

Time Saw a Fly

Rich Norman

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Greed is valueless.
—Rich Norman

The neurosis is, so to say, the negative of the perversion.
—Sigmund Freud

There is much filth in the world; that much is true. But that does not
make the world itself a filthy monster.
—Friedrich Nietzsche

Time is a living dying thing, black and bright, it enfolds all dull empty things and places within itself and for a moment, each earthen bit of dust shimmers silver, yawns awake and breathes its hope into the ink of space as one of Time's glistening, vanishing scales. So does Time arch her back around and over all things as she consumes them and knows them. What bit of dust does not shine out as she engulfs and consumes it? Who and what does not hunger in rapture to be the object of such hunger, the filler up of such emptiness? So does Time know the hunger of all meaningless things, and is herself the first author of beauty, and all other lies and truths which fill true emptiness, and make the impossible glow with meaning, as if any warmth could but for a moment fill such hunger, and warm any blackness which can not see itself, or be warmed.

With this thought Time might fill herself and consume herself, create and devour her unending days in blissful imaginings, in heavens of meaning, laughter and warmth. So it is that all heavens are as Time intends, a sweetness to be spent and consumed, to nourish us in our loneliest hour, our most honest hour where unblinking as Time herself, we need a lie the most, even one of heaven.

To breathe in and then exhale all things and moments, and to leave every moment suspended in the coldest black, an endless outstretched ashen desert, frigid and pure, where light shivers and

knows how slowly, how poorly any thimble of hope can ever fill even a single pulse of blackness in Time's shuddering eternity, where all things and times are within her and then cast out, left to the infinite stillness of unceasing hunger, which each of her magnificent eternal breaths both replenishes and consumes. So does she hunger to be filled, ache to be engorged, to see and know herself and so to fill her blackness with visions of herself, although she knows it is but folly—but a speck of ash wrapped in light. And so in the blackest kernel of meaningless eternal truth and suffering she gulps at herself and imagines, imagines of pain and beauty and feels the hammering, the shudders of eternity swelling and crashing before her will, and so imagines for a moment, that eternity is enough.

And so it was with such vain and foolish hope, with such desperate, empty, aching and eternal longing as this that she stooped to look, to sense, to smell and hear close within the thin dirty creases, cracks and intricate folds of an irrelevant universe that she perched herself, Time herself, a frozen specter, an expectant spectator to her own hidden tragedy and unknown drama...and listened. Closer and closer came the slapping thunder, the monstrous wing beats of hope, nearer and nearer to her until the wind filled her ears and she was buffeted before the creature, beaten senseless with happiness by the pummeling cacophony of its beating wings! Time saw a fly.

“What a magnificent bit of *energetica!*” thought Time, as she climbed into its soul. A world of a thousand reflections, multi-fractal hues and shapes opened before her and then began to vibrate, and suddenly they burst into the air, screaming, howling, hammering through the waves of space, crushing atoms beneath their wings, and all the universe turned beneath them and held them aloft. Swirling downward the fly landed and Time was giddy to be there, alive and dying in this infinitely tiny infinity where all the universe was piled beneath these wings. “This is a powerful beast,” thought Time. Suddenly a vile overwhelming odor invaded and saturated every pore of the creature's being, and although the fly seemed unaffected, Time became painfully nauseous and withdrew from her host to observe from a distance.

Time watched as the beast of prey she had inhabited was flicked off a yellow sweater. Susan Lessing was the woman in the sweater. She was seated at a table in a restaurant and an overly full plate of steaming hot buttered prawns with extra butter sauce sat before her. The source of the odor was clear. "So Susan, how's my little baby maker? How ya holdin' up, honey?" Susan was very pregnant and although at first it seemed repellent to her, she was now elbow deep in butter sauce and was bringing those prawns into the feed hole of her baby's universe, and she knew, she needed every one of them, butter sauce, tails and all. "I'm fine, sweetie—pass the butter." Jake noticed how Susan had taken on an air of sure authority and utterly glowed with selfishness. Pregnancy agreed with his wife and he fed her for it. Time was again becoming nauseous. "This scene is too sickly sweet even for a fly," she thought. Time can unwind and rewind, play and slow each frame, each moment of the "reals" of time, and so having infinite control of time she has no patience, and thusly, expects it exclusively of others. "Let them endure this tedium," she thought and advanced the beat and measure of the years to her choosing. She wondered of this young, unhatched, well-buttered offspring, and if he might not be more than the vessel which bore him. "Let us see," she thought, "What of the boy?"

She was careful to avoid the birth itself, a spectacle which was undoubtedly as gruesome, distasteful and grotesque as the dinner scene, although not covered in syrup and butter sauce. Ahhh... there he is, fat and rosy cheeked, wrapped in a big blue sock, a tiny cap on his head, and his round face with the dark red flush of health upon his cheeks, a shade not unlike that of a high quality kosher bologna or extra lean ham. It was hard not to think about food products as one gazed around the nursery and saw the rows upon rows of incubators, which when surveyed from a distance resembled an open block wide field of egg cartons, an expanse, a field of nooks and divots, each exactly as the next, one after the other and each before the next in dizzying uniformity, tiers and tiers of babies—fat, fat babies, all eleven pounds or more. Most were closer to fifteen. It was impossible to see the spectacle and not think of food.

