption to trek out into this inferno on their own two feet in the blind hopes of ever finding another living thing, indeed, had balls. We inevitably found that we weren't alone out there. At the southernmost point of our journey, we drove toward what looked like a cargo truck slowly making its way down the highway. It wasn't until we were overtaking the truck that I realized it was transporting an armored tank on its trailer. We then soon passed a small military camp where clusters of other tanks were lined up like blondes on a beach. I was not surprising at that point, considering we were right on the border with Jordan. No matter where we went, we were constantly reminded of the literal threat of war all around.

Pulling into a petrol station, we needed gas and refreshments. The usual welcome mat was laid out before us as we were greeted by Snickers, Coco Cola, and Pringles. The universal factors of globalization were the asphalt on the road, the junk food in the corner store, and the bullets in the assault rifles of the soldiers that looked as if they were guarding the M&Ms like a national treasure. I soon realized that those kids in dirty uniforms weren't guarding shit. They were just like everyone else, getting high on sugar while in transit to anywhere but here. Mara told me about the conditions that the Israeli soldiers had to live with. Every citizen, once they come of age, was obliged to serve in the military – which seemed reasonable considering the genocidal-threats facing the country from every side, including from within. But the fact that these kids with guns were paid barely enough to afford a pack of cigarettes, seemed a little neglectful. If you're commanding the loyalty of your troops on a daily basis, don't be a fucking Jew about it, pay them a respectable wage! The soldiers weren't even given transportation back home on their downtime, which explained why we saw several of them hitchhiking. It was also a common occurrence that Muslims went berserk and ran people down with automobiles, including soldiers trying to get home for the weekend. That really killed the romance of hitchhiking across country. Living rough in the military goes without saying, but this was borderline humiliation. And you

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should never embarrass those whom you need to protect you. Humiliation leads to resentment and betrayal. Spare the rod and spoil the child, is one thing, but excessive disrespect was the womb of rebellion. Netanyahu must be glad that his military believed in the same granddaddy deity in the sky. As Voltaire once said, *“There is no God, but don’t tell that to my servant, lest he murder me at night.”* So, the inevitable question arose: on whose side was I? And what about the plight of the Palestinians? Yeah, I saw the graffiti that Banksy had done during his little visit to Gaza. Artists were apparently the heroes of radical thought. Which explained why ISIS wanted to behead them all and film it. Yet if extreme Islam deplores any image which could be misconstrued as a false idol, then why were they creating propaganda videos playing at a frame rate of 29-images-per-fucking-second? Wasn’t the very production and distribution of those snuff films an act of the same blasphemous-narcissistic-worship that they claimed to repudiate? The point of those videos was to recruit the young into a war against the hordes of infidels, yet the movie-stars of those public-executions were then praised by psychotic fanboys who adored their protagonists as if they were Muhammad himself. Their extremist sacrilege reeked of hypocrisy! Shame on ISIS for the false idols that they promoted in every propaganda film that they have ever broadcast! But then Mara reminded me that I was being pedantic. Perhaps, but wasn’t that what it meant to be an extremist, to lose your shit over even the tiniest of details. Wasn’t the devil in those very fucking details?! She then cautioned me, that even by suggesting such sarcastic-criticisms I might inadvertently raise my own name to the top of their shit-list. But the bottom-line was, I didn’t need to draw a satirical portrait of Muhammad to know that ISIS wanted me dead! Every aspect of my lifestyle condemned me in their cuntng eyes. I knew my fucking enemy, and I didn’t have a choice about which side I was on, because they already deemed me as damned. Wasn’t Salman Rushdie still in hiding? It had only been twenty-six-fucking-years since the fatwa was slammed on his ass. There was something reassuring about being in Israel, knowing that every neighboring country wanted to wipe this entire civilization clean off the map. Too often the current cushy empires of the world take their position of power for granted and assume that there wasn’t anybody out there who was going to invade or stir shit up. What an arrogant delusion of the modern-metrosexual. The day you let down your guard or couldn’t support yourself, you became the fucking Gaza Strip! Countries were won by force! As for the West Bank, it wasn’t even marked on the map here. It had long been adsorbed and there simply was no discussion about it. Just like no one seriously discussed

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whether any nation should be handed back to any indigenous people. Because if you pushed the argument hard enough, it became so regressive that you ended up deconstructing people's entitlements backwards through time until you were talking on a species-level, and then referring to which fossilized animals owned the continents long before homo-sapiens even grew thumbs.

The drive north led us into the howling night where we approached the Salt Ponds at the southern end of the Dead Sea. We passed an enormous refinery before complete darkness covered the badlands. There was one last military checkpoint on our way as we turned up into the mountains. A cluster of cabins were waiting for us at the summit where the gales ripped into that exposed ridge. That night it rained as if old man Yahweh had sent a new flood, but I slept like a baby.

In the morning, we found our porch was coated with mud from the torrential downpour that had seemingly blown itself out in the small hours. The folk at the breakfast hall were themselves bemused by the peculiar monsoon that had come out of nothing for the first time in recorded history. After coffee, Mara and I took a stroll to the edge of the cliffs, and I got my first decent view of the Dead Sea. Wow. And I don't mean: wow, what a pristine blue lake surrounded by palm trees. No, I meant: wow, the lake really was disappearing as if some Goliath-sized plug had been pulled and the water was half-way drained out of that tectonic bathtub! The terraces where the water level had once been, looked like the layers of bone from a skull that had been worn away with a grinder. Mara informed me that all the salt mining and the very heat of the desert was drying up the Dead Sea faster than it was able to replenish itself. Against that dreary backdrop, I watched Mara make her way further around the edge of the cliff, and I saw how unique she really was. Entering a relationship held parallels with annexing a natural resource. You suddenly had access to places and people you would otherwise have had little connection to. After all, I didn't know anyone else in that region of the world. Yet she had been there for me last year at my lowest when no one else had come. I knew the answer to the ultimate question of what would happen if I was left to my own devices, but she had changed that all for me. Therefore, she was so important that I couldn't even compare her any past lover. She believed I had some kind of intrinsic value, which in turn gave me a sense of self-worth, and thus circled around and produced a value denomination within myself for her. Though the conundrum being: was this reinforcing spiral expanding or shrinking? Expanding and slowing down like ripples in a pond, or shrinking and accelerating like a ball on a string tightening around a

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pole that it was hurtling toward?



On the drive down the mountain side, I finally gauged how high up we had actually gone as Mara raced a little too fast for my liking down those steep roads. Who needed a roller-coaster ride to freak the living shit out of you, when you had a girlfriend who giggled at your traumatized grunts while she sped around hairpin-corners. The cliffs might have been beautiful rock formations to behold, but I was too busy straining my neck against the extreme inertia to appreciate anything beyond the edge of the road. Mara always enjoyed boasting about how Israelis were all assholes when they drove. That's nice, but did she really have to live up to such a fucking reputation while I was clinging to my safety-belt right next to a hundred-foot precipice?!

The only intervention that finally managed to force my deranged little chauffeur to hit the breaks, was when we came to a landslide that crossed our path. Last night's deluge had washed huge channels down the massive walls of stone. However, Mara wasn't so easily intimidated by the dried-up remains of an avalanche, and she drove right over the debris – until the car's center stabilizing system couldn't even handle the stress! An alarm rang out as the wheels slid on the sludge and the car went sideways! My fingers drug into

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the fucking dashboard, but Mara merely chuckled and drove on over the top.



The sun came out and we soon parked beneath a collection of gaudy hotel towers. Accompanied by dozens of fat Russian grannies, we ate ice cream on the beach. Skinny-dipping wasn't an activity I was renowned for, however, after getting ankle-deep in that revolting water, I shied away from another step. The slimy content of the Dead Sea wasn't something I had bargained for. It was more like a lake of baby-oil than water. My refusal to go swimming was met by a dissertation of disdain from Mara, and yet she herself wouldn't go more than knee-deep. Typical. As I watched her paddle about in the shallow water's edge, I couldn't help but wonder what she was getting out of our relationship. We had had our first break-up a week before flying here, and since then everything was on probation. She didn't trust me and I couldn't trust her. That was all we were in agreement upon. Would time be the test of our broken communication skills? Might things work out even if we were diametrically opposed? But if we were fundamentally against compromising our principles on the concept of honesty, then why had she come back knocking on my door? Was it really such a good thing that I was there with her at all? Though really, what 'good' ever comes from anything?

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And I recalled a lecture by Alan Watts, *“There’s a Chinese story, a kind of a Taoistic story, about a farmer. One day his horse ran away, and all the neighbors gathered in the evening and said, that’s too bad. He said, maybe. The next day the horse came back and brought with it seven wild horses. Well, they said, aren’t you lucky. He said, maybe. The next day his son grappled with one of these wild horses and tried to break it in, and he got thrown and broke his leg. And all the neighbors said, oh, that’s too bad that your son broke his leg. He said, maybe. The next day the conscription officers came around gathering young men for the army, and they rejected his son because he had a broken leg. And the visitors all came around and said, isn’t that great, your son got out. He said, maybe. You see, you never really know in which direction progress lies.”*



Once we left the Dead Sea, we drove north and reentered the Old City of Jerusalem and happened upon the tomb of King David. Just like at the Western Wall, men and women went their separate ways to pay homage to this founding father of foreskin-mutilation. The small stone chamber had a concise collection of Orthodox Jews gathered around, and then there was me. The sarcophagus was covered in a blue cloth, so I found the Orthodox

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themselves of more interest. All of them were wearing black suits, white shirts, and either black kippahs or wide brimmed hats. There were a few old chaps with Spanish-moss-like beards. A couple were faithfully swinging their whole bodies as they nodded while muttering prayers. Before this trip, I had no clue as to how many ginger Jews there really were, those soulless fucks! Then there was one homeless looking old guy, ranting to himself in a corner like any nut-job you would see in every city in the world. Then, just to remind me of what century I was living in, I spotted a kid on his iPhone checking his Facebook. Distraction respects nothing. Next, we were told that the Temple Mount was only open on Sundays. I was denied from the Holy of Holies once again. Leaving the Old City out the Damascus Gate, we headed down a narrow road that lead to the Garden Tomb. A second supposedly venerated location where Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified and then buried. Mara and I had wandered from Orthodox Jews, to Muslim hecklers, and into a den of fat fucking American tourists – what an ethnic smorgasbord of spiritual congestion! However, there was one truth that you must remember at all times when visiting such sights of historical controversy: these places have been razed, attacked, and rebuilt by conflicting cultures countless times. Any



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claim that even a single pebble on the road was in the slightest bit authentic, had to be taken with a grain of salt. That said, let the tour group lead on. As those cow-people shuffled up the path between those Eden-like trees, I heard a voice enter my head and take over my body. Mara looked up, watching as I hummed the melody to *New York, New York*, by Frank Sinatra. A smirk creased my lips, while Mara shook her head and giggled. With a skip to my strip, and old Frankie-boy in my head, I found myself staring up at the Rock of Golgotha, a forty-foot-high cliff that vaguely reassembled a skull, where Jesus had supposedly been nailed upon his precious fucking cross. Immediately, our tour guide began making figurative excuses about the fact that a bus-depot currently resided directly below that ridiculed sight of god's public humiliation. Mara and I paid no attention to our ad-lib tour guide after that, and made our own way down to the Garden Tomb itself. Being an atheist Jew, Mara didn't give a fuck about any of this religiosity, but she enjoyed taking me to these places because I was curious. Standing in the cool shade of the possible resting place of Jesus, the motherfucking King Of The Jews, I again heard Frankie-boy singing in my head, *"I wanna wake up in a city that doesn't sleep. And find I'm king of the hill, top of the heap."*

On the 18th of April, Mara and I said our fair wells to her parents after they drove us to the airport. At the first security checkpoint a female guard took our passports, asking us to wait while she collected the head of security, another gorgeous female in uniform. She never said a word to me, while grilling Mara about our visit to Israel. The head of security occasionally gave me a glance, and I frowned at whatever they were both smiling about. Then we were on our way through the departure gates. With a sideways chuckle, I asked Mara what that had all been about. She said she had been asked why, if she had known me for the past four years, had we only just gotten together in the last five months? She told the head of security that it was because I'd always been with other girls, so she had to wait. All three girls had then shared a sympathetic giggle. Those moments were special. The sort of situations that you remembered for years. The idea that Mara actually admitted waiting for me, revealed something of how she felt.

After constant pestering, on the 9th of May I went along to my first one-on-one counseling session. Mr. Brody was the second choice on my short list of therapists, yet he still came highly recommended. It had been a clear day and I'd taken the afternoon off work to visit Mr. Brody's office. He resided in a self-contained building within the courtyard of a west Berlin block. The

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Asian adornments, pastel colored furniture, and his mellow tone of voice made for a welcoming environment – if I was looking for a spiritual guru that is. One of the few questions he asked, was why had I chosen him? I told him that it was because he was male, older than myself, and his first language was English. I was being systematic. So, a sexist, ageist, and cognitive-bias to begin with. Though, if I'm aware of my own personal preferences, is that still a psychological hang-up? Wasn't accepting your limitations the first step to unconscious freedom? Or, instead, should I have sought out a female foreigner, half my age? Although, that sounded more like my sexual inclinations rather than someone who might actually have the possibility of gaining my respect. During that session, I learned how to correctly categorize the main types of therapists. Mr. Brody was neither a psychologist nor a psychiatrist. Psychologists talk about shit, while psychiatrists could deal out drugs. Mr. Brody himself was just a counselor. A guy who could listen. And so, a cringe began to grow behind my chiseled expression of conceit. We went through a rundown of when the police took me to hospital last December, and I ended by reminiscing about my childhood growing up in the sun. While briefly discussing my art, Mr. Brody asked if I'd ever considered why I had all these violent thoughts. I shrugged and confessed: we're a violent species, we're all capable of atrocities given the right circumstances, and I'm fine with that. He nodded, inhaled pensively, and then brought up the only question that I myself had wanted to ask: what had I wished to gain from therapy? I sat back and returned the question, yeah, what was the point of all this? He said he wasn't there to tell anyone what to do, it was up to the client to decide what they sought to achieve. I suggested that the real reason I was there was to mitigate my girlfriend's aggravated insinuations. It wasn't because she sincerely believed that I was still suicidal, but because deep down she knew that I had cruelly trapped her in the emotional gravity of our passive-aggressive relationship. Mr. Brody then summed up my therapy-experience perfectly: I was ambivalent. I instantly agreed. Ambivalent! Exactly! I was utterly fucking ambivalent about the idea that this fucking conversation could solve shit! I wasn't there because I felt some desperate need to share my masochistic-Oedipus-psychosis. I was there to prove to Mara that there was no one else who could help me if I had already been consumed by my own Shadow! So, I felt a great sense of relief as I left that first session. My breakthrough having been as simple as: I have no need for therapy until I know exactly what I need therapy for.

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On the way back to Mara's place one evening, we were both in a joking mood, but the discourse soon went from a little lighthearted teasing to a full-blown shit-storm! The premise of my argument being that 'absolute honesty' didn't exist as our unconscious wasn't even honest with ourselves. Mara therefore accused me of lying about every-single-fucking-thing! Of course, that led to the subject of our first break-up: my communication with the French girl, Amelia. Mara had found our correspondence after snooping through my phone. Yet, when I'd awoken upon the morning of our first break-up, I had found Mara reading my diary from last year (which I'd given her because I had trusted her to understand why I'd done what I did last year), however, I realized soon enough that Mara had only used my diary as evidence against me for fixating on Amelia. How disappointing. We were both at fault for breaking the trust of one another. And so, we broke-up. Yet we went to Israel and everything was fine. But there was no point in persisting in this travesty, once trust was broken it was broken for good! These weren't idle thoughts! Even after showing Mara how much of a respectable boyfriend I could be, she still never forgave me! NEVER! And why should she? I was the living example of why utopian civilizations could never exist. Claiming that you're 'just being human' was the easiest excuse for being an evil piece of shit! And yet still lovers tolerate it! Women didn't just deserve to be abused, they needed emotional-vampires to relentlessly victimize their self-loathing because that was the only way that they could ever feel anything! So, I broke-up for a second time. Though, how quickly she revealed her bluff and back-peddled. This was suddenly too small a reason to end it. Exactly! If it was such a small thing, then why did she always blow everything out of fucking proportion?! Mara then began crying and hugged me, begging me to stay. Her sobbing reminded me of an incident a week before hand, when Mara's work at the ISB (International Spook Buddies) gained us an invitation to an evening with the philharmonic. It was commemorating the fifty-year anniversary of Germany and Israel working together. On the train to the event, Mara was looking stunning in her Prada heels, but then the ticket-collectors came around. We continued our conversation, when suddenly the Brazilian tourist sitting right next to me burst into tears while she spoke with the ticket-guy. Slowly turning my head from Mara, I found this woman blubbing like some melodramatic pig. She had the wrong ticket but was adamant that this was merely a misunderstanding. While she pleaded how she hadn't maliciously intended to commit a crime, I silently sat there soaking in this fantastic example of Male Vs. Female dynamics. The young Turkish guy looked hesitant as he dealt

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with the weeping woman, especially when she resorted to explaining herself in Portuguese. Another female passenger tried to mediate in German, when a second ticket-collector, an older guy, came to see what the problem was. He immediately dismissed the tourist's sniveling, it was she who had fucked-up, they were just doing their job. But the Brazilian stuck to her game-plan and begged as if she were on trial for her life. The train then reached the next station where the two collectors decided that this wasn't worth the hassle, and they backed away from that whimpering sack of misdirection. I applauded that textbook case of crocodile-tears. Tears that let females to get away with anything. But I shook my head in disgust at the ticket-collectors for their pathetic lack of resolve. The older guy should have had enough life-experience to see straight through the facade of wounded innocence and understood the clear manipulation: make everyone in close proximity feel as awkward as possible until the overwhelming trend-sympathy pressures those provoking the dilemma into simply abandoning their position. Misdirection, you little minx of the winning argument! Could you imagine a man behaving like this, a grown adult male weeping uncontrollably? The whole train would look at him like he was mentally-impaired, and most likely the police and an ambulance would have been called. Whenever females let the waterworks gush, you know that their argument was so weak that they had nothing more of substance to offer. But no weeping female would ever get one ounce of fools-pity from this fucking son of a bitch. A crying female is a lying female!

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Ms. Kylie and I made it back to the dead man's house by early evening. By then the only person I was interested in seeing was the guy behind the bar in the elaborate parlor full of thousands of antler trophies. Give me coffee and don't you fucking dare go cheap on the sugar! It had been a long day since waking up at 4am for the first train to Potsdam, before catching another to my remote hotel – which I still had to walk back to. Though, all I could think about was coffee. Sweet, creamy fucking coffee. The espresso that arrived left me less than grateful. I hate shots of black bile! Fuck off with that shit! So, I had to settle for a decanter of water, and I downed that jug like a triathlete. As I sat in an armchair, I was having some serious doubts about whether I should trust Mara or rely on my own bitter fucking intuition. And then in came that little maid, announcing that dinner would be served momentarily. She stared directly at me for a little too long, and I glared harder into her tight dress as she slipped away. Even after violent make-up-sex with Mara last night, I was still easily distracted by temptation – because I'm a fucking human being!

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I don't know where all those guests came from, I hadn't heard any other cars arrive, but that elongated dining table was full to capacity. There were about thirty already seated when I strolled into that big room full of esteemed power-players. I was half expecting to be told to trot off like a good little gimp and collect a bottle of the finest chardonnay – but that same little maid gestured toward my seat right in the middle of that grand spread. The thick wooden table was heavy with candles, flower arrangements, and two bronze statues of blackened stallions. It was the massive tapestry on the wall ahead of me that caught my initial interest. The gloomy tone of that image had faded from the centuries, but it still brought out a smile as I digested that portrayal of skinned women in a circle. Their limbs had been removed, along with their heads as they sat, tied together within a bonfire that roasted their flesh. Their heads were impaled upon tall spikes that all burned in the center of that golden hellfire. I fucking loved it! The loud conversation eventually drew my eyes downward to those surrounding me. The guests were dressed in suits and ties, and so much funerary lace. The first individual whom I focused upon, sat opposite. He was a lopsided old guy with some kind of skin disease that had left his sagging face looking grated raw and horrifically inflamed. My eyeballs casually rolled to the left, where an elderly chap in military formals was missing his entire bottom jaw. To the right of the poster-boy for skin-disease, was a woman wearing masses of pearls beneath a face that was so badly burned that the scarring had left her looking more liquid than human. This was an exclusive gathering of the rich and powerfully disfigured. The guy to my immediate right looked as though his countless swollen tumors had deformed his entire body to the point that he appeared to be comprised of nothing but potatoes held together by his tuxedo. The unidentifiable person on my left was barely a torso with twig-like, thalidomide arms under a face raked with scars. However, apart from the extreme physical constitution of each guest, they all seemed deeply engrossed in conversation with one another – well, at least those with a mouth did.

“Und, wie geht es dir, mein Schatz?” Mr. Potatoes asked, but he was then distracted by the arrival of the entree. Platters were carried in by a succession of slender beauties dressed in the same smooth black as the little maid that I was so fond of, though, I couldn't spot her this time around.

“Hey, how's it hanging, Bob?” I sneered, still examining the servant girls one by one.

“Bob? Oh, how delightful! I always wanted one of those rough and tough names,” Mr. Potatoes wobbled, as a plate was placed before him. “To

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everyone else this evening, I'm The High Priestess, but you can call me Bob if you so please."

"The High Priestess, huh," I said, frowning toward what had just been set in front of me. Within a silver bowl was a clear soup, soaking a squid-like tentacles knotted around the hairy hand of a tiny primate. Leaning over to Mr. Potatoes, I added, "You can call me Scat-Perv, then."

Mr. Potatoes gave me a look of indignation, as if my title was any worse than that bowl of repugnant liquids and body parts. I was glad to discover that I was without a spoon. However, I realized that no one else had any cutlery either. Mr. Potatoes then cautiously whispered in my direction while he glanced around the table, "Saw you with The Devil earlier."

"Pardon?" I looked up, as the servants returned, carrying more platters with small instruments upon each one.

"The Devil. You arrived with her this evening."

"Ah. So, why isn't she sitting on my left?"

"Ha! So, you're The Hermit!" Mr. Potatoes barely managed to contain himself. "Am I right or am I right?"

"What part of 'Scat-Perv' don't you understand?"

"You're The Fool, then?"

"Probably. But not tonight, handsome."

"The Hanged Man, perhaps?"

That was when all the guests reached for the new platters, picked up the six-inch black matches and set their entrees alight. At least I didn't have to taste that disgusting dish. Following suit, at that table of Tarot Card titles, I lit my soup on fire, and was pleasantly surprised to find that the aroma was quite delicious, like roast ham mixed with marinated muscles. Someone at the far end of the table then stood and began a lengthy speech in Deutsch. I gazed around, admiring all the golden candle stands that led my eyes toward the center of the big table where there was a wide empty area without any ornaments. I assumed that that was where the main course would be carved up for everyone's viewing pleasure. My pupils wandered up to the sparkling chandeliers at either end of the dining room. I liked the gold-trim on the emerald walls, though I couldn't tell if the lighting had dimmed or if the burning bowls had tricked my eyes into thinking that the room had grown darker. The whole gathering then repeated some riddle in unison. None of them seemed to care that I just sat in silence. I watched as another guest then arose from his place. The old guy had only one arm, and a really bad limp as he walked around the long table. As he went, he touched each member on

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the shoulder lightly, while whispering to them. He muttered so softly that I couldn't even hear what he said when he came to me. Standing above his own burning plate in front of that vacant space in the midst of the table, the old guy whispered slightly louder, and again the whole group participated in verse. It definitely wasn't my eyes, the chandeliers were out. Only the flames on the table illuminated the one-armed Mr. Mumbler as he lifted a chalice and slowly poured a pale sand onto the vacant space on the table. As soon as a wide circle was drawn with sand, Mr. Mumbler began picking up candles and pouring wax into even placements around the circle. By that point they had my intrigue, and once the wax was set, Mr. Mumbler plucked a dagger from his own flaming bowl and scratched a symbol into each puddle of freshly solidified wax. I was wondering what exactly we were about to feast upon, when in came an assembly of other distinguished freaks. They had to be the Minor Arcana accompanying the seated Major. Theatrics always did make for a memorable evening. Though, with so many others without a place at the table, I was curious about what strings The Devil had pulled in order to get me a VIP spot. I then suddenly got suspicious that I was the one on the menu for tonight's carnivorous cripples. That was until the deathly silent crowd parted, and two small children were led to the table. They both stepped upon Mr. Mumbler's ready thigh as he took a knee and guided them up into the center of the circle. There was a boy and girl, both no more than nine-years-old. The boy was wearing a white suit and tails. The girl in a knee-length white dress with her straight blonde hair hanging either side of her cute blue eyes. With the flames from the bowls shimmering ghastly upon the faces of everyone in the room, those two kids seemed to glow in the light as they stood back to back like they were in a trance. I was beginning to doubt that dinner was ever going to arrive – when an outburst shattered the calm! It was that obese woman who I'd seen earlier at the deathbed. Lunging from her chair at those two kids, she yelped like a ravenous sea-lion! While grinding my teeth against the shrill pitch, I also shuddered as Mr. Potatoes joined in, screaming at the two children! His voice was no longer a camp parody of his flamboyant homosexuality, now it was cracked with absolute abhorrence. Glancing up at the kids, I watched them flinch, and then all hell broke loose. Every other guest at that obscene funeral congregation surged toward the table! My chair was slammed into from behind as bodies pressed tight against the table. Shrieking voices tore through the dank air like some kind of riot. Using all my fucking strength, I pushed my chair back just enough to spare my ribs from snapping against the edge of the table. That was when I realized

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what the purpose of the circle was for. The thin barrier of sand and wax inscriptions was the only thing holding back the horde. The few random sentences that I could decipher from that torrent of screeching Germans were petty attacks about appearance and anything those two kids might ever hope to become. I didn't really know what the fuck I had found myself part of, but it was fucking psychotic! Those influential degenerates seemed to be getting their rocks off by shitting on two pristine perfect examples of idolized purity. Surrounded by the depth of human scorn, I found it spectacular. Like a lynch-mob at a witch trial. Scanning slowly from side to side, I watched all those finely dressed lunatics screaming savagely, until I rested my glare upon the fevered rantings of The Devil, or as I'd come to know her, Ms. Kylie. She was somewhat transformed from the dignified lady who had previously held her mannerisms with grace and cool reserve. Now she foamed at the mouth like a pit-bull as her hair spilled about her enraged snarl. There was something precious about seeing people go ape-shit. Witnessing the untamed human animal was like discovering their true self.

However, as much as I enjoyed those deafening screams, my thirst was simply a higher priority. There had to be someone in the kitchen who could make me a fucking coffee. After squeezing through the gathering, I looked back, daring Jehovah to turn me to a pillar of Dead Sea salt. Yet as I reached for the double doors, I saw the two children begin to undress for the appeasement of the climatic cries of the crowd. Fuck that. I needed caffeine if I was ever going to walk back to my hotel that night. Strolling along a corridor, I was starting to wonder how far that gig was going to go. Was this some high-class pedophile party? Or was it all kosher as long as no one touched themselves or the kids? The whole child-abuse subject was always a wasp's nest of opinionated outrage, just like what was going on in that dining room. Maybe that was the very argument they were all engaged in. Yet the hypocrisy for the relativity of the 'age of consent' always put a smile on my face. For you could fuck an eleven-year-old in one part of the world, and then later brag about it in another country where the legal-age was twenty-one. It was moral-relativism at its most essential. But fuck it, the kids could go fuck themselves – which they all did anyway! Give me a nice pair of titties and some feminine-shaped hips any day! And right then my favorite little maid stepped around a corner and walked directly toward me.

After the little maid brought me a coffee in a far-reaching corner of the house, we hurried upstairs into her tiny quarters. She gasped, as I bent her over, unzipping her dress straight down her back, before I yanked her up

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close. Her hands grabbed at my pants and I grinned, glaring into her dark eyes while both of my hands squeezed that superb ass of hers. Spinning the little maid around, I pulled her dress, panties, and stockings all down to the floor in one controlled movement. She removed her bra herself leaving her butt-naked on all fours in front of me. I shoved my crotch toward her ass, but my erection was still trapped inside of my pants. I loved stripping a girl while I'm still in my suit jacket and shoes. The little maid stood up, still grinding her ass against me as I reached around and slipped my middle finger straight into her sopping wet vagina. My fingers sunk inside with such ease that I immediately hoped that her sphincter would hold a little more resistance. She then spun, dropped to her knees, and stabbed my hard-on into her impatient mouth – when I stopped her. I actually stopped her! I put my big hands on either side of her warm round face and said, “No.”