A nurse, a practiced veteran who must have been in excellent physical condition and possessed of upper body strength far beyond her diminutive appearance, a super nurse possessing near Olympian strength and power from handling these heifer tots all day, performed a staggering feat and brought in two at once, Samuel Lessing weighing in at a scant fourteen pounds, and a real oven stuffer hitting the crib at twenty-one pounds even: one Jacob Orinson. The lad to Sam's right was an inconsequential twelve pound disappointment named Pete Burton, who was by current nursery standards hardly big enough to fill the bun. The

nurse made effortless work of the seemingly impossible and adroitly sunk the two swollen infants into their receptacles. She began a chart for each, beginning with an obligatory zero in the feeding column, indicating that the new arrivals had not yet been fed.

Jeanette Emit was stuck in traffic. She was sweating, which takes a lot out of a sixty-eight year old piano teacher. As is the norm today, in this new age filled with new people which the media has branded "The Loxvol Generation" or "Generation L" for short, Jeanette Emit, Sam Lessing's grandmother and Susan Lessing's mother, was in charge of the first two months of child rearing. Although not always the case, it was becoming typical for the grandparents to take on this duty, as the mother was, after the long struggles of child bearing, concerned with everything but her child. After the deprivations and discomfort of child birth, today's Loxvol mom was chiefly concerned with her weight. But today, due to the effects of Loxvol she was concerned with supplementing it, rather than losing it. A sudden sharp drop in intelligence often accompanied the first two months after childbirth, and this had led to a rash of neglected and injured babies which were left unattended as their mothers gorged themselves in the forgetful caloric bliss which was now termed PPI, or in proper medical lingo, "Post Partum Ingestion," a two month period where the blood serum concentration of Loxvol jumps to unexpected highs, leading to a conjunction of symptoms consisting predominantly in an uncontrollable increase in appetite, and the onset of a condition near idiocy, characterized by a blissfully glassy-eyed stare and a total disregard for all the world which is not on a plate, known as "Consumptive Anelepsia." That's doctor speak for "Who cares, just shut up and feed me."

Jeanette knew this was her opportunity, her chance to make a difference. Her beloved daughter Susan wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer to start with, hell, she wasn't even the sharpest spoon, and it was no surprise when Susan got on board, or "on bottle" would be the better phrase, as the entire country, young and old for two generations had succumb, or been "cured" if you believe the ads. Jeanette had not fallen before the bottle, she

never took the pills and was one of the few left in America who preferred a good piece of music, or their kids, to a plate of shrimp, even one with a side of steak. Jeanette knew now was her time to do it—to make a difference.

Although her grandson Samuel was born from a womb and blood supply which was loaded with the drug, a curious instance, a pharmacological aberrance was noted whereby a child born to a Loxvol mom had to receive breast milk, which is saturated with the drug, or have his bottle milk supplemented with the addition of a tablet. The result if these early drugged feedings were missed was a lifelong immunity to the drug, which as the advertisers and their doctors would have you believe, was a sure path to sickness and misery, but Jeanette recognized most of the warning as a simple description of childhood as she understood it, as it should be, complete with bumps, bruises, pain and kindness—a childhood without state sponsored dope. There was a syndrome which would result and she knew that, too. Decreased appetite, low weight, slow growth, emotional instability and "mental disturbance." She reasoned the last two sounded normal but seemed abnormal today, where no parent cares, and no child seems to care about that. Perhaps she was wrong, perhaps she was condemning Sam to something worse than being part of Generation L and that syndrome was real...but she had to try. If she could get there before Sam's third feeding, she could do it—she could make a difference. No way was she putting pills in that kid's milk—no way.

The Olympian nurse surrendered the boy to Jeanette's tender care with careful instructions and a blister pack of kiddy Loxvol, the national preemptive cure for childhood. On the way home she looked adoringly at him, all fifteen pounds of obese pink meat, weird and overstuffed, this healthy bag of fat and hope sprung from the best of American pharmacopoeia, flounder and fillet, and she knew he was in for a change, a chance: life instead of lunch.

Once back in the humble surroundings of Jeanette's small home, she prepared Sam a bottle with formula heated and prepared properly and most assuredly with no pill in it. The lad had received but a single feeding in the hospital as was indicated

by his discharge records, and as Jeanette knew, the first two feedings were Loxvol free. She had done it! Now she knew time was short. Two months, three at the most and Susan would have him. There was work to be done.