Raising her worried eyes while she continued to suck, she eventually stepped back while I stared at her sublime figure. She was the image of Jules Joseph Lefebvre's classic nude, *The Grasshopper*.

“You have no idea how much I'm dying to fuck the crème de la crème right out of your ass... But...”

“You have a girlfriend.”

“Which normally wouldn't stop me. So, that must say something about how I feel toward her.”

The little maid smiled. She was surprisingly understanding about the situation. In fact, she seemed even more attracted to me after I admitted this. However, as tasty as that little maid may have been, she was nothing but meat. I felt nothing for her. She wasn't Mara.

Leaving the little maid's room with a strange sense of pride, I quietly shut her door as I glanced down the corridor at another distant room – where that same decrepit rabbi from the Berlin street and the Western Wall was now staring back at me! I lunged down the hallway, just as a swarm of servant girls came up the marble stairs and filled the passageway. Struggling through the awkward girls, I saw the door at the end of the corridor gently close. Fuck this bullshit! I shoulder-barged the last servants out of my way and hammered my fist against that locked door! The formerly chatty servants all stopped and stared in grim silence as I furiously thumped at the door. The eerie stillness was like someone pissing on my back, so I turned toward that herd of female scrutiny. But as soon as I had my back on the door, I heard it gradually creak open.

“Well played, motherfucker. Well played, indeed,” I whispered, watching

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that group of girls disperse down another corridor. Taking a breath, I finally turned around. That tall, bearded scarecrow slowly raised both hands. His right index finger went to his lips implying that I keep quiet, while his left hand held up a large playing card. I glanced at the card for only a second, before the view behind him compelled my eyes aside. Ever since the end of last year, once I had decided to stay at my old flat, something had started to grow in a corner of the ceiling. Some days it wasn't there. But every time that I became aware of its presence, it had increased in volume. It was like a porous mass of pale flesh, almost like a sponge riddled with hundreds of deep black holes. Each pore was about the width of a one-euro coin. By now it was about two-meters-wide, and yet no one else seemed to notice it when they visited. But there, in that dead man's house, behind that rabbi, I saw the exact same phenomenon covering the entire ceiling!

Just then, I heard the little maid exiting her room – suddenly that looming mass shot forth a thousand worm-like black serpents! The old rabbi shoved me away and slammed the door shut right in my face!

BOOM!

And then I was grabbed from behind!

Ripping my arm free from the confused little maid, we both looked at each other with an expression of what-the-fuck-is-your-problem?! But it was silent. There wasn't a sound coming from behind that door. Nothing. Grinning, I shook off my cold sweat, and caught the little maid by her elbow, marching her away from that room. I hadn't realized that it had gotten so late, and once we were downstairs, I found that it was well after midnight. The little maid didn't say a word and scurried off back to work, leaving me standing next to that dark room where the dead host still lay. With one last look toward where the little maid had run off to, I reluctantly showed myself the fuck out.

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After another night of only a few hours of sleep, I took the first train even further south to anywhere. Staring out the window, back the way I'd come, I watched as the sun slowly rose with those black clouds always right on the tail of the train. The shit weather was following like a fucking curse. Despite that whole freak-show banquet from the previous evening, all I was preoccupied with was how could I have let the opportunity to fuck that sweet little maid pass through my fingertips?! Was it because I was in love with Mara?! If so, why then, whenever I had wanted to tell her exactly how I felt, had the conversation always disintegrated into some ruthless fucking argument? It

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wasn't until this second break-up that she even let slip that she was actually in love with me. Was I too shut-down at the time to confess my own affections, or was my unconscious deliberately sabotaging our coexistence? Or were we really not meant to be together? I was never afraid of putting my heart on the line before, so why was I hesitant about admitting my feelings this time? If I truly was too untrustworthy for Mara, then why hadn't I fucked that little maid's tight ass? Didn't that alone prove my commitment to Mara? But then again, if I ever told her about this indiscretion, she would crucify me for even getting into such a compromised predicament! I have often heard people talking favorably about the polyamorous lifestyle, yet, like getting musicians together in a band, the more people involved the harder it becomes getting everyone to agree. Finding others who endorse an openly sexual relationship might work in theory, but I have found for practical purposes, deception was what maintained the structural integrity of simultaneous relationships. Lies, and only lies have kept the good times rolling, baby! The definitive results that honesty have produced, were disbelief, eating disorders, and females regressing to toddler-tantrums. And why shouldn't they spit the dummy? Everyone, most especially in a serious relationship, suffers from THE EXPECTANCY OF PERPETUAL IMPORTANCE. Yet, no matter how good of a partner you are, the reality of couples was doomed by the ego. You could never fuck someone enough, you could never love someone enough, you could never be enough for someone else. We will always disappoint those who want more! And we all want more! To remain alive, you must constantly consume! Those who scoff and claim to have reached a point of satisfaction in a relationship, are merely experiencing a passing phase of complacency. The future-self, however, will despise this dismal lack of ambition. So, fuck pandering to anyone! How someone says they want to be treated, is not how they really wanted to be treated! The premise of Relationships And Their Discontents (as with civilization) is: you must sacrifice some freedoms in order to gain greater security, thus leaving you discontent. The great compromise. But in the end, it's all a fucking lie, because no one is safe! Life is tragic without any kind of love to keep you company, yet true-love in its essence is absolutely fucking tragic! It's a no-win situation. Just like how Mara held me in such high regard, and yet had such a low fucking opinion of me. The only way to have your cake and eat it too, was through deception! Play the game! Pretend to be Prince Charming, and milk it for all it was worth! Or else, sooner or later, you would become one of two things: either too predictable, or too unreliable. There was no long-lasting middle ground

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without the cohesion of lies!

My mind was made up, I'd never tell Mara about this trip and how well I had managed to resist the little maid's temptation. Yet how could she believe anything I say and not suspect that it was all part of some intricate orchestration, sadistically designed in to gain her confidence only so that I might break her heart at a later date? I had, last December, stated quite clearly with ominous overtones of foreshadowing: *Throughout the day, more and more resentment coated my teeth with the bile of my contempt. And after dinner, I finally looked at my phone and found a plethora of ignored messages from Mara and others. Staring at the rain, I wondered what was the worst thing I could say to Mara right at that point? "Come over."*

And then the train broke down.

Catching the next train to an even more obscure destination, I soon found myself in a township with the name of which I never even looked up. Without a goal, I walked away from the station and toward a cluster of hills leading up into a forest.

She came walking down that sunny, cobble-stone street and directly toward me. The color of all those trees in the cool breeze held my attention for a few moments longer, before the curvature of her hips redirected my retina.

"Where did you disappear to last night?" Ms. Kylie smiled.

With my head repelling in a slow-motion double-take, I ground to a halt in the middle of the road while reeling from this overwhelming *Deja vu*. Two large men in suits then stepped up behind Ms. Kylie and their staunch presence broke the spell. Collecting my skepticism, I replied. "Make you a deal. Tell me how you found me right now, and I'll spill the beans on anything, including how I lost my virginity to a watermelon."

"What's your name?"

"A little late for introductions, isn't it."

"You're name!" Ms. Kylie insisted, as the two men leaned in closer.

I was about to say, 'daddy', but Ms. Kylie looked too hung-over and in less than a congenial mood.

"What is your name, *junge*!?"

"*Junge*? Well, if you're going to get personal, then you really must be The Devil. But if The High Priestess, couldn't even guess my name, then why in the fuck should I tell you?"

Ms. Kylie then turned her back on me, as the two thick-set men in Hugo Boss advanced.

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“What’s the fucking world come to,” I sneered, immediately thinking of the card which the rabbi had held up, “when The Ace Of Cups can’t even take a walk in the park without a leash around his throttled fucking throat?!”

Bruce



SHORT STORY 8
2015
THERE IS NO DIAGNOSIS

DISCLAIMER:

There is a near infinite number of people that can suffer for my amusement. You know none of them, and neither do I.

The door into that hotel suite finally swung open as several men, from undetermined Asian origins, stormed in – yet all they found was little old me sitting comfortably in a leather armchair. *Smoke And Mirrors*, from Puscifer, was playing on the stereo as I looked up from my blood covered hands. Those men in tailored suits were dumbstruck for a moment as they scanned the open space, looking for three other human specimens that were currently absent from the picture. A tiny guy then marched in. Grabbing my face, he squeezed my jaw like a furious dentist, and snarled in Mandarin as if those cunts assumed that I understood what the fuck they were saying. He then slapped me across the face! I couldn't help but smirk with shock. That was when I noticed several droplets of piss on the floor, next to that two-foot-tall vase. That little prick went to strike my face again – however, my hand rose and we high-fived! He instantly reacted to the blood that smeared across his palm and he screamed like a fucking lunatic! Suddenly I was dragged out of there by two pillars of muscle, while those who had been searching the other rooms came back empty handed.

Soon, upstairs, I was seated at a dining table in another suite. An older Asian guy with a cravat and gold rings on every finger, came escorted by several girls. One of the little Chinese runts who had unintentionally helped me into this establishment was forced onto a chair next to me: it was little Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes himself. He'd lost all of his cool demeanor as he twitched, glancing at everything below eye-level. Mr. Cravat whispered into the ear of some slick-looking guy. And in turn, Mr. Intermediate then relayed the message to Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes who nodded incessantly at every word. Twisting toward me, he then stuttered, "Where is everybody? What happened in the room? What the fuck did you do, man?!"

My cheek still burned when I spotted Mr. Slappy lingering near the doorway. Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes continued whining, while I focused on Mr. Slappy and how much I wanted to smash a fucking window with his face.

Impatient, Mr. Cravat thumped the tabletop and squawked at Mr.

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Lamborghini-Shoes, thus provoking the wrath of one of the many bodyguards who smacked him across the back of the scalp! “The fuck happened to the others! Speak! Tell them something!”

Sniffing at that repugnant tang of dried blood, I rubbed my fingertips together in front of my face. “Nothing happened. They picked the lock. Left me there by myself.”

Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes quickly rattled off a translation down the grapevine, where it was immediately refuted by Mr. Slappy’s sarcastic laughter.

Annoyed, Mr. Cravat half-turned his snout toward that chuckling subordinate.

Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes then informed me of Mr. Slappy’s repudiation, “Can’t pick the lock. It’s a key-card. There’s no keyhole to pick!”

“I don’t know how they opened the door, but they obviously did something that fucking worked,” I snarled, when suddenly Mr. Slappy grabbed my wrist, exposing the bloodstains to Mr. Cravat.

“Seriously, man,” Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes pleaded in hushed tones. “Tell them something, or we’re seriously fucked!”

BOOM went the whole table, as Mr. Intermediate smashed a marble bust upon the fingers of Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes!

My smile stretched as I watched that little social-climber shriek. Mr. Intermediate seemed professionally indifferent as he nodded again. A security guard then came down on the young Asian guy like the restraints on a roller coaster – yeah, as if the well-being of Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes was any of my fucking concern. However, his horrified voice was worse than feedback! His squealing was enough to get even me talking, just to shut him the fuck up. “They’ve been eighty-sixed.”

Everyone, including the tormented Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes, paused and squinted with their already squinty-chinky eyes. Is that racist, even when it’s a genuine observation?

“When Mr. Fag-Boy and Miss Resting-Bitch-Face weren’t throwing hissy-fits at the locked door, they kept themselves busy by snorting copious amounts of cocaine,” I slowly recalled. “The entire time, Little Miss Shitty-Pants ranted endlessly while she finger-fucked her phone. It’s a love affair. No man could ever compete against a girl’s fucking app-addiction.”

Mr. Cravat sniggered, as his head rose back. He clearly seemed capable of comprehending my recollections without translation.

The giant bodyguard clutching Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes had somewhat loosened his grip once I’d begun to appease his boss, but I scowled, “Hey, no

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slacking off on the fucking job! Why the fuck should I cooperate if you don't have some kind of fucking leverage over me?! Come on, guys! You threaten him, and that's what makes me talk! Come on, Jesus fuck! Choke him!"

Mr. Cravat tilted his expression, and then finally took a seat opposite me. A servant from the shadows automatically stepped up and poured him a glass of gin.

Taking a stiff, white napkin from the table arrangement, I wiped the residual blood from my palms. "Never tried opening the door myself. Why bother. The others all went ape-shit at it with no success."

"What are you talking about?" Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes muttered with his American accent. Suddenly the guard thumped him, and he gasped, "Come on! Get to the point!"

Looking around the whole room with its wet black windows, I finally confessed, "I flushed them down the toilet."

"Man, stop messing with these guys!"

"I. Flushed. Them. All. Down. The fucking toilet!"

Mr. Cravat glanced at nothing.

"There was this nice blender in the suite. I literally liquidated them. And then flushed them down the toilet like the worthless fucking shit that they were!"

"Tell them what they want to hear! Tell them where the fuck the others are!" Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes mumbled. "The fuck is wrong with you?!"

"Apparently, according to my therapist, there's absolutely nothing wrong with me. She said that, "*There is no diagnosis.*" That I have, "*Finely-tuned coping-mechanisms.*" My life has been validated. Now, how about you shut your fucking hole and let me finish telling the fucking story."

-

Several hours earlier, a miserable wind had kept me company while I stood in the middle of Mühlendamm bridge. After I finished reading a short letter, I stared down at the black waters below the refectory of the Berlin Dom. The railing on the bridge was low and easy to climb. That alone gave me some reassurance that I didn't have to travel all the way back to Scotland in order to finish what I had so stupidly postponed. This year's winter felt exactly the same as last year's, and I was still here, despite my best efforts. Screwing up the letter, I tossed it into the river as I thought of the sigils that I'd burnt on the shores of Loch Ness. The devils at the summit of the Holy Mountain Of Pigs had been right all along: I had indeed been duped by the oxytocin! However, out there on the bridge, the water was once again calling

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for me.

Yet, I soon felt something watching me. Twisting to my left, I glanced across the two triple-lanes, toward the other side of the empty bridge. There, that old, bearded man in black robes, glared straight back at me. I hadn't seen him since the funeral in Potsdam. Turning toward that gloomy old rabbi, I wasn't surprised that he urgently walked away. The rain then began pelting down. If I wanted a sign from the great indifference of the hopeless fucking universe, then this was as good as any.

Following the tall stranger, I had a fistful of questions for that whimsical cunt, but a few blocks toward Stadtmitte, he turned and entered an old building just before I could grab his arm. A looming bouncer then slammed his hand against my chest! It felt like I had walked into a telephone pole. Watching the old man disappear into what looked like a luxury hotel, I sneered at the bouncer before scanning over the wide building's nineteenth century facade.

I had been led astray AGAIN!

Straightening my wet overcoat, I turned back the way I'd come – only to collide right into a swarm of assholes exiting several taxis. At least half a dozen umbrellas popped open at once, so I ducked under their blackened canopies as they swept past the overwhelmed bouncer.

That group of ten young, Chinese business men was defined by an aggressive sense of expensive style. In the narrow lobby they all shook off the rain and laughed about whatever the fuck twenty-something-year-old CEO's fucking laughed about. I was only interested in finding that enigmatic old prick, but the huge lounge in the front of the building was completely deserted. Joining the youngsters, I dumped my coat at the front desk, before we all stumbled up the large marble staircase. The hysterics coming from those guys dressed in Canali, Brioni, and Zegna was exactly what you'd expect from kids taking cocaine on an empty stomach. Why no one had noticed my presence was anyone's fucking guess.

The top floor was a club called, *The Little China Embassy*. My old friend, AJ, had once described his experience at an exclusive strip-bar in Dubai, but as decadent as that had sounded, this was weirder. The open plan had multiple levels soaked in a rich atmosphere of opulent crimson and olive highlights. The clientele were all from the smug-faced-gentlemen portion of the gender-spectrum, while the staff ranged from every other inclination of humanity. However, my simplistic presumption that the place was merely a glorified opium den was soon corrected once my retina sponged up the acts taking place at various tables, booths, and VIP conclaves. Bodily fluids were

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on the menu tonight! I was awe-struck. Was this the promised land, the sixth day's work? The closest customer was using chopsticks to pluck snails from the spread-eagle genitals of some flat-chested girl sprawled upon the table. Another horde of posh-nosed old men were huddled around a naked boy who bent over and released a Champagne-enema into the awaiting crystal glasses. Behind the cheers that ensued, two men in their fifties (who were probably good, upstanding egalitarian partisans by day), were using thick rubber tubing to castigate every orifice from a circle of girls that had been bound together with bondage rope. This was a club for the elite iconoclast who had left their redundant notions of social norms, along with their spotless wedding rings of fidelity-deception, at the front desk. There wasn't a single moral-compass to be found in anyone's vest pocket this evening. After all, why should successful husbands remain attracted to aging wives, when they only desired the pristine flesh of little girls with perfectly petite pink bits. Flesh ages – lust does not.

I was savoring the sight of a fecal discharge pouring from a slender boy into the cupped hands of a delighted grandpa, when I first met Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes. He slung his arm around my shoulders like we were best buddies from boarding school where we used to jerk off over our room-mate every other night. Like the rest of his friends, he was laughing at how subservient the polite hostess was as she led the group toward their booth. It was when he suddenly spat on the floor, that my eyes were directed toward his designer dress shoes that reminded me of two black Lamborghini Huracáns – hence his given designation. Twisting away, I shed his arm like I was shaking off a used condom that had floated my way on a drunken breeze.

Loser, by Beck, then came over the loud sound system, just as my eyes spotted someone unexpected. For a moment, I just scowled at her from across that humid house of ill-repute, until that woman slowly looked directly back at my suspicious bewilderment. It was her, the Iranian woman from last year! She immediately rose from a crowd of suits, as voices pawed at her departing swagger. Not once did her pupils look away from mine. Sauntering across the club, her black ponytail swung to the rhythm of her provocative hips within an elegant black, Yves Saint-Laurent dress. She placed her glass on a table as she approached, looking as if she was getting ready to fight. Suddenly Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes danced limply in front of me. The Iranian woman walked by, glaring condemnation at my presence as she grabbed my hand. She would have dragged me after her without resistance – had I not spotted the old rabbi. He was lurking in some secluded doorway, where he

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watched me as if he was forbidden from blinking. In the past I would have unquestioningly gone after the drop-dead-gorgeous female, but the quid pro quo of women gave me little more than easily forgotten idle talk. So, I ripped my wrist free from the Iranian and slammed my elbow into Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes driving him clean out of my way! But the second I approached the distant rabbi, he took a single step backward, and completely vanished into the shadows. Quickening my pace, I strode right through another cluster of Asian business men as I fought to catch a glimpse of that elusive character. However, my lack of manners clearly set off a few red-flags, and that last group of assholes weren't about to let my indiscretions slide. Some little shit grabbed my arm. I tore myself loose without regard, as I continued toward that doorway. Again, I was latched onto. With fuming impatience, I wrenched my arms out of the grasp of those nagging fucks, but I swung off balance and crashed straight into two chicks and a dick! The subsequent screams of indignation from those three cunts was a declaration of war! The crowd's overreaction only exacerbated my frustration as I tried to move on. Those three lecherous cretins clung on like leeches and we all went down a second time, landing right in front of someone stepping out of the very doorway that I had endeavored to reach. Pinned under three bitches, my chin was ground against the floorboards where I saw three books THUD down inches from my face. I was held there for long enough to read the spine of each: *The Storm Of Steel*, by Ernst Jünger, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, by Carl Jung, and *The Magical Revival*, by Kenneth Grant. A redwood of an old guy with pale blue eyes and wispy white hair, slowly knelt and collected his reading material without so much as a glance at my existence.

Moments later, an unknown number of security men in Italian suits, hurried away the collateral-damage, including myself. I went without a word, while those three loud mouths seemed determined to inconvenience everyone's mood this evening.

We were soon locked in one of the hotel suites with nothing to do but wait. Mr. Fag-Boy was the first to busy himself by wrestling with the door in a flaccid attempt to protest this Shakespearean injustice. He was your typical Berlin douche with a rat-face below an overgrown porcupine of a bleached hairstyle. Miss Shitty-Pants was the spitting image of the 2015 Valentino Donna Fragrance model, and she immediately went looking for the Dom Pérignon. Miss Resting-Bitch-Face looked like Taylor Swift, who always reminded me of the anal-porn-star, Krystal Boyd. She also wasted no time pulling out her golden case of narcotics. No medieval torture had ever been

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as agonizing as having to listen to those petulant voices filling that suite with an alien language that made screaming babies sound soothing. I hated every square inch of those nauseating fucks!

Seeing how they'd served colonoscopies for appetizers upstairs, I was without a doubt that spillage happens – and my face had been pressed hard against that contaminated floor! So, I moved straight to the bathroom, accepting that there was no possibility of finding the old rabbi anymore. A passage from Milton then crossed my predicament, "*All is not lost; the unconquerable will, and study of revenge, immortal hate, and courage never to submit or yield: and what is else not to be overcome? That glory never shall his wrath or might extort from me.*" Hanging my jacket, I rolled up my sleeves and thoroughly scrubbed my hands before washing my face with excessive amounts of soap. Standing there with water dripping from my nose, I stared vacantly into the marble basin. This was a classy joint. No expense spared. A fancy playground for the rich and perverse. Because, after all, there's no degenerate act that money couldn't accommodate. If you could afford it. And of course, afford to cover it up. Yet no one, no matter whom or how cool, could afford to let the status quo fathom how despicable they really were behind closed doors. People are never as understanding as the insecure like to overestimate. The core principle of privacy was: anything goes – if you could afford it! The audacious claim that no grown adult was helpless, was only ever true if they could afford help. If they could afford justice. If they could afford hope. But if you couldn't, then get the fuck back down where you belong! And I clearly wasn't part of this affluent world. I wasn't meant to be here. Sir Francis Bacon then spoke up in the back of my head, "*The mind is the man, and the knowledge of the mind. A man is but what he knoweth.*" However, this did little to outweigh my abysmal thoughts that ran violent at an accelerating rate. The chrome faucet was still gushing, yet it still couldn't drown out those squealing voices in the other room, until a line from Macbeth became another ear-worm, repeating, "*Full of scorpions is my mind.*"

The bathroom door then eased open, and Miss Resting-Bitch-Face leaned in with derision in her eyes.

Turning my back on her, I reached my suit jacket – when she suddenly grabbed my arm! Slowly facing that female, I could feel those scorpions stabbing at the insides of my claustrophobic skull. She seemed fascinated with the snake-skeleton tattoo down my left arm that she yanked at as if I was a mannequin. With a brutal twist, I once again tore myself out of the pathetic

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grasp of another arrogant whore.

“Didn’t think you perverts ever washed your hands,” Miss Resting-Bitch-Face spoke, with a somewhat approachable smile. “I mean, why bother?”

“You know,” I whispered, like a good, small-talking son of a bitch, “I’d rather have chunks of wheat-laced shit on my dick from a super model like yourself, than have even the tiniest bit of my own crap under my fingernails.”

“Don’t be revolting!”

“Says the girl who’s just been hanging out with scat-munchers.”

“Not anymore! Fucks canceled my fucking contract!”

“You work here?”

“Worked. Past-tense!”

“You going to miss filling martini glasses with your hot, angry diarrhea, foaming like a latte as if your ass has rabies?”

“Get over it. It’s just a job!”

“And I’m sure you earned every cent, laying links of peanut-butter over the sweating bellies of billionaires.”

“Don’t talk about peanut-butter.”

“Did you mistakenly use ‘crunchy’ instead of ‘smooth’ to irrigate your anus?”

“It’s all shit. Shit is shit!”

“Reminds me of a story I heard in Japan. There was this typical salary-man, who would visit this one particular dominatrix. Every day he saw her on the way to work, and he’d hand over his lunchbox packed with sushi that had been meticulously prepared for him by his wife. The dominatrix would then take her morning dump right on top of his lunch while he watched. He never touched her. Had no interest sexually. Instead, he believed that she was so perfect that nothing, not even her shit could be bad. And so he ate her daily deposit like each mouthful was a blessing.”

“You’re not going to call that some kind of warped form of fucking love!”

“Didn’t you have regulars who ‘loved’ your ass too.”

“Hated every one of you sick fucks with your greasy fucking eyes! As if I was meant to get off on you judging me! Fucking hated it most of all when you all tried cuddling up, pretending to give a fuck with your desperate fucking baby voices! Fucking insulting!”

“Nothing more suspicious than someone claiming that they understand you.”

“None of you fucks even get the message that I’m trying to fucking ignore all your bullshit! You all just keep on whimpering, talking to me like I’m your

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fucking pet!”

“Yet you played along.”

“It’s a job!”

“Whatever pays the bills.”

“Exactly! Give me your fucking cash so I can get back to fucking work!”

I leaned back against the sink and paused... The impertinence in her voice seemed directed personally toward me.

“Girl’s got to do what a girl’s got to do!”

“And a pervert’s got to go where his obsession leads him.”

“Better the devil you know.”

“Why’d they fire your ass?”

“Fuck off!”

“Definitely wasn’t your personality, was it.”

“Everyone’s got their limit.”

“Only so much literal shit you can put up with?”

“Most of you wrinkly old fucks have the lamest fantasies! It’s all some variation of the same kind of anal-fixation.”

“Sounds like a fun party.”

“Seriously, it’s not.”

“What’s the straw that broke the camel’s rectum?”

“Opposite of what you said before.”

“Meaning?”

“You fucking creeps love shoving whatever up my rear, but when this guy suggested I fist-fuck his fat ass, that was it, I’d had e-fucking-nough! That’s just fucking disgusting! At least I know where my shit’s coming from. But who has any fucking idea what’s been up his diseased asshole! Fuck that! No thanks!”

“Thought you were about to say that some guy wanted to sit on your face, rest his balls on your eyes, while he squeezed a fat shit directly into your nostrils. Imagine that. Shit filling your nasal cavity until you’re deep-throating an endless fucking log!”

“You’ve done that to one of the girls here, haven’t you, you twisted fuck!”

“Still easier that trying to take a shit into a condom.”

“Why would you even want to?!”

“It’s a thing. Fill a condom with shit, tie it up, and leave it in the fridge. Once it’s frozen, you shove it up someone’s ass!”

“Fuck off!”

I paused again, glaring at her... The voices of the other two continued

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scratching at the walls.

“Can’t stand the cunts working here, like those two fucks! Hate their constant fronting. Only looking out for the next drink and dumbfuck to score their drugs from. Such a fucking joke. These sluts all sexualize themselves to attract the eye of some big-spender or whatever, but the fucking moment they get the attention of a nobody, these same cunts scream ‘rape’! Fuck them! Totally fucking asking for it! And fucking hate it when you gross old creepers come into the club wearing my favorite brands, like Cartier. It’s offensive to my sense of taste! None of you have any fucking style! You all ruin it for people like me with some class!”

“How?”

“Can’t be bothered explaining! I know what I mean! If you don’t get it, that’s your fucking problem. Don’t know why the fuck I’m even talking to you. You’re the same as the rest of these fucking perverts!” she said, before sliding her back down the wall, and taking a seat on the floor. She had this longing in her eyes as she sat in her skimpy Dior dress, clutching her Bottega purse like a security-blanket. “There’s always bigger fish shitting on everyone else.”

Looking at the bathtub, I wondered how many times it had been filled with human feces. “Suffering is necessary.”

“Yeah, blah, blah. Whatever, douche-bag! Just because you can’t relate to a tragedy doesn’t mean the rest of us don’t understand what’s going on! I’m fucking tired of shit like Facebook! Nothing but trolls and negativity. Can’t get away from it. Wish every single asshole on social media would go fuck themselves! And I don’t give a shit what you think, so keep your fucking mouth shut, okay!”

“And yet we’re all thinking the same shit!”

“We’re nothing alike!”

“Really?!”

“Really!”

“If we weren’t all so easily categorized, then there wouldn’t be a whole mental health industry making a quick buck from applying the same fucking formula to our standardized thinking.”

“Bitch, my depression isn’t the same anyone else’s! And my fucking feeling aren’t the subject for a cunt like you to fucking minimize!”

“Given enough questionnaires, any doctor can reduce your mental state to a one-line definition, and you know why?”

“Fuck off!”

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“Because your pain is not unique, and neither is your fucking medication!”

“Hey, asshole! People are more than just fucking stereotypes for your ridiculous generalizations! You’re just a fucking dick! Like the rest of the fucking cunts in this fucking place. I’m over it! I want to be a kid again, when I was treated with some respect. It’s fucking exhausting! Sick of being surrounded by abusive friends trying to use me for whatever the fuck they want. Fuck all this shit! Remember being happiest when I had nothing to my name.”

“Fucking spare me!” I barked. “Starving to death ain’t nobody’s idea of a good fucking time!”

As she continued talking, I became aware of stepping outside of myself. The realization then came to me that all of our words were little more than egos clashing in a vain attempt to outsmart each other. But why was I even engaged in conversation with this female. A heated debate could become desirable if there was a lesson to be learned, or if I was aiming to seduce her. However, I was too fucking repulsed by that female to want anything to do with her shit-talking triviality. I hadn’t spoken in several minutes, when an impulsive idea suddenly feed the bowels of my mind. Digesting that inspiration, my unconscious processed that dysentery-narrative into a vision of what I suddenly wanted. I wanted nothing more than to piss right on that cunt’s infuriated, Playboy-eyes!

“Hey!” And her hand slapped the floor where the Bvlgari jewelry on her wrist clattered loudly! She was expecting a response to something I hadn’t been listening to. “Jesus, you’re such a useless fuck!”

There comes a point where talking ultimately solves nothing – action must be taken.

Mr. Fag-Boy then lurched around the bathroom door, and so, Miss Resting-Bitch-Face instinctively burst into obnoxious laughter right on cue. My loathing toward those meat-insects inflamed my nervous system with spasms of intolerance. I’m no stranger to strippers and friends that work in the sex industry, and there’s even a massage parlor at the entrance to my apartment building, where the Russian ladies always politely share a passing hello. So, respect was given where respect was found. These three cunts however, deserved no such common courtesy. Yet still, turning away, I kept quiet. After all, who the fuck was I to look down on their existence? I had once held the firm belief that people with money were smarter than those without – until a friend refuted my opinion by noting that kids born into money hadn’t earned it. Ergo: there was no correlation between intelligence

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and someone's success. Some are just luckier than others. Some have earned it. And some are just resentful, like me.

With my head down, I went to the kitchen in that wide-spread suite and had a look at the coffee machine. Miss Shitty-Pants coincidentally decided that she was suddenly an expert barista, and of course, everything I was doing was ever so melodramatically wrong. The other two also had to interfere like all know-it-alls had to. Miss Shitty-Pants was whining in her mother-tongue, when she then elbowed me in the ribs as she began pulling the coffee machine apart. Gripping the edge of the counter top, I could physically feel my body temperature boil. Mr. Fag-Boy then started berating me, like I understood whatever his foreign, fake lisp was insinuating. However, when the third slut began kicking at the locked door, a transcendent calm welled-up inside my chest, emanating from one simple thought: either no one was standing guard outside the door, or no one gave a fuck what we did in here. An empty bottle of whiskey then shattered against the door! Only silence answered. It was confirmed. We were locked in and left to ourselves. So, if I was trapped, then surely this was the ideal opportunity that I had been looking for. All I had to do was trust my unconscious. For I am whatever I am. As little or as great as I may be in the scheme of the universe, I will be all I will be.

Stepping over to the dub-step rumbling out of the stereo, my fingertips tapped the power display. The abrupt dead-air was instantly met by outrageous cries from all three cunts. Turning toward the open kitchen, I found Miss Shitty-Pants marching my way. I grabbed a brass vase, walked straight for her, and swung that heavy object directly into her fucking head! She dropped like a duck that had just flown head-first into the windscreen of a 747. Mr. Fag-Boy squealed but I heard nothing after I punched him directly in his fucking windpipe! He fell discarded upon the floor like a screwed-up, paper towel in a public toilet. Moving around the kitchen counter, I found Miss Resting-Bitch-Face taking a step backward – so I helped her: by clamping my hand over her face and slamming her skull back down against the edge of the fucking sink! The impact of bone against marble transformed her bitch-face into one of absolutely no personality. Dead or alive, those meat-insects looked just as unappetizing as ever. Returning to the squirming male, I watched his eyes bulge one final time before his balled-up body shuddered from complete asphyxiation. Miss Shitty-Pants however, was muttering something as she crawled on all fours like a stunned sack of shit. My foot then filled her gut! She crashed onto her back, and then the sole of my polished shoe stomped her snobbish features into the uncooked pulp of human-stroganoff!

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I sighed at last, listening to the near silence of inner city living. Plugging my MP3 player into the stereo, the opening track, *Addis*, from the album by Om, soon filled the entire suite. While staring out the huge windows at the rain, I missed real storms, like the cyclones that had torn at my childhood home. Finally, I tilted my head quietly toward the locked door. No one had come. No one had stopped me. No one knew what I'd just done. And if no one ever found out what had happened here tonight then there would be no consequences of consequence.

One by one, I dragged the dead meat into the bathroom. Wasting no time, I stripped the bodies naked. Casually folding the perfume-drenched clothes into irrelevant piles, I left them neatly in the bedroom drawers. The kitchen was fully equipped to host a banquet if need be, and I found it supplied with all the appropriate cutting utensils. So, I plucked your everyday carving knife that was normally used to distribute the dismemberment of bloated turkeys on nights like this (it was Thanksgiving after all). First thing I did was position all three bodies hanging over the bathtub with the heads downward inside. My left hand grasped the first scalp while my left knee rested between the shoulder-blades. The heads were held above the bath as the knife then split the necks down to the bone. With the 'power-supply' already off, there was little arterial-spray from the jugulars. I severed arteries like hydraulic cabling, parting skin like rubber, and cutting into the cartilage like thick plastic. What are human bodies but: "*an apparatus consisting of interrelated parts with separate functions, used in the performance of some kind of work.*" Once all three slender throats had huge holes puncturing them, I placed the carcasses upside-down in the tub and watched gravity empty them of their warm juices that trickled down the drain. I then remembered a discussion between Richard Dawkins and some other philosopher, which involved a minor disagreement about the analogy of referring to the human body as a 'machine'. For a machine has a set of designed plans in which they are built from, whereas a human body has evolved and adapts. But staring at the wounds in those human duplicates, for all intents and purposes, the analogy worked just fine for me.

After the first body was empty of blood, the blade sliced around the entire neck, cutting into the spine. The bones in the neck were tricky, but no more of a task than breaking off chicken wings with your bare hands while you enjoy your meal. The third body however, was still being a bitch. The spinal cord wouldn't break, the vertebrae were too tight. I had to twist and wrench the head 360° twice before the last tether snapped. The head landed next to the

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others in the bath, before I turned on the faucet and rinsed my hands above the slaughter. The three headless carcasses no longer annoyed me, they were just chores that needed to be dealt with.

Looking through the kitchen again, I found a brand-new pair of scissors. I then cut off all that product-clogged hair from the three decapitated trophies. Filling a frying pan with the locks, I soaked the hair in cooking oil before setting it on fire under the stove's smoke-extractor. It stunk like barbequed Styrofoam.

Next, I unplugged the blender and carried it into the bathroom. I've seen people blending an iPhone on YouTube, so why not blend a few humans. Of course, this took preparation. The blender wasn't like your average wood-chipper, you can't just shove in a whole arm or leg. First, I took my time disarticulating each body. And those bodies swooned like lovers that I had absolutely no affinity toward. Male or female, they meant no more than meat, not even meat that I wanted a bite out of. I didn't desire to fuck any of it, I just needed to erase the remains. This was about redefining my environment in order to suit myself, by molding the world with my own two hands.

All the blood washed away as the water continually ran down the plughole, leaving little-to-no mess. Arms were cut at the shoulders, elbows, and wrists. Legs were cut at the hips, knees, and defiant ankles. All I saw was a bathtub full of pulpy kindling.

Taking a forearm over to the bathroom sink, I used the carving knife and separated the radius and ulna, before stripping lengths of muscle from the two bones. With a dash of water here and there, the blender made mince from the slithers of flesh in practically no time. Into the toilet I then poured that slop and flushed it all away! My workspace was clean, but the two bones from the unidentified forearm still held clumps of residual meat. So, I stuffed the bare bones into the oven where they baked at a high temperature.

This systematic-procedure continued for the better part of an hour. Naturally, with each new limb my skill improved. I worked ever more efficiently between the sink, toilet, and stove. The remaining hands and feet though, proved to be tough little bastards. So, I decided to boil them first in a big stainless-steel pot. The hot water loosened up the congested carpal and tarsal bones. However, I quickly learned that I could simply ignore the blender entirely for those extremities, and just cut them into quarters before flushing them directly down the toilet. One set of painted fingernails resembled the aerodynamic fenders from a row of Ducatis as they raced down that porcelain. The feet took a bit more encouragement, but the kitchen's

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mallet helped bash my fucking way through any resistant ligaments.

Next was the dismembered torsos. With a small fruit knife, I sliced open the first belly with a shallow cut below the sternum down to the pubis. Using both hands, I pried open that great laceration, like spreading the curtain toward visions of Unit 731. I paused at that sight of shiny membranes and discolored organs. Grays and purples, pinks and scarlets. Intricate tissues meshed with hairline veins. All those crucial lumps of doe-like flesh clung to their designated seating, fulfilling an exclusive and vital occupation. These were components in a holistic system where every part was reliant on one another to sustain an operative homeostasis. Grabbing the second torso, I immediately sliced it open. And then the third. After I peeled apart all three long incisions, I leaned back, comparing the three. They were utterly indistinguishable! There were no mammary glands, and the genitals were waxed down to the nub. Apart from a miniscule penis in the mix, those carcasses were identical. We're all the same glorified alimentary-canal. Using the scissors, I extracted the large and small intestine from the first carcass. Dumping the stringy conduits upon another body, I dug in deep, finding where the colon reached the anus. Carefully severing the orifice, I then cut the connection to the stomach. Bundling up that serpent of entrails, I stepped over to the toilet, where inch by inch, lengths of bowels were chopped off into the bowl. Shit happened – I flushed it away.

Once all three intestines were disposed of, I thoroughly washed my hands and the scissors. I knew that the remaining torsos were free to hack up without concern for tainting the meat. But I shook my head – I had no fucking intention of frying up any of that shit for a late-night snack. However, those mutilated bodies had become much more attractive since my modifications. Flipping over one of the females, I yanked its rump up over the edge of the bath and examined its pale but perfect asshole. Overcome with a sudden curious lust, I grabbed the hip with one hand as my other drove two fingers into an accepting rectum. My digits popped out into the gutted gut, so I rolled the body over, spreading its lacerated belly like giant labia. Admiring my two fingers waving back at me within the hollow, I put some serious thought into sodomizing that meat. But my disgust soon reminded me of my simple objective.

From then on, I moved quickly with the scissors. Ripping out random chunks, hand over fist, I threw the butchered internal organs into the toilet and then flushed them away, never to be seen again.

After the abdomens had been eviscerated and all three rib-cages had been

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scooped out, I had a moment of wondering if anyone was ever really going to check in on my imprisonment. If someone walked in and found me with those meat-wet scissors while hunched over the three mangled bodies, I would have been beyond all plausible excuse. Caught red-handed. But I wasn't. Because no one came. Nothing ever stops me from my desecration. Yet Mara had stopped me last year. So, therein lies my root-value for her. With a little perspective, it was clear that she was the defining difference between last year and this. Unfortunately though, she was well aware that too much time spent in my company brought out the worst in me. And looking in the bath, I knew that this was inevitable.

With the mallet and a steak knife, I chopped up the ribs and shattered the spinal columns. Shredding skin and muscle fibers with a long bread knife, I returned to the blender before flushing the last traces of the torsos into the city's sewers.

While I waited for the skeletal ruins to bake in the oven, I turned to the three hairless heads. The two females now looked like twins, but the male was as forgettable as ever. I skinned their faces, scalped them, and then spun the blender one last time. Placing another load of bones in the oven, I then bashed out each and every tooth from all three tattered skulls. There would be no identifying anyone here tonight. After rummaging through the bedroom closet, I found a dry-cleaning clothes hanger. Straightening the cheap wire, I stabbed it into the cavities behind those empty eye-sockets, scrambled the brains like stirring a pot of paint – now that's what I call a homemade, frontal-lobe abortion!

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“Seriously, man, what the fuck are you talking about!?” Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes whispered, slowly shaking his head as he leaned as far away from me as his chair would physically allow. “That didn't fucking happen!”

Smiling, I glanced at that shriveled little shit, and then looked back at Mr. Cravat. “He's right. None of that happened.”

“How did you get blood on your hands?” Mr. Intermediate hissed, now smoking a cigarette.

I twisted slowly around, and while eyeballing that cunt, in an exaggerated, slow-motion shrug, I replied, “Told you, they picked the lock and fucked off.”

“You're lying,” Mr. Slappy sneered.

“What did you do with the bones?” Mr. Cravat then spoke up, as he shifted in his seat. “Where are the heads?”

“They're in a tall, black vase, back in the suite,” I said quietly. “The heads

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are stacked inside – soaking in my piss. The rest of the bones, they’re in two plastic rubbish bags under the kitchen sink. Ready to be dumped in random trashcans around the city.”

A stale silence lingered.

“Liar,” Mr. Slappy scoffed.

“Have a look!” I stated. “Go see for your-fucking-self!”

“Yes. Go look,” Mr. Cravat croaked. “Take him with you.”

Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes then lunged away, denying that he had ever seen me before this evening!

On the way down the corridor toward the elevator, my mind strayed back to the Mühlendamm bridge where I had been reading a letter that Mara had sent me: *“I despise everything you believe in. I despise your deceptive and treacherous nature. I despise you for not being honest with me, knowing full well that this is the one and only thing important to me. I despise you for not respecting me enough to be honest with me and trusting that I will find the solution for both of us. I despise you for shitting all over me and my heart despite everything I’ve done for you and held and helped you through. I despise the fact that you’re a selfish ungrateful cunt! Most of all I despise you for being my one and only weakness and that I love you so much.”* As the men filled the elevator, I noticed that Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes was held in an arm-lock by security, and yet I was standing free. Was I to blame for taking anyone on a ride if they willingly came along? But a crime was still a crime, even if they let me get away with it. That old proverb then reminded me that there were worse people than me out there, good people, *“So good that he’s good for nothing.”* Naturally, naysayers insist that there’s something deeply wrong with you, me, and everyone. Of course, our logic is flawed, biased, and egotistical. No one is impartial to their own personally relevant dilemmas. But confessions of the heart did little if only the self can enlighten the self. Therefore, sharing is a distraction. Should I bottle it up and transmute the self by myself? Bottle it up like the ashes of the sigil magick that I had begun filling glass jars with. The greater truth of your own plans must be kept to yourself, for ultimately no one cares about your reasons for treating another human being like a piece of fucking meat. Looking at Mr. Lamborghini-Shoes cringe, Burroughs then spoke to me, *“And avoid fools at any cost.”*

The elevator doors opened, and I glared down that dark corridor toward the distant suite – when suddenly the piercing fire alarm rang out! Doors along the corridor soon flung open, as bodyguards raced their high-paying clients out of there! Dozens of half-naked girls also quickly poured into the

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hallways. Much like shit in the toilet, I had no choice but to go with the flow. Reaching a turn in the corridor, I glanced back through that human-stampede, and spotted Mr. Intermediate and Mr. Slappy fighting against the crowd and chasing after my inexplicable escape.

The mob burst into an emergency staircase, and once I reached the next level down, a tiny hand grabbed my elbow and yanked me through a door with heroic strength. More Asian men with pink eyes and unbuttoned pants came stumbling out of other rooms, as some skinny little kid led me against the grain. I whipped my arm loose, and that small Indian boy immediately spun, bleating at me while he pointed at another door just beyond a herd of whores. There, the impatient Iranian woman stood with arms crossed. This time, I swam like a sewer-rat up the s-bend toward the light coming from behind her impeccable feminine silhouette. That staunch woman said nothing, her sour expression making her beautiful face appear even more delicious as she locked the door behind me. The boy was left in the corridor to fend for himself. Scanning across a very different hotel suite, I saw two old gentlemen in tuxedos glide around the corner from the kitchen in electric wheelchairs. They were both in their seventies, and not one of those identical twins had a single leg among them. Then, to my left, a blind man in a three-piece suit, shuffled into the lounge from a bedroom. His entire face was so badly scared that it appeared as if he had once slipped while trying to shave with a chainsaw. Instead of your typical seeing-eye-dog, he had a huge hyena on a leash. The Iranian woman walked to a door on the far side of the suite, and after an extended moment of who-the-hell, one of the Stumpy-Twins raised a frail hand and gestured that I could kindly get the fuck out of there. Cautious of Mr. Salami's surly-looking pet, I noticed a gold brooch pinned to his lapel. Pointy like a Doré halo and resembling masonic imagery, the ornament seemed somewhat familiar, though, I couldn't recall why – probably because I was too disturbed by the insane gurgling noises coming from that giant fucking hyena.

The Iranian woman wrapped a black shawl over her shoulders, collected her Chanel purse, and then led me into a new series of corridors completely separate from the first. We seemed to have entered the neighboring building, yet the fire alarm persisted wherever we hurried. Soon she descended a smaller staircase to the basement parking lot where the alarm echoed even louder. I had made it all the way to exit ramp before my strange guide actually noticed that I was no longer following her.

“There's nothing in the vase!”

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It wasn't her voice that stopped me, but the freezing wind coming down from the street.

"What happened to those three?!" the Iranian's accusing tone felt like I was inhaling ammonia. "What witchcraft have you commit this time?!"

Turning, I smiled as I spoke, "Witchcraft? Are you fucking high?!"

"I will not be intimidated!"

"Sure about that?"

"I see the curses that you've sent sniffing at my doorstep! Every day I see them! Every day since your insolence at the lake!"

"Please," I winced, while staring at the exit ramp. "It's a 'loch'."

"I see them!" she snarled. "Waiting outside. I see their wet eyes. They hide but I still see them watching me!"

"But the sixty-four-thousand-dollar question is, have they started singing you lullabies while you sleep?"

"Why waste your time with this toying!" the woman snarled. "Why must you insist on shirking among such puerile infatuations and inferior spirits?!"

I was aroused by her unshaken confidence. There was an innate pride to her voice that smelt like royalty, and I was developing quite a curiosity for tasting some of her elitist meat. However, I had another priority, "Who's the old rabbi?"

We both stood in contempt for a moment – when the fire alarm abruptly quit, yet the echo throbbed within that cavernous parking lot.

"You never looked in the vase, did you."

She was a stone.

"Tell you what, cutie pie. If you get my coat back from the front desk, we'll call it even."

A BEEP BEEP then drew my eyes to a silver Lexus RC 350.

Fire trucks and ambulances with epileptic, indigo lights filled the streets around *The Little China Embassy*. And while the Lexus quietly drove away, Helena Winkelman's deranged string quartet, *Quadriga*, crawled out from the dashboard.

"Your friend, the one that you abandoned back there, he'll be held responsible for inviting you in." The Iranian woman's voice seemed softer, genuinely concerned. "They won't be forgiving about it."

"A little while ago, I brought my girlfriend into a session with my psychologist. During which she cried – a lot. My therapist then told me that it wasn't 'normal' to feel 'fine' about watching my girlfriend cry," I recalled, as the car speed through the sodden city. "And yet, after everything, for a third

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time, the official diagnosis is in: just because I think this way doesn't make me sick! So, if I make my home my gallows, then what the fuck do I care about some nobody taking the fall for me back there!"

"You should have died!" the Iranian woman murmured. "You do realize that! Explain yourself!"

"WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU TO ME?! I DON'T FUCKING OWE ANYONE ANY FUCKING EXPLANATIONS!"

The Lexus swerved down a side street and came to a sudden standstill at the corner of nowhere and consequence – that's my exit, thanks. I was about to slam the passenger's side door shut, when that woman spoke up, "There's a man in Moldova, pray you meet him before those from the Tigris banish you!"

Fuck that cunt! I was done with all this cryptic talk. Yet as the Lexus sped away, a sentiment from Genghis Khan rang throughout my vindictive little head, "*The greatest happiness is to scatter your enemy, to drive him before you, to see his cities reduced to ashes, to see those who love him shrouded in tears, and to gather into your bosom his wives and daughters.*"

Bruce



SHORT STORY 9
2016
SOMEWHERE TO BE ALONE

DISCLAIMER:

*Without proof of one's experience, one did not experience anything.
When one is alone, one does not exist.*

NACHT 1.
FRIDAY 26th FEBRUARY 2016

It was fucking freezing after the taxi pulled away leaving me on the side of the highway in the early evening. The asphalt was too wide for a backwater country road, but I wasn't sure if it was a highway, freeway, or autobahn either. Other than the departing taxi, there wasn't a speck of traffic out there. No headlights or any other form of illumination. The overcast German gloom hid the celestial bodies, and again I was straining to remember the last time I actually had a decent view of the constellations. For a moment, I began entertaining the notion that the cabbie was being a cunt and had dropped me off in the middle of nowhere. But my eyes finally adjusted to the depth of my woodland surroundings, and a pale building presented itself through the gusts.

At the end of last year, I had taken the bus to Halle, a university town near Leipzig, and an hour out of Berlin, I first saw this place. There were two fields, one with wild grass, the other a bare expanse of naked soil. In the middle of those two open plots was a narrow driveway that led to a two-story house. Its white-painted stone, elegant windowpanes, and gray-slate roof made it look anything but a typical farm house. It was love at first sight.

Clutching my suitcase in my right hand while clinging to my laptop bag with my left, I strode with a hunch toward that lonesome house. On my approach, I began regretting that I hadn't investigated further on Airbnb whether or not the place required coal-stoking for the heating. When suddenly searing white light covered the building and reflected back into my scorched fucking eyeballs! The headlights from an unexpected vehicle came slowly up behind me. At first, I assumed that it was the owner. Perhaps there had been a mix up and he had given me the wrong set of house keys when I was back in the township. As I watched the car pass and pull up to the house, I spotted the silhouette of two men sitting in the vehicle. My second thought

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was one was frustration as I reached for the back of my belt – I still hadn't bought a new knife since Scotland over a year ago. Once the strangers exited their vehicle, I was immediately addressed with the clinical formality of the German authorities, "Herr Knox?"

The cops, already? Who the fuck was complaining about me before I'd even arrived? But these guys weren't your standard, flat-foot beat-cop, (not that German cops walked anywhere). They were plain-clothed, older guys.

"You speak English, yes?"

"Don't pay you the big bucks for nothing, do they," I sneered, placing my black suitcase between the house and the BMW.

"Excuse me?"

"Why should I?"

The two big men shared a serious glance.

So, I crossed my arms in that arctic breeze, as snow began falling.

"My name is Kriminalkommissar Rosswald, and this is my college, Everett." And then up came their respective ID cards. In English, they were 'detectives', and so I will refer to them as such from henceforth. "We are from the Stuttgart division."

"That's a hell of a commute."

"Excuse me?" These guys were always so fucking polite but incapable of grasping sarcasm.

"Tell you what, chief. Let's see if the key opens that front door. If not, I'll be thanking you kindly for a ride the fuck out of here," I grinned, as snowflakes melted upon my shaved head. "But first things first. What exactly are you after?"

"We are here investigating a missing person."

The little white house was a couple-hundred-years-old but had been thoroughly renovated within the last decade – so no coal-shoveling for this lucky little Popsicle. I switched on the hot-water-system, as well as the kettle, and then I removed the coffee and tea supplies from my suitcase. The ground floor was mostly an open plan with the kitchen on the other side from the front door. An old, wooden clock sat on the mantle above a fireplace and tick-tocked loudly throughout that chilled lack of small-talk.

"Now, how about some common courtesy and spill the beans on how exactly you guys found me? All things considered, apart from the owner of this charming establishment, no one else knows where the fuck I am. And yet here you are. Got to admit, that's some fucking spooky shit right there."

The two detectives, in their late forties, sat on the other side of the large

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dining table, both cupping their tea with tilted heads above their loose, frog-like throats.

“Was it my phone? I’m sure I switched off the GPS—”

“It was your credit-card,” Rosswald croaked. “The payment for this house.”

A vague smile crossed my face, “Duly noted.”

Everett lifted his snout, as I opened the yellow pack of slender Leibniz, lemon cheese-cake flavored cookies.

“So, who’ve you lost? And how can I help break the big case?”

“Lurlina Morgen. She was reported missed five days ago, on Monday morning, after she didn’t arrive at an appointment.”

“In Stuttgart?”

“Correct.”

“Heidelberg.”

“No, she is a resident of Stuttgart.”

“No. Heidelberg. The closest I have ever come to Stuttgart, and that was Christmas 2006. Who the fuck’s in Stuttgart that I’d give two shits about?”

“You have a strange way of talking to the police,” Rosswald said, sitting back and lifting his saggy chin. “Perhaps the Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien were correct when they called you an, ‘Obszönitätscharakter.’”

“You know, you look like a director that I used to work for. A big Belgium guy. Good guy. Had a real hearty laugh. Great way to judge a person, by their laughter. How authentic it is. He wasn’t technically my boss, but he understood that I was more valuable than all the other kids in the studio. Was simple math. I did more footage than everyone else combined. Even after the debacle in India, he secured my immediate evacuation. As well as my continued employment. I can respect that. He was willing to stick his neck on the line, not out of some selfless act of kindness, but because he needed the work done. But even then, I never assumed that we were friends. It was just professional respect. However, who the fuck are you that I need to respect?”

The two detectives became more alert in their seats.

“The fuck is Lurlina Morgen, and what the fuck does she have to do with me?”

“On Facebook,” Rosswald stated. “You know her as ‘Lulu Mourning.’”

I leaned away, my eyes rolling into the back of my skull, as I rubbed my palms over my face.

“So, you see,” Rosswald said, taking a sip of his Earl Grey. “We have

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been closely studying your private messages.”

“Your conversations have been, as you say, explicit,” Everett added.

“Explicit? I prefer to call them: gratuitous, unadulterated, and piss in the wind!”

“You are aware of her age?”

“Twenty-one, according to her driver’s license.”

“It is the nature of these communications which concerns us. Your encouragement of her self-destructive obsessions. Especially her fixation with the violence toward the refugees.”

“Ah, so that’s what this is all about.”

“Excuse me?”

“The thought-crime of negativity toward the infallible asylum-seekers.”

“Not at all. After reading your messages, neither of you spoke particularly critical of the Syrians. But you also in no way condemned the harassment of their plight. It is the violence itself that Lurlina seems fascinated with. However, it was the sexual tone of your messages toward the violence that was the most alarming.”

“Plight? You’re the first German I’ve heard say that word.”

The two detectives didn’t look amused. Rosswald then whispered, “Where is *The Little China Embassy*?”

Pausing, I glanced back and forth at the two gray-haired cops. “Isn’t there some law protecting personal communications – no, no, of course not. Stupid me. Nothing’s private on the internet. But what if we’d communicated the old-fashioned way, with hand-written letters. Did you expect to find letters lying around on her bedroom floor? Or what if we’d anticipated nosy fucks going through our personal shit, so we agreed to burn our letters as soon as we’d read them. Then, I guess, you’d have nothing to snoop through. But of course, that would never happen in this day and age. You must be glad that you’ve all those incriminating messages on Facebook to sift through. Unless, we didn’t actually write anything actionable on-line at all. Then where would you be. Ah, here you are. With nothing!”

“What are you doing out here?” Rosswald smiled calmly. “Why haven’t you told anyone, even your girlfriend, where you’re going? You will admit, that is a little strange. However, now that we are here, it makes perfect sense. You are having an affair! So, is Lurlina going to show up any moment now, or is it some other woman?”

“Shit! You got me!” I laughed hatefully, raising both hands. “My girlfriend keeps telling me that I’m a terribly fucking liar. Haul me off in chains.”

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“You can stop being so unhelpful.”

“Ask me a straight forward fucking question then!”

“Have you seen Lurlina Morgen recently, and do you know of her whereabouts?”

“No and no.”

The snow tapped on the windows and the old clock ticked.

“You drove all this way just for those two questions? Your investigation really must have hit a brick fucking wall. But seriously, come on, you guys surely didn’t drive across the entire country just for a runaway kid. She’s probably in Rome for all I know. How is this honestly worth your time?”

Detective Everett subtly nodded his head with a frown.

“Or are her parents the rich conservative type?” Crossing my tattooed arms, I made my own speculation. “Pretty, rich white German girl goes missing amidst the rape-scandal of this immigrant crisis. Merkel fears a shit-storm in the headlines. So, let’s hope it’s some pervert on the internet that’s abducted her, like back in the good old days, huh.”

There is a theory that the universe is always talking to you, but most people aren’t listening. Yet if you allow yourself to see the signs you can find them right in front of you. The literal-atheist screams coincidence-superstition toward such a delusion. While the spiritually-impassioned is cautious of nefarious-influence. And yet the student-psychologist categorizes such projections as symptoms of the Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon. Sometimes though, an omen is simply a fucking omen. Standing on the small front steps, I watched the two detectives slowly reverse their unmarked vehicle back onto the road fifty meters away, when BAM! Squinting against the snow, I slowly turned around. There was a window either side of the front door, three windows upstairs, and a lone central window in the attic. The front of the house didn’t face the driveway but toward the grassy field where a crow had flown straight into a window. It lay twitching on the gravel, and I was reminded of my last weekend. While standing beneath the pillars of the Altes Museum, I had watched an enormous swarm of crows smother the evening sky. there I wondered why some birds migrated during winter, and yet others endured the scarcity. Google would have had some succinct explanation, but I didn’t want to look away from such an impressive number of crows. I was too enthralled by that immense spectacle of a thousand howling ravens dominating the heavens, as if their wings were the very fabric of night stretching over everything. I had felt no desire to pull out my phone and take a fucking photo, I enjoyed focusing of that living moment, and I wouldn’t let

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Google distract my awe. But on the front steps of that little white house, I still wasn't sure why some birds weathered the cold. Standing over the stunned crow, I noticed that its wing was broken. Its pain was pornography to me. Lulu would have filmed the injured bird and then e-mailed me a QuickTime, knowing that I wouldn't condemn her for doing so. The two detectives failed to grasp that. They were far too linear with their conclusions. To them, I was just another sicko corrupting a troubled youth. And they were totally right, of course. Ignoring the crow, I stepped back inside the toasty little white house filled with all that golden light. Plugging my MP3 player into the stereo, Monster Magnet, *Dig That Hole*, put a devious smile on my face as I sat upon a huge sofa with my copy of *Othello*. It had been the second work of Shakespeare that I had ever read at school, and I had instantly been drawn to Iago. I was still proud that he had become a definitively formative role-model of mine. "*Work on, My medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught; And many worthy and chaste dames even thus, all guiltless, meet reproach.*"

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It was well into the small hours when I finished reading, and then heard a loud THUD come from upstairs. The place was too brightly lit to feel like a haunted house, but it was old enough to raise an eyebrow. A second BANG, and I ran up the stairs and flicked on every light switch! There were two identical bedrooms on either side of a modern bathroom at the top of the stairs. All the windows were tightly locked, and there was nothing lying broken on the wooden floor. And then came another THUMP! It was coming from the attic. Above the stairs was a trapdoor that took some wriggling before it swung open. The lights were top-notch up there too. It didn't take two detectives from out of town to discover that the storm-shutter on the window had come loose. Deductive logic immediately banished the demons from the empty attic. There was a stack of candles in a far corner, and nothing else in that vacant space. Opening the small window, I grabbed the shutter, just as I spotted a tower beyond the surrounding forest. There was no steeple at the summit of that bleak structure, it was just a stone block among low hanging clouds. Securing the shutter, I stepped over to the only other window on the opposite side of that timber attic. Standing in the small alcove, I saw a shallow hill above the trees at the back side of the house. Retreating, to the middle of the attic, I looked from side to side. To my left was the tower, to my right was the hill. The house seemed perfectly positioned in the center.

Back downstairs, I glanced out the bedroom window, but just one level down and I could no longer see either the tower or the hilltop.

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BOOM!

The shutter had already come loose. I wasn't surprised, the latch was a rusted piece of shit. Despite the modern fittings in the house, I wondered exactly how old the original structure was. My childhood home had been through several major extensions. I had seen a photo from the 1930s, when the house stood on an empty hillside as a much smaller building. When my parents bought the place in the 1970s, it had already been expanded upon. My father then built the downstairs and the front balcony. Of course, since my mother sold the house, it had been transformed into a yuppie's summer home: a forth incarnation. Human settlements are never static for long. Yet, as much as we rebuild upon of the same subsiding top soil, the bones of all those dead animals are still buried deep in the back garden of my youth. Unless someone happened to go digging. Then, what a find they would unearth!

In the kitchen, I found a drawer full of tools. Grabbing a nail, hammer, and a lighter, I climbed back into the attic and nailed that fucking shutter to the outside wall. Grabbing up a bunch of candles, I lit them in a circle upon the floor. I'm not a student of meditation, but I do practice indulging in psychosis. There, I sat and despised a possible future where animal-rights had banned the pleasure of watching a steak frying in a pan. One culture's cuisine is another's barbaric savagery, and yet no observable reality is more ethical than any other once you find the skeletons in the closets of every civilization's birth. Why should I obey the moral laws of strangers whose vacuous warnings had never stopped me before? If I ate Lulu's anemic meat that night, how was that worse than butchering her? And how was that worse than killing her? And how was that worse than sodomizing her? And how was that worse than objectifying her? And how was that worse than seducing her? And how the fuck was that any worse than simply knowing that she even existed in the first fucking place?! When I eat a schnitzel (of any kind), I feel fucking fantastic, especially knowig that it suffered! There is no moral crime if you repudiate the ethical dogma of giants in favor of your own experiential fucking conclusions!

TAG 1.

SATURDAY 27th FEBRUARY 2016

I woke up late, because I forgot how much I loved to sleep alone. After coffee, I took a stroll so that I might fathom the scope of my environment. Once I had gone straight out the front door into that field of grass, I glanced back and

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found the little white house gleaming brilliantly in the daylight. Continuing out, I came across a wooden fence holding back the brown and white speckled trunks of the forest. Onward I went in search of that tower. The woods were easy to pass through, as there were no shrubs, only dead leaves between the widely spaced trees. I loved that smell of damp wood. My thoughts returned to that of Lulu and the trickery of the internet. She had found me via my art six months ago. Just another curious kid. I remembered her first profile picture where she wore her brown hair slicked back and into a tight bun. Her cute face hid behind large, thin-framed glasses, while she was dressed in a snug, beige trench-coat and enormous scarf. Lulu was, by all accounts, perfectly lovely and genuinely so. She was perhaps too polite for my kind of virtual interactions. Though the cops weren't kidding about her interest in violent content. But so fucking what?! The other night, I saw a video of ISIS cutting off an old man's head, and I was fucking bored! After all, what did Schopenhauer say, "*Life has no intrinsic worth, but is kept in motion merely by desire and illusion.*" Lulu's own infatuation with conflict was not repressed, denied, or abnormal. She embraced her fascination. She owned it, and had even dubbed her denomination, *Devotion To The Demiurge*. She would flagellate herself to this lesser god while masturbating in front of me on Skype. She was empowered because she empowered herself.

It hadn't felt like I had been walking for long before the trees parted and presented a small gorge where a shallow creek crept below. Directly across the broken landscape were the foundations of that blackened tower. From where I stood, it looked like a six-story structure with only a small ground floor extension crumbling to my left. The place was a ruin, but it definitely didn't resemble a church, more like the remains of a keep from a collapsed castle that was now half strangled by creepers. The creek was only dribbling, but it was still wide enough to cancel the idea of getting any closer to those looming fortifications. Besides, I had work to do. I hadn't come out to this geographical isolation for my health. I had two scripts to write. My *Extermination* pitch had been put on hold while my day-job had kept my idle hands busy with commercial animation. I had already laid out the first draft of the script, the basic three act structure was done, and I'd begun the second draft of act one back in Berlin. Though, I decided I needed to get out of town and away from my personal tensions so that I could focus on the rest of the script, but of course that was impossible – I couldn't escape myself. My predilection toward the original *Terminator* film had begun at an early age. A reverence toward the unstoppable force of death. I had seen it as a

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cautionary tale, and the underlying message was one of human tragedy. That was what had attracted me, it was the concept. Like my *Alienated* pitch from 2011, I had no intention on focusing on past characters, it was the setting that had potential. I had centered *Alienated* around those primal human concerns of extreme deprivation, the fear of the dark, and being trapped in a hostile environment. It's the simplest ideas that inspire me, however, the more violent the better.

Returning to the field, I shook my head spitefully. I knew that working on a script was just as futile as anything that I did. No one would give a fuck about it. So, why was I really out there? Because, what had Camus said about the myth of Sisyphus: I enjoyed my endless fucking toiling! I needed to expel the monstrosities in my head through creative exorcisms of desecration. Self-indulgence was a good enough reason for me to do anything at all.

That was when I spotted several figures in the distance to my left. They soon saw me too, and we all continued toward the little white house. There were four in the group. Local kids. They passed by the house about twenty meters ahead of me. All of them scowling. The only boy in the group couldn't stop staring back as I stood outside the front door, glaring at that scrawny runt. I didn't unlock the door until they crossed the highway. Scaring the shit out people was something I was famous for.

I spent the day working on my two scripts. The second one being part two of my picture book, *Uncle Fingers*. I sat at the dining table looking out over the fields, muttering words that rhymed, when I suddenly grinned. I'd finally become a raving lunatic, talking to himself in the woods.

That afternoon, while pouring another coffee, I glanced past my laptop, over the stereo that was playing Ken Mode, *Blessed*, and outside to where a man was standing in the middle of the field. His arms were to his side in a dominant stance. Sipping on my sweet, creamy coffee, I slowly approached the front window. He was African and wearing a scruffy jersey and jeans. I knew he could see me, so I just perpetuated the stand-off. It wasn't until I saw another guy step out of the woods that I placed my cup upon the windowsill – and then suddenly I knew exactly what I had to do.

Opening the front door, I walked out into that cold air and stood below the window where my cup was still steaming. There, I picked up the dead crow from last night and turned toward that distant man. He was unmoved, but the second person had sunk back into the shadows of woods. Holding the big, black bird straight out, I spread its silky wings. Placing the bird on the

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neat gravel path that surrounded the little white house, I started drawing sigils in the dirt with my fingertip. Even heathens can comprehend the message behind Enochian warnings. So, I welcomed this intruder to come a little closer. Come and take a look at the picture I had just made for him. Come closer so that my voodoo could soak into his paranoia. With blood on my hands, I waved bye-bye to the stranger as I casually walked back inside – locking the door behind.

After washing my hands in the kitchen sink, I tucked the claw hammer into my back pocket. Finishing my coffee, I found that the black guy was now standing only a few paces from the edge of gravel. He was leaning cautiously toward the mutilated crow, though his posture was spring-loaded and ready to high-tail it away from there. I got a good clear look at the guy. Real cola-colored skin, and he was obviously living rough. He could have possibly been one of the refugees that everyone kept complaining about (complaining regardless of if they were for or against them). If they had already walked all the way to Germany, it wasn't that much of a stretch of the imagination to suppose that some had continued this far north. I eyeballed him one last time, and he gradually backed away. I then smirked at my own reflection in the glass. Who the fuck was I to judge this guy? This wasn't my property, and this definitely wasn't my homeland. Even out here, I couldn't avoid the social politics of the time. Perhaps I could simplify the situation into: the essential need to assert one's own personal boundary. But then I heard the voice of the regressive-left declaring that there shouldn't be any borders of any kind at all! So then, did that make me right-wing? But if I was sincerely right-wing, then surely, I too should get the fuck out this foreign land? Therefore, I must have been a liberal at heart, as I clearly supported globalization. However, I never believe in equality, so then I had to be a capitalist pig! Yet, I wasn't wealthy enough, which meant I had to have supported the communist 99%. Though, I fucking loathed hippies, or were they called third-wave-feminists these days? Naturally, my penis made me a rape-advocate, which explained why I liked to fuck black chicks: so that I could assert my dominant, racist misogyny! Although, if I fucked black chicks, didn't that prove that I loved all colors? But you see, no matter what you do, any contrary argument could be made to condemn your motives. Yet you're never wrong if you know how to apply the Socratic-method correctly. Or then again, were you never right?

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Those kids later returned. They were looking cranky as they gathered around the dead crow. Slowly rising from the table, I saw them kick gravel at

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the bird before drifting closer to the house. Opening the front door, I watched them continue by, before I scanned the field again. There hadn't been any sign of the black guy for hours. Turning toward the departing kids, I took note of a small shed at the edge of the forest. Guessing that the kids were on their way back home, I wondered how far they had come in that overcast countryside of half-naked trees. Again, I was distracted but the nature of things. Why was it that some trees lost their leaves and others kept them all year round? I felt the urge to switch on Mr. Internet for the first time, until the fourteen-year-old boy glanced back and squealed once he realized I was still watching them. The group spun, and everyone stood perfectly still. Hissing in Deutsch among themselves, one of the three ratty girls then yelled out, "Slender man!"

NACHT 2.

SATURDAY 27th FEBRUARY 2016

In the early evening, I needed to stretch my legs, so I headed around to the back of the little white house and across the field of dirt. The forest was an equal distance away from the building as on the field of grass side. While crossing that expanse of dust, I wondered why this land was left barren. Maybe it had recently been tilled, or maybe these were pastures and the livestock happened to be visiting the slaughterhouse at the moment. I didn't fucking know. I wasn't a farmer. There probably was a completely legitimate reason for the wasted space. Every process of production involved some aspect that, to the layman, appeared nonsensical. Why do some birds migrate and some trees lose their leaves while others don't, seemed inconsistent, but that only illuminated a hole in my own understanding. Reaching for my back pocket, I stroked the claw hammer that I had brought along. When you see any unknown person staring at you from outside your residence, you must take precautions! If he was merely passing by, he would have kept going. If he wanted something innocent, he would have said something. Strangers in cities are common place, but out here in the middle of nowhere, every encounter brought the defenses to the fore. Vigilance is necessary when you only have yourself to rely on.

Once I made it to the summit of the small hill, I was presented with a decent view of the surrounding territory. Apart from this hill, the countryside was completely flat and covered with reoccurring patches of woods, farms, and the settling mist. Facing the little white house, I glanced to my right, where those kids had returned – there was no town or any smoke signals

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of any kind. To my left, was the highway, and beyond was a lake not too far behind a stretch of trees. Scanning ahead, past the little white house, I focused on the stone tower. Stepping to my left, I began lining up the attic windows with the distant ruin. That's when I noticed I was stepping between several large rocks overgrown by the shaggy grass. I quickly realized that I was standing in the midst of a circle of small standing-stones. The boulders were only a couple of feet high, uneven, and in a ring about ten meters in diameter. Examining those dark stones, I uncovered even more that were almost totally buried. And then I looked up and saw a light coming from within the attic!

Rushing back to the house, I was glad that I had taken the foresight to hide my laptop after today's visitors, but that was beside the point, someone had invaded my fucking space! It was either the black guy, or those fucking kids. I was sweating in my overcoat as I charged across the field of dirt and noticed that there weren't any windows on this side of the house, except in the attic. No light came from upstairs as I reached the front door. My hammer was in hand as I keyed the lock. Scanning for any forced points of entry, I quietly scaled the stairs. Nothing seemed out of place and everything was silent – other than that fucking clock. The trapdoor overhead was still closed. Once I was sure that there was no one hiding in the bedrooms, I stormed up into the attic – but there was no one there. It had grown a lot darker, and as I stared back at the hill, it looked black against the haze of dusk. I was about to double-check downstairs, when I stopped dead in my tracks. I saw the light again! It was coming from the tower! One of the tiny windows in that ruin was shimmering with an amber glow. The optical illusion caused by the alignment of landmarks then became apparent. But who the fuck was in the tower?

Switching off my pen-light as I reached the creek, I peered across the small gorge at the gathering of people sitting around a campfire below the tower. At that point, I made the assumption that these guys were Syrian refugees, simply because they looked like the background characters in every news story on the topic. While standing there, watching the homeless, it dawned on me that I was doing the exact same thing that the black guy had done to my residence this morning. Shaking my head, I was in the motions of leaving those guys to their business, when I heard a violin (or some such Middle-Eastern instrument). The old men next to the campfire began singing in Arabic. The melancholy song was too beautiful to ignore, so I inched down the embankment, jumped across the stream, and climbed up around the trees

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along the side of the tower. I wasn't exactly hiding but no one noticed me, or at least no one cared that I stood just a few feet behind them. There were five middle-aged men seated, and I saw several others huddling further away. Once the song ended, they murmured something, and everyone laughed. Part of me wanted to sit, listen to them sing, and simply enjoy the campfire. But I wasn't one of them. And after all, my shaved head and tattoos painted me as the stereotypical portrait of those whom had sought to persecute these people the very moment that they had arrived in Europe. Prudence suggested that I didn't push my luck, and I began backing away. However, I glimpsed a flickering light within a hole in the tower, and it drew me inside. Fuck it, discretion be damned!

Creeping into the depth, I made my way up a staircase of ancient stone. Another small campfire crackled in the corner of a large chamber, though, no one attended this one. I headed further up the stairs, only to find the staircase bricked up, which didn't make sense. The light that I'd seen from the hill and the attic must have come from higher up than this first floor. A scream then erased the rational investigation from my mind! Clenching my teeth, I twisted on those dead-end stairs and found that same black guy howling at me from another doorway. Raising both of my hands in a non-threatening gesture, I restrained the urge to grab my claw hammer. Slowly heading down the stairs, I was followed and yelled at by the black guy the whole way. The group by the campfire looked too tired for the rantings of the hysterical man. Again, I kept my palms open and mouth shut. A few more gypsy-like guys stumbled over, and that's when the black guy's words must have registered with the rest of them. Suddenly they all lurched back, cursing at me! My claw hammer wasn't going to do jack-shit against this number, so getting the fuck out of there was literally running through my head – until they all beat me to the punchline. Just like that, every one of those exhausted looking men ran off like a bunch of stray cats. Whatever the black guy said, it had freaked them out so badly that they had even abandoned their violin, possibly the only material possession that they had saved after everything. Left alone by the campfire, I didn't want to sit by myself. The violin looked sad as I stared down at it. For a moment I was about to stomp it into a million fucking pieces and then kick the fucking thing into the flames. But I didn't. I just walked away, back through the woods, hating everything.

Arriving back at the little white house in the freezing wind, I slowly climbed into the attic where I no longer saw any light coming from the tower. That familiar rage then overcame my temper. Visions of Lulu choked,

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stabbed, and broken by my hands, only served to frustrate my contempt for that fucking place. Yet there was nothing more satisfying than bringing a beautiful female to her knees.

I had fallen asleep in the attic and awoken with my left shoulder feeling like I'd been kicked by a mule. A sound had caught my attention. A scrapping noise coming from downstairs. Tilting my head so that I could eliminate the background groans of the old house, I then heard a series of miniscule thumps. Footsteps. Footsteps getting louder. Coming up the stairs. From where I lay, I slithered on my belly across the attic to the edge of the trapdoor. Peering down into the dark, it was no surprise that I recognized those four adolescents, even though they were all wearing balaclavas. None of them noticed the open trapdoor or its extended ladder as they spread out into the two bedrooms. Either they were looking to do some thieving or planning on murdering me in my sleep. I couldn't have asked for a better gift from the gods. Watching them whisper, I could hear the anxiety in their trembling breath as they eventually gathered together above the stairs and directly below my spiteful little eyes. Without the slightest warning, I reached down with both arms and grabbed the closest kid by her face as I screamed like I wanted them dead! They all shrieked like they were shitting burning hot curry into their fucking pants! Ripping the balaclava off the kid in my grasp, she struck out in terror, shoving a friend down the stairs! She struggled like a spastic, but her ponytail was caught within the balaclava that was firmly locked in my grip. The horrified screams from those other little rodents was fucking hilarious as they crashed down the stairs and out the front door. How quickly they abandoned their own. The remaining child thrashed about as I lifted her up through the trapdoor, her panic was my kind of amphetamine. Her hands then caught the ladder and she frantically tried tearing herself free. Once we finally came face to face, I sneered into her terrified eyes, "I'm going to cut your fucking head off!"

I then dropped her! She landed with a gasp, a snap, and a clatter, as she tumbled straight down the staircase. Jumping after her, I watched the little girl shriek and crawl for the open front door. I could hear her friends crying her name as they all run off into the night, while I laughed at their horror. Last month, I had gone to a live freak-show, where one of the performers drove metal spikes through his arms and face. My photo was taken during the act as I watched on enthralled, and a friend later commented on the picture about how abnormal my psychotic grin had been. I scoffed at the remark. The

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pleasure of sadism was nothing to be ashamed of.

Walking after the kids, in order to make sure that they had really fucked off, I approached that tool shed among the trees. The door was bolted shut, but I soon found the key on the set to the house, and I peered inside. It was near impossible to see anything in there, but I did spot several large bags of cement powder. There was also a weird hollow sound in the shed as I glanced around the pitch black. Returning to the house, I reminded myself that I needed to keep my pen-light on me at all times. A weapon in the dark was useless if I couldn't see what I was dealing with. Rain then came gushing just as I stepped inside. Coming to a standstill in the center of the lounge, an idea suddenly struck me: those bags of cement would be perfect for camouflaging the mutilated remains of Lulu. I could plaster individual bones until they set into unrecognizable configurations before dumping them in that lake beyond the highway. A bit of concrete should be enough of a disguise for nature to sweep them under the carpet of the great indifference of the universe. That all-seeing eye was right there with me in that little white house. It was outside and surrounding and consuming everything. An endless emptiness that filled even the spaces between molecules. Two months ago, I had awoken early, suddenly confused about my understanding of the expanding universe. Specifically, its acceleration. My mind was wrestling with the theory of the Big Bang. After the universe had initially expanded at a ridiculous rate, it had cooled down, creating galaxies and the like. According to the observed red-shift taking place, we know that the universe is not only still expanding, but it's speeding up. However, the confusion that awoke me so rudely was: why after the 'inflation' period did the expansion slow down only to then start speeding up again? Apparently dark-energy was causing this second-acceleration by pushing space itself apart. As I had laid in bed in those small hours, I wondered if the universe had already died? Was this second-acceleration in fact the universe exploding? After the first expansion, the universe had reached an equilibrium – and then it all went POP! But due to the size of the cosmos, we can't even tell. Now that the universe is expanding at an accelerating rate, eventually all the other galaxies will be traveling away from our galaxy faster than the speed of light, and once those other galaxies travel beyond the horizon of the observable universe, it will appear as if our galaxy is alone in dead space. That's the deep-future of the universe. But what had bothered me was, if you pushed that idea further, given a long enough time-line, wouldn't the very expanding space in our galaxy, solar system, and the very atoms in our bodies also get pulled apart

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too? We'll all POP like the proverbial balloon of the universe. I couldn't sleep with that in mind, so had spent that morning searching on-line for lectures on the subject. I discovered that this was an already established hypothesis, appropriately titled, the Big Rip theory. Therefore, this second-acceleration is the death of us all! We're already dead and the universe doesn't give a fuck!

TAG 2.

SUNDAY 28th FEBRUARY 2016

I woke just before sunrise. While sipping on my coffee, I stared out the front windows at the mist covering the field. The muddy footprints on the kitchen counter gave away where the kids had entered last night. I soon located a loose bolt on the window which I nailed shut. Cleaning the surface of dirt and cement dust, I couldn't stop staring at the blender in the corner as I made a second coffee.

Crossing the highway and another field of grass, I entered a thin section of trees, before arriving at the lake in the pale morning light. Completely surrounded by the forest, the pond looked like a thousand other insignificant lakes in Germany. Some distance to my left, I saw a tiny wooden jetty. There wasn't any kind of path around the edge, but the trees were widely spaced, so I navigated the terrain without difficulty. My fingers were dry after mixing the cement late last night, and I was fucking annoyed that it hadn't already set by now. Maybe I had used too much water in the mix? Strolling along the old jetty, I suddenly wasn't sure if cement would even last underwater, especially if it hadn't even dried properly. Best to investigate on-line before the next time. That was when a brown dog with a white chest came running down the jetty wagging his tail. An old guy in a fedora, with a walking cane, emerged from the woods and waved cordially as he approached.

"Morgen," the sixty-year-old nodded, as he kept his distance.

"Howdy."

"English?"

"Hmm."

"Your vehicle breakdown?"

"No."

"Strange spot for sightseeing."

"Is it?"

"Isn't exactly on the tourist map."

"Point being?"

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“Just keep clear of the house on the other side of the road.”

“Why’s that?”

“For the best.”

“You from around here?”

“Zurich. But have a farm back there.”

“What’s wrong with the little white house?”

“Where’s your car?”

“Don’t drive.”

“What?”

“Came by taxi.”

“How are you getting out of here?”

“I’m not.”

“What?”

“Staying at the little white house.”

The dog then sat between his owner and me.

“Why’d you move here if it’s nothing special?” I finally asked.

The old chap ran his palm over his white beard. “Ah, well.”

Taking a deep breath of the chilled air, I relaxed to the sound of the water against the jetty.

“Had enough city life. Got in too much trouble.”

“Trouble? In Zürich? In Switzerland?”

“Yeah, we’re not all neutral,” he smiled, staring out over the lake. “Was a professor of biology at the University. Had to leave. No, I mean, I was obliged to leave.”

“Teaching creationism?”

“No! No, not at all,” he chuckled. “Always followed the guidelines to the letter. Unfortunately, keeping your personal life out of the workplace is a trickier little bugger. But that’s the politics of human nature.”

“You now a philosopher-farmer?”

“Less bother than trying to make it as a philosopher-king.”

“Yeah, fuck Plato and his elitism.”

“Indeed! Fuck Plato!”

“You fuck a student too?”

“If only it was that simple.”

“Hell is not without its bureaucracy.”

“And it’s hierarchies too.”

“What’s your problem with playing the game?”

“Well, like Montaigne once said, *“We are double in ourselves. What we*

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believe we disbelieve, and we cannot rid ourselves of what we condemn.”

Nodding my head, I waited.

“We are a curious animal, and that is what gets us in trouble.”

“And gets us fired.”

“And then we flee to Germany.”

“For the weather.”

“Ha!”

“You prefer farming to teaching?”

“Very much so. I’m far too old to make a fuss over my own ludicrous notions about the world anymore. Not a crusade worth the effort. Just look out for my own well-being these days.”

“Good old self-reliance.”

“But you’re a young man, with your *‘Libido dominandi.’*”

“Not so young,” I grumbled, sinking my hands deep into the pockets of my overcoat. “Got to remember, men too righteous end up crucified. While those too cautious never get their head out of their ass. It’s the tactician who wins the war.”

“Well, I’m no tactician.”

“So, what did you do, spike the university’s drinking water?”

“Nothing so entertaining. Merely had a few pet theories about certain unexplained aspects of the world. But some ideas one must keep to oneself.”

“Yet if you push an idea underground it can gestate and become malignant. However, if you nurture an idea it can latch onto like-minded individuals, where it too can metastasize. Either way ideas blossom in uncontrollable ways. I don’t fucking believe there’s any absolutely right course of action when it comes to channeling human potential. When inevitably, shit just happens.”

“Indeed, some ideas simply can’t be stifled.”

“So, what got you fired?”

“Oh, you know. That old problem with evolution.”

“Such as?”

“Life is rare. Rarer than we think. The planet is brimming with organisms, large and small – but. But I ask you, why don’t new gene-pools spontaneously arise on the Earth all the time? We live in this Goldilocks-zone, which enabled our gene-pool to get started in the first place – but. But why aren’t there other completely new forms of life springing into being and competing against our own evolutionary tree of life?”

“Because the initial event that sparked the primordial slime into life took

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more than just the right environmental conditions. And besides, haven't they found life thriving in some acids, and also miles under the ice? So, fuck the Goldilocks-zone!"

"Exactly! Thus, life is more unique than we already take for granted."

"And that got you fired? Seems a tad bit harsh."

"What do you know about dark-matter?"

"Huh, funny. Only recently learned that no one really knows what the fuck it is. Dark-energy is causing the accelerating expansion of the universe, by making more of itself – somehow. While dark-matter behaves, gravitationally, like regular everyday-matter, except that we can't actually see it. Right?"

"Correct."

"Were you fired for teaching astrophysics in biology class?"

"Ha! Almost!" He then pulled out a thin cigar and lit up. "Really crossed the line when I suggested that dark-matter could possibly be the unseen world of gods and devils."

"That's it?"

"What do you mean?"

"That's all that got you fired?"

"The problem was, I told it to three students – who I was fucking at the time."

"Three?! Bravo! It was fucking worth it!"

We shared a laugh as the dog watched the ripples.

"What are you really doing out here? Most people around these parts turn their back on me the moment they hear my accent."

"Why?"

"I'm not one of them."

"So?"

"So, we don't share common beliefs."

"I'll enjoy anyone's outlandish ideas without necessarily agreeing with them."

"That's a dangerous position to take. Remember what you said about being a tactician. Sometimes you have to stand on one side or the other, or else everyone will ostracize you. History doesn't look kindly upon the pacifist."

"Says the Swiss."

"But ultimately, what does the organism of civilization care about the individual as long as you play the bills-game? However, in order to pay the bills, you need gainful employment, which requires fitting in. Your time is yours, unless those whom employ you no longer find you compatible. And

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then you have a problem – with everything! And mark my words, most of your friends are spies waiting to see you fail. Those people are beyond fighting, because they use the social system itself to tear you down. In the end, making them the better tactician.”

“Yeah, well, with some people the best course of action is inaction. Sometimes reason doesn’t work. By removing yourself from the equation, you allow the vacuum left behind to do all the talking.”

“That’s arrogance. How can we ever know that we make any difference at all in our absence alone?”

“Inaction in the context of how you end a bad habit. You just fucking stop doing it!”

“But by removing yourself from the problem, those causing the issue will see it as a victory.”

“My father used to tell me, *“He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day.”*”

“Ha!”

“Why the fuck is it that philosophers are so preoccupied with the betterment of civilization as a whole? Are they all saying that in order to truly elevate yourself you must concentrate on the bigger picture? Or is it only because of their supposedly altruistic fucking endeavors that others have chosen to remember them? Fuck this daily facade that most people have for longing to live a harmonious existence, while the fucking world and our own self-sabotage leaves us all in ruins! No one knows how important their fucking principles are until their very fucking life is put on the line. We’re all just fucking meat-insects! So-called intellectual power-houses should fucking know this by now!”

“It’s all academic until someone straps on a suicide-vest. And then the pacifists run crying behind the authorities with the fire-arms.”

“Fuck these smug optimists in their comfort-zones, forgetting how the little guy on the street is barely fucking surviving! I fucking hate listening to people that have never known what it’s like to go hungry, and yet preach high ideals from ivory fucking towers!”

“Look at how well Trump is doing in his electoral campaign at the moment. People respond best to those whom don’t talk down to them. No one likes being scolded over how things ought to be instead how they actually are. That kind of pretension tends to get you condemned by the masses. After all, who really votes on reasonable evaluations? It’s nothing new. We are all openly bigoted behind closed doors – until the masses endorse our bias.

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And people in numbers are malicious entities. We'll seize any opportunity to humiliate and ridicule others. The end of an intimate relationship is a prime example of how easily we regress to our impulsive nature. We don't want to hear the truth, we're emotional-engines running on instinct. And when emotion gets in the driver's seat, we abandon that most divisive delusion of all: the belief that other lives have value. But ultimately, we are all wrong about everything. If we observe, then we are missing out on experiencing. And if we experience, then we are not objective. The only way for one to understand the bigger picture, one must objectively-experience! One must coexist both inside and outside of the universe at the same time. Such as god and his only son."

"You know, you remind me of the-most-hated-girl-I-knew. Known her for nearly three years, though, had always been curious as to why this one particularly little specimen had inspired so much animosity from so many people. She was a fellow artist, and once the distraction of sex and sodomy had been taken care of, it was undeniable to me how talented she really was. Her parents were both success stories within the Hamburg art world, so it was no wonder that nepotism paved her career straight out of high school. However, once she moved to Berlin, I immediately noticed the hatred come toward her from multiple angles. After a couple of years of introducing her to various social circles, I could unequivocally confirm that she really was the-most-hated-girl-I-knew. So, I began watching others behavior around her. Naturally they all put up with the small-talk, accompanied with the social custom of faked smiles and quickly fading interest. But given enough of these observations, I could no longer ignore the general irritation felt by everyone who interacted with her. It had gotten so bad that people even questioned why the fuck I was hanging out with her. But fuck them! I've never required the validation from one set of friends before I could befriend another. I'm not embarrassed by the politics or dumbfounded by the presumptions coming out of the mouths of my friends. What interest is there in limiting myself to closed-communities of pandering yes-men with their one-sided friendship-conditioning. I want wildly abusive ideas, radical thought, and the voice of polemics permeating my sponge of a thought-process. Without truly free inquiry the conversation stagnates and becomes incestuous and fucking boring! I want backwater racists as friends, I want vegan fitness fanatics as friends, I want metal-head atheists as friends, I want catholic mommy-boy fagots as friends, I want junkie scene-climbers as friends, I even want *'Nazi-gangster-Jews'* as my fucking friends! I want paradoxical

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influences from unreasonable sources to affect my perception, no matter how unsettling or counter-intuitive. I find myself adhering to Hegel's nugget of wisdom, *"Learn from ideas you dislike."* However, it seems that the-most-hated-girl-I-knew, was also one of those easily offended offenders in today's anti-shame-but-love-to-blame climate. I weep for Rosa Luxemburg. Yet it came as no surprise that one day she wrote to me, *"You're plain ugly on the inside. I have no time and space in my life for your shit anymore. Not even for mindless entertainment."* Soon afterward, another friend spieled off all the aspects that they despised about the-most-hated-girl-I-knew. The detail was extreme. From her obnoxious condescending attitude, to her contradictory claims of rebellion, and even went on about her unoriginal aesthetic. Listened to the lengthy criticism, I was still intrigued as to how she triggered such hostility in so many people. Perhaps on a spectrum of personality and physical traits, she encapsulated just the right amount of obnoxious-contradictory-unoriginality that sparked everyone's bile. I deduced that this reaction was due to two factors present in her haters: envy and disgust. The envy of what she had (money and looks). And the disgust as she reflected the elements that these people disowned about themselves (irrational insecurity). Their envy and disgust were a feedback loop of: THE INHERENT SELF-HATRED OF HUMANITY! Hate drives all human emotion. Negative emotions are always the dominant. Whether hate for what we have been, hate for what we are, or hate for what we will become. Love for anything is powered by the hatred of losing that love. Hate is the true constant of humanity, not love! The most popular delusion we tell ourselves is that we are better than mere hateful beasts. We aren't! We are all hateful. Love, hate's supposed counter-weight, is easily turned on its self-righteous head. Othello murdered his beloved based on little reason, and that exact same Shakespearean suspicion happens all the time in relationships. Hatred, however, is never easily forsaken, forgiven, or forgotten. The Freudian pleasure-principle is said to be oppressed by the reality-principle – but the key factor keeping the pleasure-principle in check is the 'hatred' of the reality-principle. Aversion outweighs attraction! There would be anarchy if all mankind conducted itself impulsively and did whatever we wanted all the time. Hatred toward life keeps life alive and very fucking hateful for doing so. Hate balances us. And then, whether we support whatever, we look for the appropriate means to vent our hatred, even in the name of compassion. We will back one side of a dispute for the indulgence of hating the contrary argument. Love has consistently been proven fleeting! Love will only temporarily numb the hate. And like a narcotic, love only

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dumbs down intelligence. Love can only ease the suffering of the masses when it is used as the illusion of the carrot on a stick, only retarding our perspective in the short-term. The external population's hatred is perpetual, and yet we hate being hateful so much that we run back to love as soon as possible like cowards. But love is always fading and quickly replaced by copious amounts of hatred. Inevitably, hatred wins in the end, every time! Hate has always been there. Hatred toward everything is what compels us to do anything. Sex, hunger, and the need to belong, are incomplete instincts without hatred's fuel motivating us away from their opposition: the hate of celibacy, the hate of starvation, and the hate of loneliness! But you have to keep in mind, when I say, hatred drives everyone, by 'everyone' I mean 'me'. You are just a hateful part of myself! And I alone am the inherent self-hatred of humanity!"

The old guy looked away and puffed on his cigar.

"Why the fuck should I stay away from the little white house?"

"Too late for that now. After all, what stops someone from crossing the line and doing something wrong?" the philosopher-farmer said. "Respect or fear of the consequence. And you have neither."

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Writing on and off throughout the day, I took a break when the clouds parted, and wandered around the outside of house while drinking a coffee. At the back of the building, I found an area of the path where the gravel had been swept aside, revealing a totally different sort of stone below, much rougher and yet immaculately joined. The foundations of the house were seemingly made up of an older masonry. Maybe the place once had a patio around it. I then headed over to the tool shed, and in the crisp light of day I counted the remaining bags of cement. However, I was distracted by a strange stone structure in the corner. There, I found a padlocked iron gate that looked like the bars on a prison window above a black-hole. I could hear the vague sound of water sloshing below, as if a steady current was pouring smoothly by. It must have been a natural spring, though looked more like a medieval dungeon. Learning closer, I spotted some letters craved around the inside rim. As I reached for my pen-light, I heard a car pulling up to the house.

A white Mercedes-Benz was parked some distance from the house and a small woman reluctantly approached. With her arms crossed, she appeared as though she was cautiously crossing a minefield. Marching from the far side of the little white house, I grew more pissed off by the second. For fuck's sake, what part of going somewhere to be alone, doesn't the fucking universe

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understand?! Impatiently, I called out, “You lost?!”

The gray-haired woman paused. Her shoulders twitching as she replied, “Mr. Knox? Do you remember me? We met in Berlin.”

Squinting at her, I did find her somewhat familiar. “When?”

“While visiting Natalie.”

My mouth opened, and eyes drifted. “What was your name again?”

“Chloe.”

“Huh. Portman finally want her portrait?” And then skepticism struck me. “How the fuck did you find me?!”

“Does it matter?”

“Yes! Yes, it does fucking matter! How the fuck did you find this exact location in the whole wide world? I seriously want to fucking know!”

The fifty-year-old woman in her thick woolen jacket and blanket-like scarf, took her glasses off, glanced around, and finally spoke up, “A worm told me.”

“Holy shit. Well, come inside. Get warm. Would you like a tea or coffee? I only have instant if you can handle it? I know some people can’t stand the shit. Like it really tastes any fucking worse than some of the puke that most cafes serve. Come in, come in. Tell me, how is little old Natalie doing these days?”

“Please, I’d rather stay out here.”

Slowly turning toward the weathered woman, I still couldn’t place her accent. Maybe she was Greek.

“I don’t mean to cause a fuss. It’s not my intention to intrude.”

“We’re long past that, sunshine.”

“It’s very difficult, you know, for me to be out here.”

“Yeah, it’s fucking freezing!”

“Please, let me say what I came to say.”

“What’s on your mind?” I said, taking a few steps forward. “Tell Uncle Fingers.”

Chloe immediately inhaled and backed off, maintaining the gap between us. “You must leave! Come with me!”

“What? Why? Go where?”

“Just leave! This place! These cross-roads! Please! Come with me!”

“Takes two to make a fucking cross.”

“I’ll explain, but not here! At least let’s take a drive to the nearest village.”

“I don’t think so.”

“Please!”

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“Where are you from?”

Chloe rubbed her arms as she looked around the fields and took another step backward.

So, I mirrored her and backed off too. “It’s touching. So many well-wishing strangers concerned for my safety today, and for absolutely no apparent fucking reason. Would you look at this place. It’s pretty as a fucking picture. So, what the fuck are you all talking about?!”

Shaking her head, Chloe soon nodded in surrender. “Lisbon. Been driving since Friday night. After the worm woke me.”

“Should probably go see a doctor and get that shit checked out.”

“Was in a dream. I was here. This house. I saw what you did to that girl. She trusted you. I didn’t want to watch but was forced to. Those hands. Hands behind the curtain. They grabbed me. Made me watch you. They were so strong. But there was no one behind the curtain.”

I was fascinated by her traumatic accounts, as visions from my own reoccurring childhood nightmares came to mind.

“I know what you have!” Chloe spoke louder, though her voice trembled as if she were about to burst into tears at any moment. “I know what you took from The Old Grahams house.”

I was impressed, however, I also understood how cold-reading works, so remained silent as I smiled.

“It’ll eat you! The gate! It will eat you!”

“You do realize that that worm was a fucking liar. You do realize that, don’t you? And we’re both lying to each other right now. So, who the fuck are you to decipher the truth in this labyrinth of deceit? Yet you believed a worm! A FUCKING WORM!”

“I found you here though, didn’t I.”

With a wink, I pointed my index finger at Chloe, as I walked away. “You drive safe now. Say hi to Natalie for me.”

“Bruce!”

Oh, that tone, when females snarl my name like it’s a leash around my fucking throat.

“Seek out the one with the seven eyes and the backward arms!” Chloe strained her voice as she spoke. “Please!”

The whole time I watched that hysterical woman drive away, I was only picturing Natalie’s mischievous smirk as she had laid naked on the floor of that hotel suite.

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Later, while writing, I was listening to Montserrat Figueras & Jordi Savall, *Les Trois Principes, Alef, Mem, Shin*. The moment the song ended, I heard a splash of water. Reaching over my laptop, I killed the stereo. The tick-tocking clock kept the beat to my left, and birds murmured through one partially opened window, but that was it. Getting to my feet as I looked around the room, I was sure that I had heard something that had sounded like a brick dropping into a bath. Or was it like a cement-coated bone being thrown into the lake. Other rattling noises of the stretching building put my mind at ease. I liked this place. The short-term appeal was what I had found attractive, in relation to my long-term life in the city. There was always that balance to find. The professional verse the private life, the social verse the intimate, the internal verse the external. The duality of love was no different. The domestic verse the romantic. The two should always be kept at a distance. Like they say, never mix business with pleasure. Domestic love was the long-term relationship of couples living together, while romantic love should never be tainted by such mundane tedium! Romantic love was passionate and short-lived. Both sides had their benefits. To deny either was to become imbalanced. Yet Game-Theory says no one wants to come second place, so secrecy was the key to attaining a healthy balance of domestic and romantic love. When YHWH said, "*I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me,*" he was stating what both the domestic and romantic lover says. It's a sentiment of devotion. Yet there are still other gods and plenty more females, you just choose to deny them. Females, unlike gods, have always been a formidable adversary, but like gods, inevitably jealous. Those that go looking for what is not meant for them, deserve to suffer from what they find. Domestic or romantic, they are all females: insidious beings, consumed with infallible rationalizations for their actions and disassociations. Keep the domestic separate from the romantic! However, chemistry always breaks down sooner or later. Heat-death is not only the destiny of the universe. There has never been any lasting cohesion between any female that I have fucked. Some are great lovers, some are shit. I have been a perfect gentleman by some standards, and a disgusting pig according to others. Once the definition of the dynamic blurs, all the pleasuring in the world will never hold off her nagging. No domestic or romantic relationship is worth suffering a nagger. Nagging is a creative downer. Nagging kills inspiration. Nagging suffocates freedom. Forgiveness in a relationship is much like Nietzsche's stance on Christian forgiveness: merely the inability to take revenge! Punishment or forgiveness, though, it makes no difference. She will always absolve herself

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to herself. In turn, I also do whatever I want, which happens to be exactly what she fears the most. Once the innocence has gone from a domestic or romantic investment, it is doomed. The innocence is systematically replaced with nagging. But out there in that little white house all by myself, I was spared the nagging, and instead, I was confronted with the great indifference of the fucking universe.

Making myself another coffee, I recalled Lulu talking about her rape-fantasy. The vanity of a female's ego was boundless. She craved being desired so much that she needed a man to lose all self-control and risk imprisonment just to possess her. However, Lulu's glorification of rape had failed to factor in being gang-raped by those she was actually appalled by. She was just another kid suffering the eternal delusion of controlling the uncontrollable. The reality of rape-fantasies was never as well directed as Gaspar Noé's, *Irreversible*. Lulu had often complained that whenever she saw people eating pork, it made her feel like she was being raped – in a bad way. I had recently asked how was one type of meat worse than any other? For surely her meaty fucking cunt was just as fucking disgusting! That was the last time that we had spoken on-line. I end friendships as easily as I begin them. I am no tactician. I am imbalanced.

NACHT 3.

SUNDAY 28th FEBRUARY 2016

At twilight, I climbed back into the attic while a wind battered the stone walls and whistled through weary gaps in the roofing. I wanted to see the sunset from up there as it fell on the backside of the house, and then I felt it. An awareness like I had just remembered a chore I had forgotten do. Scanning the framework, I found that pale, porous mass clinging to a corner of the ceiling. Bone colored and riddled with holes like a thousand spider eyes, it stared back at me. The sunset began drawing my attention, though, just before I looked away, I saw several of those wet black, eel-like things reaching out of their nest toward me. Ignoring the serpents, I realized that the sun was sinking directly behind the summit of the hill. I then turned toward the opposite window. There was light coming from several of the tower windows. Staring at the distant ruin, I was without a doubt that there was definitely access to the upper levels.

The creek was flooded when I came through the trees. It was a fucking torrent! The water was too wide and far too rapid for any kind of crossing.

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There must have been a storm somewhere south, in order to account for such a dramatic surge. Looking up at that imposing stronghold, I couldn't spot any refugees camped outside, but the narrow slits in the fortified walls continued to flicker with light from within.

It could have just been the wind, but the sound of crushed leaves drew my torch toward the woods behind me. Something caught my eye. At first, I thought it had started to rain. They looked like droplets in the beam of my small flashlight, until one landed on my sleeve. It was a maggot! There were maggots falling all around! Glancing upward into the swaying trees, my flashlight swept across the remains of dead animals hanging in the branches. Dozens of rotten carcasses swung above. I don't know how I couldn't smell the stench that must have been produced by so many decomposing bodies, but I figured that I was upwind. The more I inspected the tall trees, the more gutted displays of mutilation presented themselves. It was hard to tell exactly what type of animals they were. Their hides were skinned, and the flesh putrefied. Pigs, dogs, or even horses. They weren't small carcasses, these were big animals. Then I heard it again! There was something in the woods. I could clearly hear someone stomping through the leaves. I killed the flashlight. It was a human figure! And he was running at me! I replaced my torch with the claw hammer, but then I saw a machete in the hand of this stranger! Fuck this! Turning toward the river, I grinned, resigning myself to the only apparent option – and I ran at the fucking gorge! I heard that psycho screaming behind me as I leaped with the hammer still in my hand. The embankment on the tower-side of the river was soft with damp soil and I actually bounced off – luckily the claw hammer hooked onto an exposed root, and only one foot of mine sunk into that freezing water. Dragging myself half-way up the steep bank, I realized that it was the black guy shouting incessantly at my escape. In the weak light it was obvious that not only was he stark naked, but he was covered in deep lacerations. Glaring at the machete, I couldn't help wondering if his wounds were self-inflicted. He was seriously fucking irate and chopped at the ground with his weapon. Suddenly he went silent. Clinging to the roots, I watched as he slowly turned away from me. He had seen something in the woods that I couldn't make out from my vantage point. Shaking his head, he began sobbing like a child. Both his hands rose in front of him as if he was apologizing to someone. I was about to climb higher so that I could catch a glimpse of what had so abruptly terrified this big guy – when he was attacked! His body snapped back as his scream instantly turned shrill! The momentum of the collision sent him back off the edge of the gorge.

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There he defied gravity and levitated directly above the river. Before I had the chance to question what the fuck – he was split open! His body tore apart down the middle like a loaf of blood-filled bread. His guts spilled out in a single explosive moment. A fine spray of his blood even reached my face as his internal organs slopped into the relentless water, soon followed by his body. After that, I clung to the bank for a while, absorbing what I had just seen, and scanning the other side for signs of anything.

Inevitably, I made my way up to the tower. There was a weird groaning noise coming from above. A howling. Circling the ruins for the first time, I assumed the sound was caused by the wind cutting through the cracks in the stone. Upon reaching the far side, I came across smaller, broken down walls leading to a courtyard below the tower. There had been a rather large building here once upon a time. But it was those three tiny windows next to an external staircase that zigzagged up this side of the tower which led me upward closer to their golden light.

Inside the first window came the moaning of men. Looking inside that darkness, I saw burning hot metal tools. Those torture devices illuminated only as much of the burning skin as they peeled from the flesh of what appeared to be an enormous pile of bodies. The room was full of people slowly being stripped of their meat. I couldn't make out whom the torturers were, until one of them was turned on by another who began hacking off his face! Whoever picked up the fallen instruments carried on doing the same to everyone else.

I continued upward. Inside the second narrow slit of a window the cries were louder but just as inarticulate. There was more than enough light in that chamber. Dozens of naked men, women, and children crawled over each other while they burned. Each seemed to have been burdened with a head-sized coal somehow implanted within their gut which was slowly roasting them from the inside out. Writhing in agony, nothing they did could diminish their suffering. It was an orgy of smoldering torment stacked upon itself.

The third window was almost completely silent. All I heard as I climbed those precarious stairs was the snorting of a hundred humans choking down molten hot iron. The heat scorched my face as I peered inside at that smelting chamber. There was a massive cauldron in the center where all those deranged people clambered against each other just so that they could reach into that insanely hot substance. Their hands instantly burst to flames as they cupped the liquid metal and then drank it down! Some even dunked their faces directly into the pot, and despite completely melting off their identity, they

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seemed incapable of quenching their thirst or resisting the immense damage they caused. Everyone was burnt and disfigured, and yet rabid for more. The only ones that weren't crowded around the edge of the pot, were those squatting as they shit or pissed out that still golden metal. Their genitals were charred to the bone, and some even began eating the burning fecal matter as it poured out of the rectum of another.

Once I reached the top of the tower, I followed a walkway around the internal and external parapets. Finally, I came to a sealed gate that stood between the open roof and myself. Looking through the old iron bars, I leaned away from the sight of a naked body lying in the center of that six-meter-square space. It was impossible, but it was Lulu's body! I recognized the tiny unicursal hexagram tattooed on her left ankle. The gate wasn't locked, yet it wouldn't budge as I violently shook it. I had to know if it was her. Using the outer battlements as a support, I climbed up and over the inner wall. Landing on solid stone, I looked up as Lulu herself slowly rose to her feet before me. The wind cut right through my overcoat, but Lulu stood without a stitch of clothing or even her fucking head! Reaching out, I took her in my arms and held her tight. Her skin was like all long-dead meat: cold and unappetizing. The stump of her neck felt soft against my jawline as I sniffed at it. She still smelt great. Her hands held on desperately as she began trembling. Glancing up, I saw a distant light. A huge fire back-lit the little white house! A bonfire on top of the small hill. Lifting my head for a better view, Lulu then twisted us around. One of her hands sunk into my pants while she grabbed her own breast with the other. I shoved her away, and she immediately turned and bent over, displaying her luscious ass. The fire on the hill then meant nothing to me. Though, suddenly she was no longer made of flesh. Her white meat had stiffed and was now punctured with thousands of holes. She was made of that porous entity that had haunted me ever since Loch Ness. And then, even her anus spread wide open as one of those blackened serpents slithered out of her ass like an infernal erection. A dozen more snake-sized leeches extended from Lulu's new orifices as she slowly stood and faced me. Her head was still missing but somehow, she wore a crown of such inhuman features that only a devil would flaunt it. Impatiently, she slapped me, and then grabbed my throat, pulling me close as serpents slid around my head! Pointing out to the distance, she wanted to show me something. While her grip crushed my throat, we gradually rotated as her outstretched index finger covered the entire circumference of the battlements. I tried breaking free with both of my hands tugging at her wrist, but then those serpents wrapped around my eyes

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and contracted until I was sure that my fucking skull would crack!

Blindfolded by black snakes, I then saw what they force-fed directly into my optic nerves. Through that pain the pith of human perception was peeled back, unveiling the unseen world: a vast desolate landscape bleeding as if it was mortally allergic to itself. The Earth had become the great-beast-with-two-backs while stricken the bubonic plague. Where the forests had been, now millions of ash-sodden, insect-like animals ate each other alive. It was a grotesque riot without end. Looking toward where the little white house had once been, I saw in its stead was a circle of stone pillars surrounding what looked like some kind of pit. All those writhing devils kept clear of the pillars. To my right, where the lake had been, was a massive entanglement of god-size serpents that were strangling each other as they stretched all the way to the fucking horizon. To my left, in the distance, I saw three enormous creatures that resembles mountains with horned heads, multiple limbs, and even more disproportionately huge mouths. They clashed with each other so abrasively that they sent chunks of the land miles into the sky. There was something even bigger looming behind me and casting a shadow over this entire hemisphere, but I was unable to turn my head any further. With one of my hands gripping little Lulu's hip, my other fingers sunk into her esophagus and trachea. But how the fuck do you choke the headless?! Then I saw the burning hill rise up as if hell itself was flexing its muscles. The shrieks of a billion victims of the battlefield filled the air, and Lulu's absent head gave rise to a sickeningly disembodied voice that screamed directly into my fucking ear!

Collapsing against the battlements and coughing frantically, I was instantaneously alone. There was no demonic Lulu anywhere to be found. In the light rain, I eventually got me to my feet. The bonfire was still blazing on the hill. I was once again looking at an Earth that geologists recognized. The only question that bothered me was, how come the fire on the hill was in both versions of my vision?

Taking one last look around the empty rooftop, I hurried down the dangerously slippery stairs. It wasn't until I reached the top window that I realized that the gate onto the roof was open when I left. Frowning against the gales, I ignored the now blackened windows. The Harrowing Of Hell then came to mind as I nearly slipped off the stairs. When Jesus had traveled to Hades in order to liberate the biblical forefathers, how the fuck was he meant to find them all so quickly? The Syrian refugees couldn't even walk to Germany in three fucking days. How was anyone hoping for salvation meant

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to rendezvous with Jesus in time? Sheol was a big fucking place. And let's not forget, evolution happens even in the depths of Gehenna. Environments shape everything into entirely different organisms. Given enough time in hell, the most egregious pain would eventually become the norm. Those that Jesus might have sought to save would no longer be who he was looking for. After all, the abyss changes even the best of us.

Once I made it to the gorge, the river had dried up into barely a few puddles. I never questioned why. Climbing up the other bank, I found the machete lying on the ground. The very moment I picked it up the voices of men yelling came screaming my way. It was the other refugees. A group of them emerged below the tower, searching the ruins with flashlights. The machete must have reflected their light, because they suddenly aimed their torches directly at me! Shaking my head as I backed away, I ran like a motherfucker for the little white house. Knowing that the front door wouldn't stop this angry mob, I considered my options in a fury. When I made it to the house, I was overheating, so yanked off my overcoat and flung it at the front steps. Sparing a moment, I glanced back and counted six men racing out of the woods, all of them screaming bloody-murder as they came! Running around the house, I charged straight for the hill, and the refugees followed. There have been times when I thought to myself that wearing black could come in handy if I ever needed to hide from sight. But my light-bulb of a shaved head destroyed that fucking idea! However, I found that working out at the gym had actually severed me better than expected, and I shot up that hillside within a fucking minute.

Up there, I found several small fires surrounding those standing-stones. As I approached, the random rain drops increased in frequency. In the midst of the stones, I saw a ball of long human hair. It was a head! It had to be Lulu! Running into the circle, I reached out – when a heavy chain swung over my head and looped around my fucking throat! A foot then kicked my legs out from under me, and a knee slammed into my kidney on the way down! The machete fell to the ground, as I clung to the noose around my neck. And then the mob stumbled up the hill. Squinting, I was honestly shocked that it was Chloe keeping me on a leash. Never underestimate the elderly. She scowled at those men as they spread out and slowly approached. Regardless of everyone, I had to see the face of that head lying on the ground. Clawing at the top soil, I strained against the chain with every ounce of energy that I could muster.

“What are you doing?!” Chloe snarled. “Who the hell are these people?!”

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The head was only a few inches from my finger tips and I reached onward. A man then came running, a thick length of wood was held above his head!

Chloe released me, and I lurched onto the severed head. Scoping it up, I glanced back at the attacking man as Chloe raised some small trinket in her hand and spoke in an unknown language. The yelling man suddenly dropped straight to the ground in spasms! Chloe began addressing the others, but I didn't give a fuck. However, when I looked at what lay in my hands, I found nothing but a large clump of dirt. No hair. No head. Nothing!

"Where's your fucking car?!" I demanded, as the rain began.

"Why didn't you listen to me?!" Chloe hissed.

"Where the fuck's your car?!"

"Back down there. A long way off."

"Fucking run!" I snarled, as the five other men advanced! We rushed down the side of the hill in the opposite direction to the highway. "You fucking sure this is the way?!"

Chloe didn't reply.

I then realized that neither of us had brought the fucking machete! "The fuck are you doing out here?!"

Chloe struggled to keep up as the flashlights from the men swept through the trees behind us. I have often pictured myself being attacked by a random person who brutally murders me on the street. Though, I had never imagined that I would ever be running from a literal fucking lynch-mob!

The woods went on for-fucking-ever, and I was losing faith in Chloe, until I looked back and saw that we were no longer being followed.

"There!" Chloe gasped, pointing ahead. "I parked not from there."

I could only just see the shape of an ominous barn among the black trees – when a man leaped out from nowhere and slammed into Chloe! She screamed and was tackled to the ground. I kept running toward the barn as the rest of those refugees appeared from all angles. I guess Chloe's voice caught everyone's attention. I made it to the building and slipped in through a huge door without anyone coming after me. My lungs were exploding as I struggled to control my breath. I knew I should keep running the fuck away from that clusterfuck, but the reality was worse than my heaving lungs. I needed Chloe in order to find her fucking car! And why the fuck didn't I bring the fucking machete?! This was fucked! But then, in that pitch-black barn, I saw a welcomed sight: the long, wooden handle of a fucking ax!

I'm not saying that those five men were attempting to rape Chloe.

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No, I wouldn't want to sound like an Islamophobe, perpetuating the fear-mongering. So, let's just say that those five men were assisting her out of her pants while they insisted she relax and catch her breath face-down on the ground. I bashed in the face of the first cunt with the full force of my ax handle! If only the ax had a head, I could have gone CHOP, CHOP, CHOP all night long. Making do with my baseball bat-like friend, I continued going BASH, BASH, BASH through three heads before the other two scrambled the fuck out of range. I still got one guy in the knee cap, and another in the ribs. Grabbing Chloe by the elbow, I sneered, "Move!"

Two of the men soon came running back at us. His left ear then looked like piece of raw bacon after the ax handle had WHACKED into the side of his fucking face! The other guy hesitated, so I went for him! He ran the fuck off, and I didn't follow. Clutching Chloe's arm, we made it safely to the barn.

"Where exactly is the fucking car?!" I whispered, keeping a look out from the huge door. "Hey! Wake up! Hello! Where the fuck is the car?!"

"Not far. Next to the creek. Need to follow the creek back to the road."

"Go, get the fucking car started. I'll make sure they don't follow. If I'm not there a fucking minute after you, drive back to the fucking house. I'll meet you there."

"Wait!"

"The fuck out of here!"

"No!"

"Don't fucking make me use this shit on you!" I sneered so fucking bitterly that Chloe backed off without another word. Turning to the woods, I spotted several figures hurrying through the dark. Someone then grabbed my shirt and tugged at me from behind! Lurching with shock, I discovered a child gesturing for me to follow further into the barn. As the yells of the men came from all sides, I raced after the kid. It was that skinny boy who'd broken into the little white house. He was already at the other side of the cluttered barn, waving for me to hurry the fuck up. The sound of planks of wood breaking were joined by flashlights as the barn was suddenly raided! By then, however, the kid had led me out a rotten hole in the corner where I learned that the rundown building was actually an old watermill. The creek that Chloe had mentioned, eked past a huge waterwheel that had been long since clogged with weeds. The kid quickly jumped into the shallow pond and pointed under the motionless turbine. I shrugged with an expression of so-fucking-what?! The men were getting closer, so the kid pulled my ax and we both crawled through the icy water into an obscure cavity behind the

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towering wheel. It looked like a cave, but the water was trickling further inward. When I glanced back at the kid, that fucking prick kicked me in the shoulder – and I went head over ass off a ledge and plummeted into the void!

The water was terrifically awful. Just fucking terrific. I surfaced waist-deep in a subterranean cavern, while the screams of the kid echoed with the shouting men. The hole that I had fallen from was just above my eye level and I couldn't see what was going on. Searching with frozen fingers, I needed my ax handle. It was wood, so it should have been floating somewhere nearby. The voices above soon faded, and I was left in the hollow dark. Glad that I had hidden my phone with my laptop, I pulled out my watertight pen-light. Once the halogen beam came on, I was presented with nothing that I had expected. Cathedral-like arches were carved directly out of the solid stone. It was a man-made tunnel, and the renaissance statues framing the entrance encouraged me onward.

The passageway went from side to side, probably following the natural course of the original cave system. One thing I was not about to do, was get lost down that fucking rabbit hole. The moment the path might fork, I would head back the way I came. Fuck getting disorientated underground. But the tunnel led one way and one way only. Eventually, I came to hole in the ceiling. It was the well below the old tool shed, though, there was no way I could reach up and climb out, and besides, I couldn't even get through the locked bars at the top.

Further down the tunnel, it finally opened into a large circular chamber. As my flashlight swept above, it was obvious that I was standing directly where the basement of the little white house should have been. The main room's floorboards were about forty-feet overhead. That's when I heard the sirens arrive. Maybe the fire services had been alerted after someone had spotted the blaze on the hill. Or maybe Detective Rosswald and Everett had returned with reinforcements. Sirens all sounded the fucking same to me, "*Too late! Too late! Too late!*" Listening to men yelling in Deutsch, I heard more vehicles pull up. Someone thumped vigorously at the front door, and yet I kept quiet. Even when the water broke open and those beings slowly surfaced around me, I held my breath. My uncontrollable shivering suddenly stopped once an injection of adrenaline spiked my entire nervous system from what I saw. Turning, I shone my light on their opaque presence. They reminded me of totem-poles. Tall entities made up of countless limbs and other writhing body parts. They seemed without head or tail, looming clusters of flesh that wrestled with themselves as they stood alone, gently swaying like bare tree

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trucks in a strong wind. The even spacing between them made me realize that they were unable to move from their imprisonment. Twisting to compare those behind me, I spotted a second entrance to this flooded pit, where the current of the stream continued out. I accidentally backed up a little too close to one of those unidentifiable towers of muscle, so it arched above me. Slowly leaning away, I heard it snarl. The chaos of multi-jointed limbs that made up its slender structure then spread apart in the middle as the head of a giant devil emerged. It roared with the voice of a thousand hungry lions! The rest of those infernal oracles then revealed their savage faces and fanged jaws as they too screamed at me! I lost my balance in the water, falling over just as one of the pillars of abomination swooped down, trying to bite my fucking head off! My stay was no longer welcome. Half swimming, half crawling, I lunged for the exit. Those things were big but lethargic. I was knocked over, but the devil that attacked was blocked by another fumbling beast. Thumping against the stone arch, I dragged myself several meters into the tunnel before glancing back. To my undying frustration, I spotted Lulu again standing naked in the middle of the chamber. Silence returned as those creatures began focusing on her, and just before they ate her alive, she whispered to me, “Do what you always fucking do.”

By the time I crawled out of the lake, I was frozen to the fucking core. Stumbling to the tree line, I watched as the emergency vehicles drove away from the little white house. I finally understood what Chloe had alluded to with her mention of ‘cross-roads’.

Never in my life have I showered for as long as I did in those small hours. I had had some serious concerns about the circulation in my toes, but gradually the color returned. Stepping out of the shower, I saw that I had forgotten about my little test in the bathroom basin. I had left a few pieces of cement fully submerged in water, there to verify if they would maintain their integrity. They had.

TAG 3.

MONDAY 29th FEBRUARY 2016

I hadn't slept that night. I never saw Chloe again. I didn't care. I had things to do. Evidence to dispose of.

While listening to Planet Of Zeus, *Stab Me*, I sipped on a coffee by the front windows as I watched the first signs of morning touch the tree tops.

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With the growing daylight, I saw thousands and thousands of females of every skin color and tit-size standing outside. Headless, naked females. All of them standing still as though the fields were finally ready for harvest.

The taxi soon arrived at 7am. Walking down the driveway, I found it paved with the heads of those reaped females. Climbing into the back seat, I never looked back as I smiled. Life is a game of what-the-fuck-can-I-get-away-with. I used to enjoy sharing experiences with someone special but had found that disappointing once they failed to see what I did. Why waste your time sharing anything when the universe teaches you to focus on the self and nothing else!

-

Arriving back at my flat in Berlin, I checked the letter box. There was an envelope with that familiar handwriting. It was a simple note from Lulu, stating that she had just arrived in Rome as we had planned. Our experiment had worked: no one could track her once she had abandoned all (electronic) dependencies.

However, that left me wondering whose bones I had coated in cement. But as Wittgenstein had once said, "*Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.*"

Bruce

Somewhere To Be Alone



SHORT STORY 10
2016
THE MUSEUM ISLAND MURDERS

DISCLAIMER:

This roman à clef might be a halbwahrheit if I have any Amor fati.

A BLACKMAIL ACCORD



“Get in the car,” the young Israeli spoke up, as he stepped out of a 2016 Aston Martin Lagonda.

“Prefer to walk,” was all I gave, continuing down the riverside with the

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Reichstag at my back.

“It wasn’t a suggestion!”

“And I give a shit?!”

“Don’t know. Do you give fuck about Mara?”

Turning in the freezing wind, my eyes slowly scanned over the city lights of Friday night, and focused on the angular features of that average-as-fuck, little guy.

“I’m worried about her,” Aviv stated. “Come on, I’ll drop you off wherever.”

My attention was drawn toward the other guy behind the wheel, who was glaring back at my suspicion.

“Get in the car.”

While turning down Friedrichstrasse, a light drizzle smeared the headlights into a misty glow. Considering how Christmas-obsessive Germans had always been, I wondered why they no longer hung the decorations along this stretch of Mitte. Berlin winters always were an ordeal, but at least the festive markets seemed to postpone the gloom until after the New Year’s hangover.

“I know you’re cheating on her.”

I’d only just begun to warm up in that nice Aston Martin, and I was already getting hit with accusations.

“I know you’re a fucking Nazi!” Aviv declared from my left. “And I can fucking prove it!”

“You can drop me off just over there,” I smiled, tapping the driver’s shoulder. “On the corner of Gendarmenmarkt, thanks.”

The car, however, drove straight ahead.

“You’re not going anywhere,” Aviv said in a calmer tone. “Not till you tell me exactly what I want to fucking hear.”

“If you apparently already know what you know, then why would you bother needing to hear it from me?”

“You’re ending it tonight! Ending all your interfering and breaking up with Mara! End it or I’ll expose the extent of your fucking deception!” Aviv then pulled out his iPhone. “And if you have any semblance of dignity, you’ll spare her the humiliation.”

“Love your subtly,” I said, watching Aviv switch on the voice-recorder. “Thought you guys were meant to be masters at the art of interrogation. This what you call gaining my trust?”

“Where’d you go during your summer vacation?” Aviv spoke quietly.

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“Either admit it here and now, or in ten minutes she’ll hear it from me. Including all the disgusting details.”

Taking a deep breath as the car came to a stop at a red light, I looked down Leipzigerstrasse. It was just after midnight and the traffic was thickest at the intersection. In the distance, to my right, post-modern Potsdamerplatz towered majestically. Pre-war Berlin then crossed my mind. “You know, back in early 1939, there was a series of murders that took place right here, in the center of town. They were swept under the carpet of bigger atrocities that, of course, soon came to unfold.”



Aviv gave me a sideways glance.

“They were called, *Die Museumsinsel Morde*.”

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Aviv looked out of his own window.

“I have a proposition.”

“No!”

“You want to hear me talk?”

“This isn’t a negotiation!”

“Of course it is.”

“No, it’s not!”

“You’re a spook, aren’t you?”

“Not making any fucking deals here!”

“Funny guy.”

Aviv glared into the back of his driver’s head.

“Why would you try and convince me to confess, unless you’ve got a weak argument. If you were confident in your accusations, you’d have gone straight to Mara and held no punches.”

Aviv listened.

“You want something from me, and I reckon you can help me with something that I want. It’s a win/win situation.”

“You’re going to lose, no matter what happens tonight!”

“You’re probably right.”

“And you’re a real piece of shit! You don’t even care what happens to Mara!”

“Tell you what. Help me access the locations of all thirteen historical crime scenes, and then, just then, I’ll confess to, whatever, until the fucking cows come home.”

“No!”

“Listen, chump! You seriously think I can’t handle some domestic conflict?! Especially when it’s coming from a sniveling little cunt like you talking shit! If you want to play it the easy way, take a fucking left. But if you want to dictate terms, then boy, bring it on, motherfucker! I got all fucking night!”

With tight lips, Aviv’s pupils darted about, before he reluctantly spoke up, “What do you want exactly?”

The traffic lights turned green, and I repeated, “Take a left.”

1. HACKESCHER MARKT BAHNHOF

Aviv and I exited the car next to the tram tracks.

“And?”



“Relax,” I smiled, as we stood on the south-side of the west-entrance to the Hackescher Markt train station. “It’s an easy start for beginners.”

“What? This is it?” Aviv shrugged, glancing around those coming from or going toward the station. “Get any stupid fucking ideas about running, and you’ll fucking regret it!”

“I have no doubt. You’d probably go all Krav Maga on my scrawny ass. That’s not a fight worth betting on.”

“So, what’s the big deal? What’s so fucking special about this spot?”

“I’m terrible with names, but I remember the faces of the victims.”

“What victims?”

“Seriously? How long have you lived in this city? And you call yourself a fucking Jew.”

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“You’re testing my fucking patience!”

“The night’s young.”

“What’s so fucking special about this place?!”

I closed my eyes, visualizing those black and white photos of the thirteen murdered females.

“You don’t need my help. This is a public space. What’s the fucking point of this?!”

“Hush now,” I whispered, clenching my hands in my leather gloves. “If the newspapers had had their way at the time, this would have been a very different story. But you know what the Gestapo were like. People today complain about the system, always comparing it to the tyranny of Hitler. Things now aren’t a fraction of how it was back in the day. Fuck’s sake, they literally starved entire neighborhoods to fucking death. Kids today have forgotten the utter fucking brutality of the fucking past. The police themselves had literally been told to ignore these murders. Can you imagine that kind unquestioning obedience? And yet, you know how Germans are. Love their fucking paperwork. Can find a whole heap of skeletons in the Humboldt libraries, if you look in the right places.”

“A lot of shit happened during the war,” Aviv grunted, “Who gives a shit about it now!”

Turning slowly toward my escort, I paused before I spoke, “And that’s exactly what people at the time said. But remember, those people were actual Nazis.”

Aviv took an aggressive step toward me.

“You see what I did there.”

“You’re the only Nazi here! Watch your fucking mouth!”

“She was found with her throat cut to the bone. She had a young, soft face, with short hair. Her lips were plump, like a porn-star. She lay naked and had been gutted like a pig. But her internal organs weren’t found with the body.”

“This is a stupid fucking place to try anything like that. It’s too exposed.”

“Yeah, it is.”

“Why the fuck would anyone try?”

“Good fucking question,” I conceded, looking up at the train station. “But wouldn’t you rather I confessed to something on your laundry list of indictments? Quid pro quo, so to speak.”

“Don’t think that’s how it works.”

“Maybe.”

For a long moment, that ISB Special Agent thought about his next words.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

“I want to know what happened between you and your sister. What she meant in that long email. The one about your family’s secret past.”

“Motherfucker,” I grinned, as a tram rattled by. “Snowden really wasn’t kidding about you guys.”

Aviv waited.

“What does it matter?”

“What was she talking about?”

“The fuck has that got to do with my relationship with Mara? Oh, I see, I get it. You’re trying to go all Freudian on my ass. Okay. Good luck then. Let’s open that can of worms, like I give two fucks about that ancient history.” I reached into my black overcoat’s pocket and pulled out my phone. Aviv started to react, but he eased back as I only wanted to take a photo of the pavement where the dead body had once been dumped. “I knew nothing about any of it when it happened. Didn’t even hear about it till I was in my mid-twenties. Honestly, I don’t even remember how the conversation came up with my mother. But anyway. Apparently, when I was, I guess a teenager, my parents had a priest bless our family home. Yeah. That’s it. Exciting secret, I know.”

“Why would they bless the house? Your family wasn’t religious.”

“The stalker has done his homework! You are correct, sir. But my mother has, let’s just say, a tendency toward vague spiritual inclinations. Anyway, my sister was a fucking cunt as a child. However, at some point, my parents were led to believe that there was something, some ‘thing’ in the house that was causing my sister’s manic behavior. You see, personal responsibility wasn’t, and still isn’t, something my sister adheres to.”

“What did the priest do?”

I waited with a frown.

“Did he find anything?”

“If you’re asking if my sister’s head spun 360, before she puked green shit all over the priest’s face. Then no. Not as far as I know. But fuck, maybe.”

“You never saw anything in the house?”

“That’s not what I said. I saw plenty of things that scared the shit out of me as a kid. My sister did have a bedroom in one of the oldest parts of the house. And I came across this snake-like thing that was hiding down the side of her bed which freaked me the fuck out for years. But it was probably just a bad dream. See, the original house was small and over a hundred years old. No idea when it was actually built. I used to have this reoccurring nightmare about this rat-like thing leading me down the back hallway where this other giant thing always came in from the back door. Had plenty of other

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nightmares about invisible hands behind the curtains in the living room. And of course, there were those black figures that always watched from the trees since forever. But it was just my overactive imagination. Eventually, I learned to deal with the nightmares. Unlike my sister, I taught myself to get over these fucking things. I welcomed them. The older I got, the more I stood my fucking ground. And you know what, even a fucking priest couldn't get rid of me!"

"Your sister ever improve after the blessing?"

"Have to fucking ask her."

"Don't even care about your own family! What the fuck's your problem?!"

"It's your job to analyze my logic. But if blood is thicker than water, then I don't need to give a shit, because they'll still remain family no matter what I do. That's what family is, the perpetual illusion of a bond, despite the dissociation. Whoopy-fucking-doo!"

"Still doesn't explain why your sister's so mad at your mother right now. Why's she bringing this up after twenty years?"

"Maybe Freud would call that shit, her miserable fucking Oedipus complex."

2. DIRCKSENSTRASSE

We could have walked to the next location in a few minutes, but Aviv insisted that we drive. I didn't argue, it was too fucking cold.

"The Spree used to follow where this street is now."

"The river's over."

"Used to be a canal here. This town's gone through a few changes, you know."

"Changes are one thing. Moving a fucking river is something else."

We stood on the north side of the train line, just east of Hackescher Markt. It was an unremarkable section of that long-curved street. There were restaurants, hotels, and office buildings, but I focused on a section of the overpass where another street crossed under the tracks.

"A body was dumped out here? On the wide-open street?"

"Yep."

"This guy wasn't exactly a fucking genius."

"And yet he got away with it."

"Who was she?"

"She was a blonde. Petite. Her two small dogs were found with her body."

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They were fine. Not a hair on their heads had been harmed. She however, had her throat slit, and was left naked and gutted.”

“Here?”

“Approximately.”

“Out in the open?”

“Pretty much.”

“Fuck off.”

“If you say so.”

“Someone would have seen something.”

“Maybe.”

“Someone must have.”

“You forgetting the context?”

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“Yeah, yeah.”

“People were either too scared to look, or thought it was none of their fucking business. Remember who was in power at the time.”

“What’s so fucking fascinating about these deaths after a hundred years?”

I took a photo of the street, just as a couple of trains passed each other above.

“How’d you even hear about them?”

“Stay on point Special Agent. Why are you so fascinated with my social indiscretions?”

“Because my old colleague is dating a fucking racist!”

“Ah, there’s the true spirit of 2016. We’re all born-again racists in denial.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Seen equal amounts of positive reactions to events like Brexit and Trump, as I’ve seen negative. Watched both sides mock each other as dumbfucks. Everyone hates everyone else who opposes their own vested interests.”

“That’s not true.”

“Why would I make that up? Why would I lie about people from both sides screaming about how fucking retarded the other guy is? I’ll give you an example: I was on the remain-side of the Brexit referendum, yet I’ve still seen no justification for calling the leave-side racists. But both sides have demonized the other, and now everyone’s a racist, no matter what your argument.”

“I didn’t say everyone’s a racist. Said that you’re a fucking racist!”

“And now I’d like you to present your evidence.”

“I don’t need to present you with anything! I know what you’re like, and you’re as fucking racist as they come!”

“You know what I’m like? You know me better than my girlfriend?”

“I’ve seen how you treat people, and I’ve read the shit you’ve written.”

“Again, I’ll ask for evidence.”

“It’s what you fucking are!”

“Saw an interview a while ago, where the host said he thought that the word ‘racist’ was being thrown about so often that it’d lost all meaning. The other guy rejected the suggestion, saying that when you call someone a racist, it’ll always hold a shit-load of emotion punch, and will always cause some degree of damage. He argued that that’s why it’s such a powerful weapon, no matter how much we hear it.”

“Yeah, and you are one! Whether you own up to it or not!”

“You talking about my implicit-bias?”

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Aviv just crossed his arms.

“So, we’re all subjects of determinism. We’re all racists, rapists, and murderers. They say we only developed larger brains once our ancestors started eating meat. Yet we’re still murderers because our unconscious actions control us more than our worthless fucking brains. We’re either directly or indirectly murdering people every single fucking day. I should feel liberated knowing the truth that I’m a murderer. However, what if I still don’t feel guilty for it? Maybe the only way to make everyone happy is to get murdered for my murderous unconscious. But if I let others murder me, then they’re doing exactly what I blame myself for. Who are they to murder, and yet I must not? If I’m a victim of my own implicit-bias, then how can I, as an individual, decide what is right from wrong, and when to restrain myself? If determinism says I can’t decide for myself, then surely, I’m absolved of all responsibility. So, if I’m born a murderer, yet haven’t actually murdered anyone, then maybe I need to murder in order to become who I really am. Unless, I’ve been conditioned into thinking that I shouldn’t murder. Which is the exact same thing as having no conscious choice in the matter. I don’t have to commit a murder to still be a murderer. Having the potential to commit a murder is just as bad. Potential is the same as action. There’s no room for my own agency. I’m guilty. I’m a murderer. And I’m also a victim. I should have this huge weight upon my shoulders. Like I’m personally responsible for the deaths of every living thing on the planet. This knowledge should start doing something to me on the inside. It’ll break apart my self-esteem and replace it with self-loathing. I’ll feel small and helpless, weak and insignificant. I’ve no control over anything. And yet, compared to those who have actually murdered, what exactly have I done? All I have is a pathetic self-pity toward my future possibility of maybe committing a murder. But there’s nothing respectable about an adult behaving like a deflated masochist! Instead, I should use that murderous meat-eating-mind to learn for myself right from wrong, discern guilt from innocence, and build some character with individual fucking responsibility! Isn’t it healthier to educate children into seeing each other as autonomous human beings, and not as shameful murderers from day one! But people are still fucking murdering each other! Human nature really is a dangerous fucking thing after all. Yet, how is denying your potential equal to committing murder? And if you’re going to be treated no different, then it’s better to embrace your murderous unconscious. And then, why not go ahead and fucking murder people, eat them, and then shit them out – and be fucking proud of it! But then I wouldn’t be deciding for myself, I’d be

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no better than an insect. A meat-insect! Even if I choose not to murder, that doesn't prove that I've any free-will, it might only prove that I'm incapable. A failure! A waste of potential! And yet still, a murderer who doesn't murder is still a fucking murderer! Everyone is being murdered because of me! But who exactly? Show me the body count! Oh no, wait. You don't need to prove anything. You'll just tell me I'm a murderer and I better believe it or you'll fucking murder me!"

"You're a fucking idiot!"

3. ALEXANDERPLATZ BAHNHOF

Soon Aviv and I walked into the busy train station at Alexanderplatz. Yelling Germans, stinking bums, and squealing teenagers packed the place as if it were rush hour. I stood in the center of the big old station, trains above and below, trams either side. The TV Tower stood to the west, and the Christmas markets to the east.

"In here? Are you trying to say someone was killed in here? Right fucking here?"

"Did I say that?"

"What are you fucking saying then?"

"Didn't say they were killed on location."

"How could he carry a dead body in without anyone noticing?"

"You fucking kidding? Look at all these drunken cunts!"

Aviv didn't even need to turn his head to find homeless guys sleeping in doorways, punks huddled around trash cans, and underage girls stumbling over their own two feet.

"She was found with an empty KaDeWe bag lying on her body, like she was just another piece of trash in this fucking place," I said, staring at the floor. "She looked like she was sixteen, with a dirty blonde ponytail and a big round ass."

"Was it the same?"

"The same what?"

"Method of execution?"

"Naked, slit throat, and gutted."

"That's it?"

"God bless your blood lust for exponential violence!"

"Fuck you! We're not all as indifferent toward suffering as you are!"

"You're right. I don't know anything about you. Yet you're the one



claiming to know everything about me, while still demanding I answer all your fucking questions.”

“Where’d you go on your summer vacation?”

“Was never a secret.”

“I know you’re lying!”

“First noticed the silver Mercedes outside my hotel in Hanover. After the thirtieth birthday of an old ex, I returned to the hotel and was accompanied by an old couple in the elevator. They both eye-balled me, and I took note of their overly tanned faces. There’s something off-putting about old folk with too much color for their sickly features.”

“Get to the point!”

“Come on, let’s walk to the next location. The stench of puke in this

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fucking place makes me want to rinse my mouth out with napalm,” I said, leading the way outside and following the S-Bahn further south. “People on the streets are no different from cars. If they aren’t attractive or functional, then they mean nothing to me. Nothing but insignificant objects moving by. But when that same silver Mercedes drove slowly down the main road in Bacharach as I arrived, my suspicion found it hard to dismiss as merely a coincidence. Though, of course, there had to have been more than a few of those cars in the country. So, I checked into my adorably traditional German hotel, and looked forward to exploring that picture-perfect village while I relaxed and read *Bark*. But the first morning there, I found myself sitting in the dining room, staring at that same old couple at the far end of the otherwise empty breakfast buffet. Still a coincidence? I had my fucking doubts.”

“Who were they?”

“Thought they were with you!”

“What?”

“I mean, I thought that’s how you knew what happened on my vacation.”

“It was your phone’s GPS that—”

“That’s how you did it.”

Aviv just stared straight ahead.

“You know, all the meta-data that the NSA has been collecting, isn’t that the very empirical evidence for determinism? But anyway, if you’re saying that the old couple weren’t Israeli spooks working for you, then perhaps they really were on a coincidental vacation.”

“I know exactly where you went for those three days that your phone didn’t move.”

“How? If my phone didn’t move, then you couldn’t track shit!”

“I know you went somewhere!”

“Somewhere? Seriously? Some-fucking-where? That’s your justification for calling me out. You sure you’re not a chick. I mean, that’s some flimsy fucking evidence. You make all your accusations based on such non-existent intelligence? Come on, you’re smarter than this.”

Aviv was clenching his jaw as his eyes slowly looked away. “Where’d you go for those three days?”

“Admit it, you don’t have a fucking clue!”

“Admit that you had other plans for your fucking vacation!”

“Reading *Bark* was my only fucking priority!”

“You left and went somewhere!”

“Yes, I did.”

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Aviv paused.

“First off, for the fucking record, I had no idea that an ex (who no longer talks to me) had already moved to Portugal. So, get that right out of your fucking head to begin with. I wasn’t stalking that fucking cunt! It was Chloe who had arranged the detour in my vacation. And no, it’s not like that. She’s not my cup of tea. Get your filthy mind out of the gutter. She could have been my mother, for fuck’s sake. Well, maybe not, she’s not that old. Anyway, I wasn’t having an affair, or stalking an ex, or invoking devils in the south of France again. I was in Lisbon. There you go. Happy?”

“Chloe? Who the fuck is that? And why’d you leave your phone anyway?”

“Was her idea. I received a call on the hotel’s land-line. She insisted I leave my phone. She had her reasons. And after twenty-four hours of train travel, I was met by a fucking heat-wave in Lisbon, but no more Mercedes. There. Are we done?”

“Not at all!”

“Told you what you wanted to hear. I went to Lisbon. End of story.”

“That’s not the end of anything!”

“Sure it is.”

“What were you doing there? Who’s this Chloe? How’d she get you to suddenly travel half-way across Europe?”

“It was my vacation. Was free do whatever.”

“What were you doing there?!”

“You know what I found interesting about travelling by train. Whenever I crossed borders, only small groups of cops walked down the carriages looking at the passengers. No one actually asked for passports. Europe really does have wide open borders. I could’ve had a human head in my fucking suitcase, and no one would’ve even looked. I love that concept.”

“This isn’t the deal! You’re not answering my questions! Why’d you go to see this Chloe woman?!”

“She wanted to talk about Doggerland.”

“What?”

“It’s a place that doesn’t exist anymore. She wanted to show me her research about certain underwater standing stones from prehistory. She’s a bit of nut. But don’t tell her I said that. Fanatics can be a little fanatical. You should know, being a Jew and all.”

Aviv was silent as we strolled toward the Alexa shopping mall.

“The last time I saw that old couple in their Mercedes, was the night that I arrived back in Berlin from Bacharach. Coincidence, I don’t think so.”

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“You think Mara had them follow you?”

“Don’t know what your loyalty is to Mara, and I don’t know what you’ve experienced with your own interpersonal relationships, but what I do know is, you think only the worst of me. You seem to believe that I’m beyond the benefit of the doubt. So, you assume that every time I’m alone, I must be up to no good. But you’ll never truly know, because you were never fucking there!”

“That’s because you’re a cheating asshole!”

“Exactly! And what ‘seems’ is what matters. Reality means nothing next to your reputation. If it seems like someone is one thing, then no amount of persuasion will ever convince you that your perspective is wrong.”

“You’re the one who’s wrong! You’ve abused Mara’s trust, and she deserves better! What exactly have you ever done to redeem your fucking lies?!”

“You know, when I was younger, I used to write poems and love letters, almost on a daily basis. But I stopped. I don’t write them anymore. I refuse to quantify my affections into an easily packaged construct. Feelings like that are meant to be felt! They are what they are – for a finite period of time! And anyone who demands that you love them or that you must create art purely for their vanity, should never be fucking humored!”

4. AMTSGERICHT MITTE

“What’s this place?” Aviv shivered, as he stood outside the arched facade to a wide building.

“It’s the District Court,” I said, staring at a cluster of security cameras watching us. “But I’m no lawyer, so what the fuck would I know.”

“What do you know then?”

“Not much, apparently. Especially about law. Or science. Or anything of expertise. But the more you focus on a profession, the more you appreciate how little you actually know about any other specialist areas. Yet what you should think is not what you do think. Those with only the shallowest perception of law or science, always claim to know it all inside and out. Like those who read one book on a subject, and then suddenly become an expert on the whole topic. Yet you merely absorbed your own interpretation. You only take note of those parts that you deemed relevant. Just like you’re doing right now.”

“I’m not even listening to you! It’s too fucking cold for this shit!”



“Then shall we.”

“Shall we what?!”

“After you.”

“What? This place is closed!”

“Why do you think I brought you along?”

“You want to break into a fucking court of law in the middle of the fucking night? Are you fucking insane?”

“You’ve had it easy so far.”

And just then, the Aston Martin eased down the street.

“I never agreed to this!” Aviv stated.

“And you call yourself a fucking spy.”

Aviv backed away toward the car.

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“Come on, this way,” I said, heading along the pavement in front of that wide building.

The driver slowly followed, as we walked around the block up to a passageway next to the entrance to the underground parking lot. Aviv hesitated in that long courtyard, where he muttered, “Seriously, what’s your fascination with these murders?”

“This one was a brunette. She was found just over there. Help me over the fence, would you.”

Aviv glanced around the darkened space at the rear or the court. The overpass from Alexanderplatz curved around and above us to our right. There was a ten-foot-tall fence separating us from the back yard. “We can’t go in there! There’s got to be security guards around!”

“If you hurry the fuck up, we’ll be gone before anyone notices.”

“Fuck no!”

“We just have to go over there, to the center of the building.”

“No, we don’t!”

“Look, you can see it. No one’s going to catch us.”

“Someone will come!”

“You’re way too paranoid. Look around. No one is anywhere.”

Aviv swallowed, then grabbed my foot and boosted me over the top of the thick-framed fence. I looked back just as Aviv scaled the barrier like a good little Israeli Defense Force boy.

“She was lying right here. A rusted pram was next to her butchered body.”

“I don’t fucking care about these dead whores! Tell me why the fuck you’re taking Mara to these fucking rituals!” Aviv barked at me in a hoarse whisper. “What the fuck are you trying to do to her in these Gnostic Masses?!”

Another train cruised above, as I savored this location. It was a narrow space on the opposite side of the building from the ornate entrance.

“Mara’s never shown any interest in spirituality. She’s always been an atheist until she met you. What kind of cult are you part of?”

“You forgot to suggest that I was sacrificing babies to Satan while circle-jerking with my Illuminati co-conspirators.”

“Who knows how you’re warping her mind.”

“Yeah, Thelema is all about brain-washing, conformity, and false-idol worship.”

“How’d you do it?”

“Do what?”

“How’d you subvert her?”

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“Didn’t make her do anything.”

“You fucking enabled her!”

“She had an interest in the occult long before I came along.”

“How’d you pervert her?”

“Do you know what the word ‘occult’ means? She’s the one who kept asking me about the symbolism in my art, and I told her what I’m telling you now. It’s a fucking secret! Accept it and move the fuck on!”

“Fuck you! I want to know!”

“You sound just like her. And I’ve no time for those who can’t keep a fucking secret.”

“You’ll fucking tell me!”

“Some things can’t be told! They need to be seen for yourself! All I did was suggest some people, some books, and some ideas that she might find useful. The rest was up to her.”

“You took her to a Gnostic Mass! These weren’t just ideas.”

“Have you ever been to one? What do you think’s the difference between them and your own Jewish faith? Have you spoken to anyone who practices Kabbalah?”

“I’m talking to you!”

“Touché.”

“What you did to her?!”

“Been going to these lectures at a small book store this year. Really enjoy the variety of speakers they have. Practically loved this female professor from Argentina. She did this talk on Machiavelli. Said that we were all students of *The Prince* and its insidious influence. I liked the lecture because I disagreed with her premise. Most people have never even heard of Machiavelli. He didn’t create the modern world, all he did was make an astute observation of human nature. We’re all intuitively Machiavellian. He didn’t make us this way. Sun Tzu wrote similar concepts in *The Art Of War*, yet his work isn’t regarded as evil. Whatever keeps a species alive isn’t evil, it’s necessary. The genius of Machiavelli was knowing that morality is important to the masses, so you must appear to be one thing, while understanding that you should never let principles get in the way of doing what has to be done. And the professor agreed. There’s nothing like confronting those who have an opinion on Machiavelli or magick and pushing their assumptions to the limits. Usually discover that they know little to nothing about the fucking matter.”

“You admit it!”

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“I admit that her concept of magick is not the same as mine, which is not the same as yours.”

“You can’t think for yourself if you’re being brain-washed!” Aviv snarled, when a security guard raised a flashlight and yelled at us from within the court house!

“If she’s being brain-washed by Thelema, then she isn’t following her true-will. And then Crowley wouldn’t be very happy with her pursuits.”

“Who?!”

5. STRALAUERSTRASSE

After running back to the car, the driver quickly drove us away, as I directed him around to the next stop.

Aviv was still catching his breath as we stepped back into the cold, right next to the river.

“What’s the significance of these locations?”

“Why would there be any significance? Why would there be any significance to anything I do? The world is fucking meaningless!”

“You obviously know why the bodies were dumped here. Where’s this all leading?”

“Does a psychotic need a reason for his psychosis?”

“There’s no consistency to these locations! Train stations, streets, and now an empty park. What’s the connection?”

“You really think this has always been a park?”

“I don’t fucking know what this city looked like a hundred years ago! You tell me why the murderer chose these fucking places to dump the bodies!”

“You’re the only fucking mind-reader here.”

“What aren’t you telling me, asshole!”

“She had a cute face, but the body of a chubby little boy.”

“Was her throat cut?”

“Yep.”

“Innards removed?”

“Like a turkey.”

“So, there must be a connection between the victims.”

“Perhaps.”

“What the fuck do you know about them?!”

“They were all fucking meat!”

“Again, always dehumanizing women, like a fucking loser.”

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“If you’ve ever had a fucking relationship with another fucking person, you’d know what it’s like to hate the ones you love. But it’s never a perpetual sentiment, or you’d never spend any time with anyone! People hate people, and then they get over it, and get on with their fucking lives!”

“Once a misogynist, always a misogynist!”

“Humans are capable of both emotions, you know.”

“You fucking hate women! You have no respect! And you’re a fucking coward!”

“The only inherent value a female holds, is her biological ability to breed. For men, it’s our skill at labor. That’s it at the most base fucking level. And any man that’s as weak as a woman is completely fucking worthless! Anyone can argue otherwise, but on a sheer animal level, our unconscious fucking

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knows it and fucking fears it!”

“You’re disgusting!”

“Tell me this, why don’t girls want to be worshipped?”

“What are you talking about?”

“Because inside, they all know they deserve to be treated like shit!”

“You’re sick in the head!”

“You ever fucked a chick?”

“Shut the fuck up!”

“Never met a female who didn’t love getting fucked – and fucked hard!”

“Women deserve better than a piece of shit like you!”

I laughed, slapping my thigh.

“You treat them like objects! They’re individuals who should be valued for who they are!”

“They’re all individual pieces of fucking meat! Equally worthless, until they prove their merit through their deeds. And even then, some are more worthless than others!”

“No!”

“You’ve served in the military. You think the women you fought against were worth the same as your own mother?”

“All life is valuable!”

“Are you saying that if you saw a terrorist killing a fellow Jew on the streets of Jerusalem, you wouldn’t have shot the guy – if he was a she? If so, you’re a fucking liability to your agency.”

“You don’t know what the fuck you’re talking about!”

“Aviv, have you killed people on the job?”

He said nothing.

“There’s no equality in any form of life!”

“What gives you the right to judge?!”

“I don’t need permission from a cunt like you to judge for my-fucking-self!”

“You’d never say that to a woman’s face, though, would you!”

“Are you fucking kidding me? I’ve said way worse, soul-destroying shit right into the eyes of all my ex-girlfriends! I fear speaking to no one!”

“Try telling that to a terrorist!”

“You remind me of something Mara told me in Scotland. A colleague told her that I don’t talk to him anymore after he threatened to punch my face in. This autistic cunt said no such fucking thing to me! But I told Mara, if he ever actually had the balls to try and knock my head off, my weapon is that

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of the bigger-fucking-picture. This tough-guy probably would kick the shit out of me, but my retaliation would be the fucking sweetest! I'd have him prosecuted to the full extent of the fucking law! And that would eliminate his future chances of extending his visa which keeps him in this fucking country. You see how sweet that is. It's a weapon of fear! He hates America and never wants to return. That's his weakness, and I fucking know it! The very idea of him losing his visa, is enough to shut him the fuck up and spare me his idle fucking threats of violence!"

"Terrorists can't be reasoned with!"

"That's why fucking people like you have a fucking job! To fucking kill them!"

"You wouldn't last five minutes in a war zone."

"That's exactly what my father used to say."

6. KÖLLNISCHER PARK

We drove over Jannowitz Bridge, past the Chinese Embassy, and parked near Märkisches Museum. This was a much more established park than the vacant plot that had we just left. In the south-east corner was a short, brick tower. Aviv peered in through the iron gate at the litter and darkness within.

"What is this thing?"

"That," I said, pointing toward the brick building behind. "Is a museum about Berlin. You should check out the scale models of the city in the basement. It's impressive to see how much this place has changed since the 1600s. Most tourist, however, only give a shit about the war and the fucking wall."

"Yeah, I don't give a shit either."

"Why'd you fucking ask then?"

"Get on with it. Where was the body, and who was she?"

"Who was she? I have no fucking idea who any of these fucking girls were. See, we all don't give a fuck about something."

"Then why are you so fucking obsessed with their deaths?!"

"Because they all looked absolutely beautiful with their fucking throats slit wide open!" I focused on that small tower and recalled, "There was a sausage dog found locked inside. She looked young, definitely wasn't even twenty. She had this expression of regret toward her lonely little life of insignificance. Meat is meat, and she knew it."

"You don't fucking know what she thought of her life. She was someone!"

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A fucking person! You fucking psychopath!”

“I’m not a psycho. I have empathy. I simply know how to switch it off when it has no fucking use, which is most of the fucking time.”

“No use? That’s what I’m talking about! You’re a fucking parasite using people like they’re fucking...”

“Like they’re fucking what?!”

“Using people like their fucking stepping-stones that you can walk all over!”

“Yeah, actually, that’s pretty accurate.”

“Normal people don’t fucking do that!”

“Of course they do.”

“I’m friends with people because I enjoy their company. I don’t abuse

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their friendship!”

“Nonsense. Friendships are a business.”

“Totally disagree!”

“Casual or professional, people we interact with are all in it for the give and take. At least in a profession most people understand the position they’re in. The client has a demand, so you supply. It’s no different with friendships. How old are you, thirty? You don’t have half the friends you had when you were fifteen, do you. Because you have less and less to give to those so-called friends. People only tolerate those that they can gain something from, otherwise it’s a waste of fucking time. There is no fucking altruism!”

“You’re a sad motherfucker.”

“Do you have more friends now?”

“That’s none of your fucking business!”

“Why do you think rich and famous people have an endless supply of sycophants? They have something everybody wants. All friendships come at a price.”

“My friends mean something to me!”

“Till they can’t get anything from you, and then just watch how fast they all forget your fucking birthday.”

“I’d never insult my friends with such a demeaning perception.”

“If a friend has nothing to teach me, then I have no use for them.”

“You’re an insincere leech!”

“Why would you associate with those you have a shit opinion of?”

“That’s a good fucking question! I don’t see why anyone would want to be your fucking friend!”

“I know, right. It’s the absurdity of life. And if the greater good is absurd, then why should you care about it? I know now that if I’d died two years ago, the world would be no different than it is with me alive. There have still been no fruits to my labors. Nothing I’ve ever done means a fucking thing to anyone else. So, if nothing I do will ever matter, then I can continue doing whatever I like without consequence. And the absurdity is, I would still never amount to anything even if I did amount to something! Absurdity teaches us about the core of our identity, the self is all you will ever have!”

“If we affect those that we care about, then that matters!”

“Who the fuck are they?!”

“They matter!”

“Yet as Pascal said, *“How many kingdoms know nothing of us.”*”

“It’s not about pleasing everyone, just those closest.”

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“And that number gets smaller and smaller as you go. Until soon, all you’re left with is... Yourself!”

“This is the stupidest conversation! Most people aren’t anti-social assholes like you!”

“Most fucking people’s days involve no deeper communication with other individuals beyond that of customer-service interactions. As long as you do your job, you don’t need to think twice about anyone else populating the space between point A and point B. Walking down the pavement, driving down the highway, or browsing the internet, those that you meet have no obligation to even give you the time of day. None whatsoever! As long as you don’t cause trouble, civilization would be perfectly fucking happy if you went your entire stinking life with your fucking mouth nailed shut!”

“What the fuck do you know about most people!”

“You know, as a kid, I used to believe in things like human rights. I took it for granted. Assumed it was common knowledge. It wasn’t until I grew the fuck up that I learned how these rights mean fucking nothing when reality leaves you starving to death on the fucking streets! Human rights are no more real than Liber Oz. We have no fucking rights! We only have to survive! And survival is all about risk management. But the question is, is your fucking life even worth risking?”

“You’re the only one with a low opinion of people’s ability to co-exist. Societies are made of multitudes of various cultures. Different people working together. We collaborate because we communicate because we fundamentally agree with bettering ourselves!”

“If you’re only friends with those that agree with you, then you should have no friends at all. No one agrees 100% with anyone else, as no one even agrees with their own fucking thoughts!”

“I know my wife! We’re closer than anyone because we agree with each other.”

“You agree with everything your wife says?” I shook my head. “My condolences.”

“Why won’t your ex in Portugal talk to you?”

“Said she doesn’t want ‘poisonous’ people in her life anymore.”

“Smart girl.”

“Smart enough to trust me.”

“You take advantage of people’s trust!”

“Don’t infantilize their integrity!”

“You’re the one reducing people to nothing but meat!”

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“At least I respect meat enough to appreciate that it’s a dangerous adversary.”

“I don’t know how anyone can stand to be around you!”

“Professional or casually?”

“Both!”

“You know, when I’m being professional, I work without ego. Doing whatever has to be done for the production. It’s efficient for a group-setting.”

“Why doesn’t anyone else see through your bullshit!”

“But once out on your own, the ego is absolutely fucking necessary in order to motivate yourself without any external direction.”

“Keep it to yourself, you fucking psycho!”

“Compared to a psychopath, I’m a fucking saint. And only in proportion to a saint, am I a psycho. And you ain’t a fucking saint.”

“In proportion to reality, you’re fucked in the head!”

“Are you fucking high? I’m exactly like everyone else! I’m inconsolably normal! I’m neither smart nor stupid. I’m the balanced center of the fucking universe! I’ve committed no atrocity and done nothing noble! I’m one of the little people. To the power-players, I don’t even exist. I’m perfectly fucking inconsequential! I’m merely a side note in your fucking story, just as you’re a side note in mine. And you know, at the end of the day, we’re both incidental characters in Mara’s own story of unremarkable modernity.”

“You just make it worse for yourself with everything that comes out of your mouth! You’re a sick fuck!”

7. EVANGELISCHE SCHULE BERLIN ZENTRUM

The cold was obviously effecting Aviv’s impatience as we drove a couple of blocks west.

“Hurry up! Get on with it!” he sneered, as we left the car and headed down a footpath between darkened buildings. “Where the fuck are we now?!”

“Just some school.”

“I’m not breaking into a fucking school!”

“Didn’t say you had to.”

“Where are we going?”

“The basketball court around the back.”

“Let me guess, this wasn’t here a hundred years ago.”

“Fucked if I know.”

After passing another nondescript, four-story building, we walked out

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onto a bleak court surrounded by dead trees.

“She had a Russian face with Slavic eyes.”

“And I don’t give a fuck!”

Scanning the empty space, I visualized the dead body stretched out and exposed.

“I want your hatred of the Jewish people on record! That’s all I want to hear out of your fucking mouth!”

“Antisemitism’s a bit passé, isn’t it?”

“Just because you’re dating a Jew doesn’t give you free pass to say whatever hate speech you like.”

“My only issue with your fucking Jews, is semantic. It was a genocide. Why the Holocaust gets a special title is beyond me. I don’t see the justification

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for commandeering the word.”

“You’d prefer to call it the Final Solution.”

“You have a limited imagination, don’t you.”

“It was a holy war! We were slaughtered by the enemies of god!”

“Was a war between men. It wasn’t a war against god.”

“Fucking knew you’d deny it!”

“I doubt god was involved, but don’t doubt the death toll. There’s far too much documentation. Besides, if Holocaust-deniers were true Nazis, they should be proud of their accomplishment!”

“Accomplishment?!” Aviv screamed in my face.

“Take it down a notch, before you give yourself a fucking stroke.”

“It’s that sort of attitude that allows Nazis to still exist today!”

“The attitude of talking about historical events?”

“It’s unconscionable what you’re saying!”

“What do you think I’m saying?”

“The way you act, your indifference, it’s fucking sickening!”

“No worse than your apathy toward a girl who was murderer right where you’re standing.”

“How can you even compare?!”

“Weren’t you the one claiming that all life’s valuable?”

“Seriously, fuck you! Just shut up! Shut your fucking face! I’ve heard more than enough out of you!”

“Have you heard a single thing I’ve said this evening?”

“You have no right! No right to speak!”

“No right to speak?”

“I don’t want to hear your shit! All that comes out of your fucking mouth is worthless fucking shit!”

“I agree.”

“Shut up!” Aviv yelled, grabbing my scarf as he pulled out a handgun and aimed it pointblank at my face. “Shut up! Keep your fucking mouth shut!”

Noticing that Aviv’s finger was safely away from the trigger, I pushed my luck, “Do you want to know exactly how many Nazis I’ve met since living in Berlin? Seriously, do you want to know? I’ll fucking tell you. Exactly zero! The fear of a Neo-Nazi uprising is a fucking laughable exaggeration about something that hardly fucking exists! But you got to have someone to blame all you paranoid self-hatred on. Better to fear past humiliations than consider real threats, like trucks driving through Christmas markets by current day enemies of the state. But you can’t say that sort of thing these days, because

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there's no such thing as free speech! Only legal and illegal-speech!"

Aviv seemed to have realized that it wasn't cool to have his gun out in this kind of situation, and he slowly backed away.

"Could never become a Nazi anyway, regardless of the ideologies and politics and whoever I happened to be dating. You know why?"

"Why?" Aviv whispered.

"Your food is just too fucking delicious. And if you can appeal to someone's appetite, then you can win over anyone. Anyone!"

Aviv seemed calmer.

So, I quickly added, "Besides, Auschwitz was just a fat-camp, for all those kike swamp-donkeys, wasn't it!"

"Keep talking, asshole."

"Reckon you're the one in denial here. Trying to rationalize your behavior, because you're feeling threatened by such a charming fucking shiksa, like myself."

"You moved to Germany because you wanted to join a Nazi group. Your artwork is just an excuse."

"Again, I repeat, proof or apology."

"Everything coming out of your mouth proves my point."

"Example! Give me evidence!"

"Fucking listen to yourself!"

"You're a worthless fucking spokesman if you preach from the moral high-ground yet refuse to elaborate on the subject! If you have some evidence or wisdom, then share it! I want proof or an apology!"

"You're drawn to places of historical atrocities. That's why you moved to Berlin. That's why you insisted on returning to Jerusalem. And that's why you're a fucking psychopath!"

"Recently, someone asked how I felt about living in my flat after the cops kicked in my front door. She asked if I felt insecure about having my personal space intruded upon. But a door is only a thin slice of wood. It's nothing against anyone with enough determination. We lock our doors and change our passwords, yet all that security is little more than smoke and mirrors when someone else wants in. We're constantly surrounded by criminals. The streets are full of murderers and rapists, and we sit right next to them on the train on a daily basis. After all, we are but animals pretending to be civilized. Violence is always at arm's length whenever you're in public. What place on the face of the Earth doesn't have a history of mass murder and isn't built on the bones of human fucking misery?!"

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“Most people don’t think about such things, they’re repulsed by the idea of violence! You’re drawn to it! Why?!”

“That’s like asking why you’re ticklish. I just am.”

“Fixating on the suffering of others makes you dangerous!”

“Says the guy shoving a gun in my face.”

8. NEW GREEN APARTMENTS

Leaving the car on a quiet street near the river, Aviv and I squeezed between the fences around a construction site on one side of a triangular courtyard among other residential buildings. Neither of us spoke as we stood there. Maybe Aviv had run out of questions, or he was still brooding over his last



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melt down.

“Had a twelve-hour stopover in Osaka on my way back from Japan. For some reason, I thought I could just hang out in the airport all night. But the moment I arrived, I said, fuck that, and walked straight to the airport hotel. It was one of those monolith buildings that looked like it had been built in the 1950s. With all original wood paneling, bass fittings, and polished marble still intact. The lobby was massive, with gigantic chandeliers, and a reception that was somewhere between kitsch and depressing. The very camp Japanese gay guy at the front desk was eager to please, and then a young girl in a matching uniform, escorted me to the elevators. The buttons in the lift were the big round kind that I remember from old department stores when I was a kid. Once I reached my floor, the corridor was dark and narrow. The interior design was just as refined as the lobby, but the atmosphere was more consistent with a nuclear bunker. It was one of those places where the walls were so thick that a 747 could have been taking off over the hotel and you wouldn’t have heard a thing. My room was big. Bigger than anything that Mara and I had had in Tokyo. But our view in Roppongi was far more impressive than the view of the airport. Mara was staying an extra week, so this was the first time I had been alone in Japan since 1999.”

Aviv was standing with his arms crossed, he didn’t seem to have anything to offer.

“The distortion of memories over time is a curious thing. Most of my recollections of Japan were spot on. Others however, were warped and quite disjointed. There was this one place, Ikebukuro. I had specifically wanted to go there again. But once there, I found myself completely disorientated. It wasn’t until we were heading back to the train that I began to recognize the place. My memory had distorted everything. It was fucking impressive. A literal example of how the mind can fool you. We’re constantly rewriting our history. My past is not what I think it is, it is only what I tell myself. We’re all whatever we make ourselves out to be. I am whatever I choose to remind myself of. I create myself.”

Aviv was unmoved.

“After this vacation, I’m pretty sure it was Japan that made me the pervert I am today. Socks, miniskirts, and pigtails everywhere. Everywhere! God bless those adorable little bastards. I loved surfing through the Japanese TV shows with their girl bands, cooking hours, and retarded game shows. And there’s nothing like getting washed away on the streets of Tokyo by a never-ending tsunami of tiny people. A hundred-and-thirty-million variations of the

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same face. Japan will always be special to me. It's why I still sleep on the floor. But I had a king-sized bed in the airport hotel. Lying there, I came across a Chinese News channel and there was this interview with the Prime Minister of New Zealand, John Key. I'd heard people state what a cunt the guy was. And yet, while watching him talk about trade deals with China, the guy was on fucking point! It reminded me of my previous perception of Mel Gibson. Ever since his drunken rant at a cop, I had dismissed him as just another has-been fuck-up. But while on YouTube one day, I came across an interview from 2004 about *The Passion Of The Christ*. After hearing that, I searched for the incident with the cop. And again, like John Key, I had judged the guy solely on the hearsay of others. I was wrong about both of them."

Aviv was staring at me again. "I can't tell if you're being serious, or if you're just being a dick."

"And then there was this knock at the door of my hotel room. It was almost midnight, and I wasn't expecting room service, so I looked through the peephole. There wasn't anyone there. Opening the door, I stepped into that gloomy corridor in my bare feet, and found a little Japanese kid standing there alone. I assumed some asshole had let the kid run freely about the hotel, till the little girl ran over and grabbed my hand, insisting that I follow. I figured I'd take her down to reception, but the kid jumped up and hit the top button in the lift. So, up we went. Everyone loves the elevator game! Turns out there was an empty restaurant up there. It had the same old-school style as the rest of the place, lots of gold and mirrors. I was about to ask the bartender to take care of the kid, but she started pulling me toward another door that led into some kind of smoking room. I was already fed up with her shit, so dragged her over to the only guy sitting at the bar, but there wasn't anyone working anywhere around. The little shit got wrigglier the further away from the smoking room we got, so I just let her go. She fell flat on her ass and looked way too offended for a seven-year-old's emotional understanding. Turning toward the Japanese guy at the bar, I found him to be a serious-looking, middle-aged businessman in one excellent fucking suit. He took note of the kid, but no fucks were given. I called out for the barman, except, then the kid ran off. The Japanese guy must have finally registered my frustration, and he offered me a seat at the bar. He was one of those eternally calm, sophisticated sort of guys. His gold rings and gold watch were stylish but not gaudy. We chatted for a short while, and it turned out that the kid worked for the hotel. She'd invite guests to the smoking room for a little bit of adult entertainment. From his broken-English, he seemed to imply that

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the kid was also on the menu. Oh, Japan, you land of perfectly acceptable, unspoken taboos. I love how strictly the Japanese uphold their etiquette. That guy, he probably hated my foreign guts, but he wouldn't dream of revealing his personal beliefs. Must maintain the appearance of tolerance. Someone said recently that there's no such thing as personal beliefs, as inevitably your thoughts influence your behavior. Sure, thoughts have an unconscious way of creeping into your actions, but as long as you politely adhere to the law of the land, like the Japanese, then you can believe whatever the fuck you like."

"You disgust me," Aviv finally spoke up. "You come across a child-prostitute, and all you do is take a seat with one of their clients. You're a pitiful excuse for a human! What's wrong with your thought process? Who does that? Seriously, how could you even stay the night in the same building without calling the police? Are you out of your fucking mind?!"

"You know, Mara refused to believe the diagnosis from my therapist last year. Instead, she decided that I have ODD: Oppositional Defiant Disorder. She's called me a lot of things, though, never accused me of being a good fucking person. So, I have to live up to my potential, or it's a life wasted! And without piece of shit antagonists like me out there, then there can't be any fucking heroes like you, motherfucker!"

"That's your justification for shitting on the people love you? That's a fucking childish personal philosophy!"

"Philosophies are only here to help you cope with your own fucking retarded psychology. And it's far better having even a completely fucked point of view than obediently listening to others who haven't got any proof to their fucking argument."

"You're such and fucking asshole! You think you're so fucking smart. You're fucking not! You're nothing but a pathetic fucking anarchist whining to yourself about shit no one gives a fuck about!"

"Anarchists are fucking cowards! If I was one, I'd want absolute fucking anarchy! Rape, murder, and torture on the fucking streets! I'd want fucking chaos! The desecration of everything that everyone holds dear. Anarchy is when everyone is everyone's enemy. No illusions of loyalty or safety. And nothing left sacred. Hell. Pure hell. That's what we're talk about, isn't it? Hell, on Earth! And in hell you can't escape your own thought patterns. Repeating the same thoughts without end. Yet if art is a way of structurally formulating your own thoughts and feelings, then art really should be illegal if this is hell. For somethings must never be spoken or written or drawn. Somethings are too revealing for the light of day. By suppressing these things, you deny

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understanding them. If sublimation is therapeutic, then it has no place in hell. Like I said, there is no free-speech, only legal and illegal-speech. But the Japanese know the rules of the game and know the difference between what is polite and what you can fucking get away with!”

“What kind of selfish belief is that?”

“It’s a belief in sacrifice. Every living thing that you eat is a sacrifice that empowers your very fucking existence. Gods are no different. They need to be feed with the souls of the masses, just as gods too can be eaten alive,” I whispered, leaning in close, “A violent dream. All I have are violent dreams. Every night. I am living a violent dream. We are incapable of peace. We are at constant war within our own heads. And yet I dream of the worst things while I’m awake.”

Aviv took a moment before he backed away, making sure his iPhone was still recording.

So, I turned, walking toward the street.

“Wait!” Aviv called out. “The girl, who was she this time?”

“She was a black chick. Big loose hair, but narrow hips,” I said, remembering the smell of her coconut moisturizer.

“Just another nigger to you.”

9. BEUTHSTRASSE

Standing at the acute angle of a three-way intersection, Aviv turned in circles. “So where now? Where was the body?”

“Right here.”

“Out in the open again.” Aviv glanced about, looking over the tall buildings and down the wide streets toward Leipzigerstrasse. “I don’t get it. Didn’t you say at the start, that these were called *Die Museumsinsel Morde*. None of these crimes took place on the island. What have any of these locations got to do with the museums?”

“What do you know about the murders so far?”

“They’re all within walking distance of each other. They were all killed in the same way. The victims were all young, pretty girls. Still haven’t heard how anyone could dump these bodies in crowds without being caught.”

“The guy who drove that truck into the Christmas market was surrounded by thousands of people, yet he got away. You can do almost anything in public, if you’re confident enough.”

“You admire him?”

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“This one was also a young, pretty girl. Even prettier with her head barely attached to her body. The hole in her neck was more brutal than the previous girls. Her posture was awkward and broken. Limbs looked disjointed.”

“Over what period of time were the bodies discovered?”

“What do you mean?”

“Was it weeks, months, or years between each murder?”

“Were all found in one night.”

“One night?!”

“Between midnight and 10am that morning, all thirteen bodies had been reported to the police.”

“No way one person killed, mutilated, and transported thirteen bodies across the city. That’s impossible!”

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“Half the pleasure is in the premeditation.”

“Pleasure?”

“You know what I love about porn, if you just watch the faces of the girls, they all look like they’re getting murdered.”

“That gets you off?”

“The very act of eating is a pleasure, yet you’re destroying something. Accept the inevitable and enjoy it. Pleasure is in the perception.”

“You can’t decide to change what you enjoy.”

“Perception is easily changed. Imagine you’re in a room with an unknown female. You could simply say a few magick words, and you’ve instantly altered her perception of you. Just by suggesting that you want to cut her face off, your words have completely changed her.”

“How can you enjoy manipulating people?”

“Get off your fucking high horse. We all do it. Aren’t you blackmailing me into forced attrition right now?”

“I want the truth! That’s what I want! I’m not trying to deceive or mislead! I want to know how the fuck you think you can get away with treating people with such fucking contempt!”

“I believe you, Aviv, I really do. But one person’s self-deception is another self-actualization. I hear we’re currently living in the post-truth era, which makes me fucking laugh! Lies have been around since the dawn of language. We accept what’s told without ever needing to fact-check for ourselves. It all stems from the illusion of the authenticity of authority. We’ve grown accustomed to relying on others for evidence. We trust those who know better. We accept that evolution is valid because those in-the-know did the hard work and proved the theory. We believe that god exists because scholars have done the mental-gymnastics in order to justify blind obedience. We know that our mothers and fathers have our best interests at heart because they feed and shelter us. We trust, therefore, we’re easily deceived! And just as there are sheep, so too will there always be wolves, whose job it is to lead the sheep astray and dine all night long! But in order for wolves to survive, they must remind the sheep to believe everything that they hear, regardless of contradictions. And there are no paradoxes that can’t be outweighed with a little emotive-rhetoric. Always remember: easily intimidated people deserve to be manipulated! Yet we trust in our intuitive response to whatever. We trust. We trust because it’s easy! We trust because we’re lazy! We trust and then scream bloody murder when the truth about post-truth threaten our trust! We trust because we don’t want to know the fucking truth! We trust

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because the whole truth is unobtainable! We trust because our personal-truth is whatever we want it to be! Post-truth is the voice of the serpent whispering into the fucking ear of Eve!”

“You sound like a fundamentalist.”

“Are you fucking serious?!”

“Explains your love of the culture here.”

“I hope you’re fucking kidding.”

“Look at yourself!”

“And?”

“You fit right in.”

“No more than I did in Japan.”

“With that shaved head, you know exactly what you look like.”

“I’m going to pretend I didn’t hear that.”

“Fucking white like everyone else.”

“According to certain politicians here, they’ll be glad when there’s no more Germans at all.”

“What are you talking about?”

“The German death-bed birth-rates are only encouraging the new demographic.”

“And you say you’re not a racist.”

“Merely repeating German politicians.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“Again, why would I make that up?”

“Trying to divert blame.”

“It’s no secret I support Israel’s right to defend itself. In fact, being surrounded by enemies and still refusing to back down, makes me admire Israel’s stance even more. But now you tell me, Aviv, if Netanyahu had the same open-borders policy as Merkel, how long do you think your nation would last?”

“This isn’t about Israel!”

“Yes, it fucking is! Your two big accusations this evening are that I’m a racist and a Nazi. So, why the fuck am I defending Israel?”

“This is still your culture!”

“No! No, it’s not! I’m not a fucking German! I love it here, don’t get me wrong, but I have absolutely no intention of gaining German citizenship since Brexit. I’m not a fucking German!”

“Of course, you voted to leave.”

“I already told you this evening that I wanted Britain to remain, you fuck!

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For my own best interest!”

“Listen to you. You sound as hysterical as all those Nazis after the Christmas market attack.”

“Hysterical? Who’s hysterical? All I’ve seen is mass indifference!”

Aviv glanced aside.

“And why is there this mass indifference in this country? Why are most people saying, it was bound to happen? Why would Germans say that about a terrorist attack in their capital? What would cause them to assume the worst? Are Germans dropping bombs on Syria? No! If Germany has done nothing wrong, then hysteria is exactly how the whole fucking nation should be reacting. But they aren’t! They’re indifferent because they knew this was bound to fucking happen. Especially after a year of machete attacks, shootings on the streets, and the mass rape of women and children. But then again, sadomasochism is the new cool.”

Aviv clenched his lips as he glared back.

“So, of course a truck driving through a Christmas market was bound to happen sooner or later. And now let’s blame ourselves for not importing enough refugees. Don’t get me wrong, asylum-seeker need shelter. It’s the humane thing to do. But taking the entire population of a small country without any form of vetting, is asking for fucking trouble! And that’s exactly what they’ve got! Which, you know, probably isn’t so bad. Now everyone can wallow in self-pity and blame nonexistent Neo-Nazis. Blame anyone but the perpetrators of the crime. And what lesson does that teach the children? That it’s not wrong if you can fucking get away with it! Now, you tell me, Aviv, is that how they handle attacks in Israel, or do they strike back at those responsible for the fucking crime?”

He had nothing to say.

“I heard commerce kills culture. You know what kills culture? Time! Cultures are in a constant state of flux. But indifference to being out bred sure can accelerate things.”

“You just crucified yourself,” Aviv sniggered. “I’ve got that all on record.”

“I’m glad you have it on the fucking record!” I snarled right in Aviv’s face. “Bruce supports Israel! Bruce holds criminals accountable for their crimes! Bruce believes in vigilance, motherfucker!”

10. HAUSVOGTEIPLATZ

The Aston Martin pulled over to one of two triangular roundabouts. This part

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of Mitte was clearly where the wealthy lived, worked, and spent their hardly earned cash. There was a cluster of trees either side of an entrance that I took a photo of.

“What did she look like?”

“A little blonde girl, with the face of an insufferable Bavarian cunt,” I said, slipping my phone back into my pocket after subtly dialing a nameless number.

“Can’t stand your attitude toward women.”

“You think they’re all helpless?” I scorned, scanning the empty streets. “They’re fucking not!”

“I understand why you’re obsessed with these murders. You’re actually turned-on by the violence. You’re getting some kind of fucking sexual thrill

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from this shit!”

“If you have an inborn talent, like artistic skill, then you should flaunt of it. Just like you should take advantage other parts of your temperament.”

“No one’s born that way.”

“When I was a kid, my mother used to call me a little scowler.”

“You were probably an ungrateful asshole, like you are today.”

“Around thirteen, I came home one day and found my father and his drinking buddy laughing at me. He asked, who my model had been? I was confused, until I realized he had discovered my secret sketches. I was fucking pissed off. Who the fuck was he to intrude on my personal space! Securing a lock to my bedroom door became my top priority. Learned some important lessons from that invasion of privacy though. At least it seemed like my father was proud that I was into girls. Then I realized I actually had nothing to be ashamed of. Mostly I learned that there’s no such thing as external privacy. Only your thoughts are yours. Got to anticipate being exposed at any moment, so must be prepared for the worst, by having no shame about the things you keep to yourself. And ultimately, I learned the hard way, that there’s nothing fucking special about anything you value or hold dear!”

“There’s nothing special about you!”

“Of course. Yet I can still hear them.”

“Hear what?”

“The girls. I can hear them screaming. Screaming in my walls. I’m never alone. Always kept company with my sexual demons. Every girl I’ve ever fucked or phantasied over, they follow me. I can’t escape them, because I worship them. But they’re nothing like the actual girls that inspired them. These devils are completely distinct and separate entities. They live and die by my hand, and they’re all fucking mine to rape to death whenever the fuck they come to mind!”

“Fuck, you’re a pervert.”

“There’s nothing as beautiful as the sight of all that blood gushing from the face of a cute blonde after you’ve just bashed her fucking skull in.”

“The fuck are you saying?”

“I fucked her till she couldn’t feel her feet anymore, but does it make me a bad person if I visualized her being dead? Or am I only a piece of shit if I didn’t make her cum?”

“You’re fucking disgusting!”

“You know what’s disgusting, Carpaccio! It’s like literally eating labia. It’s fucking disgusting!”

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“What?!”

“Does raise an interesting question, and you might know yourself: is cannibalism Kosher?”

“Fuck you!”

“Chlamydia from cannibalism, that’s not a conversation you want to have with your girlfriend. Am I right.”

“Stop! I don’t want to hear any of this!”

“Whenever I see some spoiled little Lolita being pandered to, I want to see her prostrated, moaning, and cut open like a fucking mackerel! I want to desecrate this pristine idol adored by so many fucking morons and show them the stinking meat that she’s really fucking made of!”

“Why are you still speaking to me?!”

“A friend once told me that being a parent was about having to endure huge periods of boredom, while only receiving tiny moments of joy. Sounds more like having to tolerate a girlfriend. Come on, you know what I’m talking about.”

“No! I don’t agree with anything you’re saying!”

“Don’t fool yourself. You can be honest with me, Aviv. I won’t judge you.”

“Don’t fucking talk to me!”

“You’ve heard of the term micro-aggression. This hyper-sensitivity toward your own feeble insecurities. Just like how a jealous female’s paranoia makes a situation all about her. They can’t bare the idea that the world doesn’t revolve around them. Give you an example: man walks down the street while checking his phone. Woman standing on the curb suddenly becomes furious at the guy’s micro-aggression. Man walks away unaware that the woman even exists. Woman screams misogyny because he ignored her, thus belittling her. However, if he had acknowledged her presence she could just as easily deem that a micro-aggression as well, as he’s just objectified her. Come on! You know exactly what I’m talking about! Every guy who’s ever been with a girl knows what this shit’s like! Admit it, Aviv! Admit it, you little misogynistic fuck!”

“I feel so sorry for Mara, having to deal with you for two whole fucking years. I should have done something much sooner than this.”

“Had a dream a few months ago, that I’d killed Mara. She was already dead when the dream began. Found myself in the process of disposing of her body. I’d wrapped her up in newspaper like a glass vase, when suddenly I panicked. Overcome with remorse, I spent the rest of the dream arguing with

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myself that maybe she would have regretted letting me murder her. Had been her idea that I do it. But what if she would've changed her mind if only I'd waited. I shouldn't have rushed into it. Now it was too late. I should have waited. I never should have listened to her. I should have done something else. But it was too fucking late."

Aviv just shook his head in complete shock.

"There's a chemical in the brain that decreases along with sexual attraction to a long-term partner. It's called PEA (phenethylamine). I have a theory that PEA is replaced with nagging. The less PEA in the brain, the more you nag at your partner. And there is nothing as unattractive as a nagger and given enough nagging anyone will change their behavior. There's a fine line where you must accept that it's far better to be alone than to endure the tedium of a resentful relationship."

"Why the fuck are you tormenting her then?!"

I stared back at that little guy for a long moment before I replied, "Because I love her, you fucking cunt!"

"Then stop torturing her!"

"You're right, of course. But we're all emotional-drunkards stumbling around inside our own heads, trying to deal with our demented ideas of what's the best thing to do. I'd stop fucking with her, if only she'd stop too."

"You're so fucking selfish. She's done nothing wrong!"

"Really?! You know what, her constant scrutinizing has taught me one truly valuable lesson: how to better mask my secrets."

"Couples shouldn't have secrets!"

"Fuck that! Whenever I see a happy couple on the train, I think to myself how easy it would be to destroy everything they hold dear. Everyone has secrets. Everyone!"

"Not true."

"Don't fucking give me that, motherfucker! Look at your fucking life. Don't you fucking dare try and tell me that you haven't got any nasty fucking shit that you keep all to yourself. Dig into your unconscious a little deeper, and yeah, shut your fucking mouth! If I had to confess every dirty little secret, it'd never fucking end, 'cause new ones are continually coming along! When I see a girl on the street, I want to stalk her, fuck her, and then eat her fucking asshole! I want her to suffer before I erase her entire existence as if I'd never even seen her in the first fucking place! When I'm at a cafe and see a girl sitting next to me, I want to stab her with a fucking sugar dispenser! When I see a girl's thighs at the gym, I've the immediately urge to lick the skin clean

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off her flesh, and then chew on every muscle fiber, simply because I have to have absolutely all of her! The texture of her skin, I want it in my palms. I want to crush it beneath my hands! I want her bleeding all over me. When I lock eyes on a girl on the U Bahn, I see that she wants me to fuck her in the ass right in front of her boyfriend! When I found the two blonde housekeepers cleaning my hotel room in Bacharach, the first thing I thought of, was strangling them one at a time upon my enormous bed while I fucked the other in the mouth! And then I'd be the one cleaning up after they fucking shit themselves."

"You can't be like this! You can't! This isn't... This is... You can't!"

"Yet I'm commanded to think only about the one I love and keep no secrets?! Get the fuck out of here!"

"Mara said you'd have these kinds of rants, but if I didn't record this, I wouldn't believe anyone would actually fucking admit to this sick shit! You really are fucking insane!"

11. ST. HEDWIGS-KATHEDRALE

Stepping out of the car onto Französische Strasse, I told the driver to wait for us on Unter den Linden at Bebelplatz. Aviv and I then walked around the east-side of the circular cathedral.

"She was over there. Another blonde with a pointy nose. Naked, gutted, and slit throat."

"Was there any point to all of this? Why these girls? And why dump them so publicly?"

"Why? I kind of like Proust's idea that it's all about love, status, and art. But I reckon you need their opposite as well. Shame, hate, and destruction. You got to have all six factors for a well-rounded reason to live. Virtue without vice ain't nobody's idea of a good time. You know, I'm always happiest when someone else hates me more than I hate myself."

"That's a fucking stupid philosophy!"

"Even the most self-righteous cunt undergoes times of self-doubt. The trick is using it to your advantage."

"By blaming others?!"

"By knowing that hatred is a strength that concentrates the mind."

"It's a weakness!"

"There's this flawed idea that I hear a lot. That a bully is compensating for some underlying insecurity. This is a misconception. The fact is, some

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people are drunk with power. Once you've learned to take charge, you're not making up for a weakness by bullying others, you're in control! The weak like to comfort themselves that they're not to blame for their incompetence by saying that the strong are as weak as they are. They need to accuse someone else for their own failures instead of accepting defeat. But if you don't learn to hate your own weaknesses, then you'll never improve."

"You sound like a complete Right-wing capitalist. Except, what the fuck have you ever achieved?!"

"Now you sound like Mara. There's the Jew in you."

"Fucking asshole!"

"You really want to play that economic game, then what the fuck have you done with your fucking life? I'm a fucking prolific artist who's built an

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entire fucking world with my own two hands. Who the fuck are you to point the finger at anyone? You're just a trained fucking killer!"

"I serve to protect the greater good!"

"Greater good? From who's perspective? Palestinians see you as the fucking bullies! I love this fucking game. When someone starts accusing you of some warped way of thinking, just flip the exact same question back on them and watch them fucking squirm!"

"You only doing it because you can't answer the fucking question yourself!"

"What question?"

"What the fuck have you done with your life that's of any benefit to anyone else beyond yourself?!"

"I pay my taxes, motherfucker."

"Yeah, you're a big success."

"Could always be more ambitious."

"What ambition? You're a fucking loser!"

"You're right. There's always more women out there to call my own."

"Why the fuck do you always change the subject to sex?!"

"Greed comes in many forms."

"And yet you have nothing. And soon you'll have no one!"

"Only the weak surround themselves with idiots to make up for their own lack of self-reliance."

"Another pathetic excuse!"

"Given a long enough time-line, everyone fucking betrays and abandons us."

"You're a sad, sad little man."

"Speak for yourself, short-round," I said, towering over that angry little Israeli.

"Fuck, I can't see what anyone likes about you."

"Let me ask you, do you believe the universe has put you here for a reason? Even if you don't believe in a higher-power, do you believe you should make up your own reasons for living? Either way, you have one goal: becoming all that you can, no matter who hates you along the way. Isn't that the fundamental concept of what being an individual is. And I walk freely among Satanists, Christians, Thelemites, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, and fucking voodoo dolls, because I am none of them. One of the most important rules to remember is be suspicious of reckless behavior, regardless of skin color, age, gender, or religion. Anyone can be a threat! I fucking despise it

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when I hear some arrogant fuck claiming that someone else is hypocritically contradicting their own principles. Principles are there to help you cope with the animal that we're all incarcerated within. We all break our own fucking rules, because we're all fucking animals! You have to adapt to situations and take advantage of opportunities. Even your leaders, philosophers, and your brightest of the bright are still just fucking human meat! Not one of us is without character defects, prejudices, and impulsive fucking temperaments! Those in authority are little more than fucking animals with titles deceiving the masses into bowing down to someone with no more answers than you or I have!"

"You're so fucking full of yourself!"

"Think anyone else knows what the fucking meaning of life is?!"

"Absolutely!"

"Go ask the smartest Rabbi, scientist, or psychologist you can find! Their fucking answers will all be so fucking vague to the point of being ultimately fucking useless!"

"I pity you."

"I don't! You should only offer comfort sparingly, motherfucker, or it demeans the value when it's actually fucking needed!"

12. PLATZ DER MÄRZREVOLUTION

"At least I can actually see the museums from here," Aviv said, standing on the curb next to Gorki Theater.

"She was tall, and wide-eyed. Had long legs, big black hair, and the sort of tits that are great to oil-up and then smack around."

"No one wants to know about your fucking fantasies!"

"The fuck are we talking about then?"

"This trip you took to Portugal! I want to know exactly what you did there!"

Glancing around the construction work on the east-wing of the Humboldt university, I thought back to the night that I received the phone call in my Bacharach hotel room. I never use hotel phones, so was a little surprised, and then rather annoyed once I recognized the voice. "Chloe met me at the main station in Lisbon, then drove out into the countryside for about an hour. I asked what had happened after our adventure in the woods. She said that she drove back to the little white house but kept going once she saw the firetrucks. I tried not to take it personally. Anyway, we arrived at this big

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house where, like I said, she wanted to talk about Doggerland.”

“What about it?”

“Some shit her friend is obsessed with. It was his house. Samuel. Was a professor or something. I can’t remember. An old guy. Big beard, balding, bit of a cunt.”

“What did she say that made you leave your vacation?”

“Said she had a niece who’d suck my dick.”

“What?”

“Come on, loosen up. Jesus fucking Christ.”

“Fuck you!”

“Samuel, he’s been working with some research group, something to do with an oil company. Don’t know the details. Been mapping the seafloor

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of the English Channel. Something about laying pipelines. Anyway, he's not involved in that. He's in it for the archeology. They're interested in the remains of whoever the fuck used to live where Doggerland once was."

"What is this place?"

"Fuck, I don't know. About ten-thousand years ago, Britain was part of the mainland. When the ice caps that covered Scotland melted, the sea-level rose, and the low lands between France and England were washed the fuck away."

"Whatever. What did you really talk about?"

"Tell you what. Take a time-out. Use your fucking phone and Google it. Then I'll accept your apology, and we can continue."

"I'm not Googling anything."

"I'm serious. I'm fucking done with your smug attitude, you little prick! Google that shit! Go on. Fucking do it!"

Aviv forced a grin, then looked at this phone. I assumed it was still recording. And soon his smirk tightened.

"Apologize or change the fucking subject."

"It's a thing. Fine."

"That's not an apology."

"You were right, okay. Continue!"

"I want a fucking apology!"

"You were right! What more do you fucking want?!"

"Say the magick fucking words!"

"Fuck you, asshole! Fuck you! I fucking apologize! Now fucking continue!"

"Wow."

"Yeah, yeah. Don't need your fucking forgiveness!"

"You're just here to judge."

"Because there are fucking consequences!"

"How do you know whether or not the consequences of your intervention will even have the right outcome?"

"I'll make fucking sure it does!"

"How?"

"Wait and see."

"Spell it out to me!"

"Do I have to remind you, hmm?" Aviv said, holding up the recorder.

"That's only the method of causing the consequences, not the controlling of consequences themselves."

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“Trust me, I’ll see you fucking suffer!”

“And yet you’re supposed to be the morally superior one here.”

“Shut the fuck up and continue the story! Finish what happened in Portugal!”

“Mostly talked. That was it. Then got the train back to Bacharach, where I was pleasantly surprised to find that my things had been moved to a much larger room. They told me that the same creepy old couple paid for the upgrade after they’d accidentally broken into my fucking room while I was away. Fucking spooks.”

“Told you, I have no idea who they were. Now get back to fucking Portugal!”

“We spent the day looking at maps and satellite images. Sammy boy was convinced he’d located a prehistoric settlement.”

“What does any of this have to do with you?!”

“Good fucking question!”

“So?!”

“A few months before hand, when Chloe and I were in the woods, there were these small megalithic stones. She thinks that this settlement at the bottom of the English Channel also has a similar arrangement. Samuel reckons he’s found several circular plots in the Channel.”

“Still don’t see why you’re involved in any of this.”

“Guess Chloe just missed my charming personality.”

“Right.”

“It was all very interesting. Apparently, Samuel’s been studying Doggerland for fucking decades. Maybe Chloe and he were once young lovers solving the exciting mysteries of ancient civilizations. But now, they both look fucking exhausted. Maybe that’s why they asked me to come along on their next expedition. Though, told them I would if I could, but I can’t so I won’t.”

“Why not?”

“Can’t swim.”

“What?”

“I. Can’t. Fucking. Swim.”

“I still don’t believe any of this.”

“Which part?”

“All of it!”

“Huh.”

“You went to France to fuck that whore, didn’t you!”

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“Oh, for fuck’s sake! Fuck you! And fuck this!”

“That’s what really happened, isn’t it!”

Taking a deep breath, I wanted to walk away and be done with this whole fucking thing, but clenching my jaw I replied, “You know how misdirection works? A pick-pocket bumps into your shoulder, you’re distracted, and he steals your wallet. People only see a fraction of what’s going on. And a jealous girl only ever sees one thing. The French whore has become a decoy. A scapegoat. No matter what’s going on, this decoy will always be blamed for Mara’s own insecurities! Get your fucking head out of your ass and give me a little more credit than that. There are plenty of other girls out there that I could be screwing!”

“Dream on, loser.”

13. DIE ALTE NATIONALGALERIE

For the first time we actually stood on the Fisher Island and walked between rows of stone pillars. The back of Das Alte Museum was to our right, the side of Das Neue Museum was to our left, and then we turned into the court in front of Die Alte Nationalgalerie. Walking down the west-side of the gallery, we headed toward the back of Das Pergamommuseum, it was currently in the midst of extensive renovations. A few cranes towered over those Greek-fashioned buildings, and not another person was anywhere to be seen.

“Just over that fence the last body was left, just the same as all the others. Bloodless and appropriately dumped.”

“You’re a disgrace!”

“You know what Mara’s mother said about me last year, after we had a small break up: good riddance!”

“She was right!”

“Well, you can never change that first impression you make upon someone, it only gets worse.”

“Just look at you. What aspiration have you ever had?”

“Ever been to Turkey?”

“Why?”

“Carl Humann is buried there.”

“Who?”

“Buried at the original site of The Altar Of Zeus. Where he uncovered it. I’d like to see the ruined city for myself.”

“What’s that got to do with anything?”

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“We’re looking right at it.”

“At what?”

“The Throne Of Satan,” I said, pointing beyond the Thirteenth Demon. “It’s housed within that outcrop at the back of the Pergamon Museum. The whole place is an elaborate extension of the altar. Fitting don’t you think.”

“Are you still talking about the murders?”

“What murders?”

“All these dead girls you’ve been infatuated with!”

“You sound just like the Thule boys.”

“Who?”

“Expect they’ll be along any moment.”

“What the fuck has Satan got to do with any of this?”

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“Don’t you know, Satan was defeated long ago.”

“You preaching scripture now?”

“It’s not like how Milton romanticized it. Empires in hell come and go.”

“You’re not making any fucking sense!”

“He’s serving a prison sentence within a prison sentence. Like a hermit, resembling the old bearded man that renaissance artists once portrayed god as. But the devil still has his prophets. He, he’s never forgotten his fucking aspirations!”

“What the fuck is with you?! Are you speaking metaphorically?!”

“No more than magick is self-induced psychosis.”

“The fuck do you mean?!”

“*“First there is a mountain, then there is no mountain, then there is a mountain again.”*”

“Make sense, you fucking idiot!”

“You know why exorcisms don’t work?”

“No! No, I don’t!”

“Devils don’t care what the name of god demands. If god could control them, then there never would have been a rebellion in the first place.”

“I don’t care about this shit! I want to know what you’ve done behind Mara’s back!”

“By the way, happy Hanukkah,” I smirked, nodding at several black SUVs racing through the security blockades and up to where we stood. “Looks like we have company.”

“You’re going to die alone, you know that, right!”

A dozen men in tailored suits and leather gloves jumped out of the vehicles and marched straight toward Aviv and I.

“Mara’s going to know everything—”

“Mara?! Didn’t you get the fucking memo?!” I whispered, turning toward Aviv. “We already broke up, motherfucker! You have nothing on me!”

“I don’t fucking believe a word coming out of your fucking mouth!”

“Well, of course. If Socrates couldn’t talk his way out of a death sentence, what hope do I have.”

“You’re a fucking piece of shit! You didn’t need my help getting into any of these locations.”

“Yeah, but at least there’s now plenty security footage of us together.”

Aviv then grabbed my collar, yelling into my face, “There weren’t any murders, were there!”

“Not yet,” I quietly replied, just before several big men slammed into

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Aviv and dragged him away.

An old man in a cashmere trench-coat limped my way while leaning heavily on his walking-cane. I then spotted Aviv's driver sitting with a bloody nose between two serious-looking pricks in one of the SUVs.

"It's about time you got rid of the Jew," the decrepit old man sneered, staring straight past me. "There's an assignment—"

"Hey! It's the morning of Christmas Eve! No business till after the holidays," I said, leaving them all behind. "A Merry Christmas to us all! God bless us, every-fucking-one!"

A PREEXISTING PACT



Bruce Stirling John Knox

The SUVs drove off just after 3am, and I strolled across the bridge toward the Theology Library. I had spent the last few weeks reading *Bark* in there. Taking a left, I followed the river until I was standing directly in front of that mass of scaffolding covering the resting place of The Altar Of Zeus.

I had drawn a circle of blood around the old city's fortifications, and yet the Dragon at the heart was still hungry. Heading past Hackescher Markt train station, and the first location, I marched inward. It only took ten minutes to walk from any of the thirteen points to Saint George. There, the bronze statue was soaked in all of their sacrificial guts, while they continued to scream from inside with the voice of Antipas! After paying my respects below that defiled altar, I stepped over to the riverside. The Berlin Dom was to my right. Mühlendamm bridge to my left. Saint George on his horse behind. But the Dragon swam below in the black waters of Loch Ness.

Walking away, I plugged in my MP3 player and listened to Leonard Cohen, *Traveling Light*. I know this town like I know myself, and I hate this fucking place.

Bruce

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SOUNDTRACK

AN OCCULT OBLIGATION

Slipknot, *The Negative One*

Wo Fat, *The Conjuring*

Portishead, *Undenied*

Ken Mode, *Romeo Must Never Know*

Arvo Pärt, *Spiegel im Spiegel*

Slipknot, *The Devil In I*

Soundgarden, *Mailman*

Tool, *Lateralus*

Tom Waits, *Down There By The Train*

RELATIONSHIPS AND THEIR DISCONTENTS

Frank Sinatra, *New York, New York*

THERE IS NO DIAGNOSIS

Puscifer, *Smoke And Mirrors*

Beck, *Loser*

Om, *Addis*

Helena Winkelman, *Quadriga*

SOMEWHERE TO BE ALONE

Monster Magnet, *Dig That Hole*

Ken Mode, *Blessed*

Montserrat Figueras & Jordi Savall, *Les Trois Principes, Alef, Mem, Shin*

Planet Of Zeus, *Stab Me*

THE MUSEUM ISLAND MURDERS

Leonard Cohen, *Traveling Light*

OTHER WORKS BY BSKJ 2001 - 2016

- 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.
Forth 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.