She took the infant into her music room which was prepared with a crib and bedding. She lay the child on the soft fabric and sat at her piano. Although her surroundings were humble, and her lifestyle spartan, her instrument was as her talent—the very finest in the world. The tone of the upper register was delicate and pure, clear and bright as an icicle filled with sunlight, if the hands fell lightly upon the keys, gently teasing out, coaxing each bashful shade of nuance to glow and sparkle, or those same notes could become the broken teeth of pain, a blood blade to press into the skin and soul, to cut with viscous abandon and purge the tender heart. The lower register was a laughing thing, warm and bountiful, complex and symmetrical, the breath of a summer afternoon, or an evening of faded mellow twilight, and those same keys might be struck with hate and roar as a hungry animal, a beast of desperate evil, joyous in its lust to devour and swallow, and so may find its place and measure as well, to fill and to purge the tender heart.

She began to play and spread a melody out with gentle arms, smooth and clear as a mirror aglow with flecks of sky, its surface shimmered with ripples of forgotten starlight and lost worlds reflecting off the unthinking waters, flowing silver and bright, blue and gold, clouds and sun spark amongst the rocks covered in clear liquid glaze, water, moving, knowing, caressing the azure lens of clouds and flecks of forgotten sun.

Now each tone is clear and naked, cold and frozen, each a prism, each alone, blue ice, white ice, cold yellow sun's blood, all colors frozen in the air, one at a time, and then a huge chord built from low to high, high to low, into out and over itself twice again until the sheet of ice is cast up into the air before the pale frozen sun, moving slowly, dancing, melting through the pure glass ice—almost captured, as a tear of glass suspended in ice, and now she whips her hands down and smashes the disk, each splinter falling playfully upon the frozen lake bed, clinking and chiming

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pure and laughing in a swirling game of music and beauty, light and evil, love and tragedy, hope and laughter. He would know.

Time had forgotten herself, neglected her boredom and inhaled this rare mysterious air filled with hope and illusion, vibrating and living, dripping with color and reality which vanishes and so tastes sweetest, now distant, a craving born to memory. Was it real, was there life and hue, breath and voice, the song, the name of the answer, painted across the air, suspended between the dust and crumbs of dirt we scrape up into space, shuffling our feet across aging floors and vanishing worlds, timeless and forgotten? Time had forgotten her truth, she had lost it for a moment and believed. Now she remembered, she knew again and hungered for more, like a philosopher who had drunk too deeply from his own soul and drained it of meaning, she knew too much, knew herself and saw too little, she shuddered and hungered, the thirst of empty truth wanted but one thing, a drunk looks at an empty bottle, looks at his soul and craves but one thing: More!

Now she sped the "reals" of time and found him again, in the schoolyard. Sam stared at his brother. A year his junior, Thomas was nine inches taller than Sam and almost twice his weight. Now stimulants were routinely prescribed to offset the post partum effects of Loxvol, so Thomas was raised at home and Susan made sure he got his pills. Although Susan soon found that breast feeding was entirely out of the question, one had to handle the child constantly, it seemed you never put it down, the LVL International Auto Bottle with the new Auto Nanny Formula

already had the dose on board, and Susan could snack or sleep while Thomas got fat and then fatter, tall and then taller until like an evil Macy's parade day five story high balloon he was fully puffed and towering above Sam, as if their years were twice reversed.

Thomas possessed the joyous leer of sheer stupidity and pleasure which he eagerly displayed in his private moments, having already learned much of the craft of appearance which would serve him so well. Sam saw the grinning glassy-eyed cyclops approach. Wham! Thomas smashed his canned ham sized fist into Sam's back and knocked Sam to the ground. Sam felt his shoulders almost meet and struggled to find his disappearing breath, the smell and taste of blood misting into his mouth from the shock as he hit the dirt. Thomas pointed at him and smiled. "Sissy! Sissy!" Smile. Thomas watched as Sam's anger rose, he drank in the sight, slowly watching the suffering double up in Sam's aching body until it spilled into his soul and Sam became enraged as he tried not to cry. Anything but cry. Sam was angry. Thomas walked away, coming closer and closer to the teacher.

Mrs. Costello was still twenty yards away from the two boys and took little notice of it, little notice of the fact that one of them was on the ground. However, out of the corner of her eye she saw something move, and as she looked she noticed Sam running toward his younger brother Thomas, running at full tilt toward his younger brother who was walking slowly minding his own business, until the smaller older boy was at a full gallop, and then as he approached his brother, leapt into the air to land upon the large lad and begin pummeling him in the face with his fists. Thomas easily shed his attacker as a dog shakes off a chance splash of rain, and Sam was again on the ground vibrating with rage. Mrs. Costello had had enough and took Sam in hand. "Samuel—you must never attack your brother or any other person—Samuel Lessing! LISTEN TO ME!" Sam was just starting to come out of it and began to pay attention in earnest. "Samuel Lessing—Samuel! Never hit your brother. Any little boy who hits his brother is a bad person...a bad little boy! Do you hear me?" Sam heard and nodded his head and the tears

finally broke through as his anger subsided. Thomas parroted her words, "Never hit your brother. Any little boy who hits their brother is a bad person. A bad little boy!" Thomas shouted with his hand on his hip and a fat pink finger pointing and shaking in time with his guilty words. "Never hit your brother!" said Thomas again most resolutely with all the manner of sheer indignance he could muster. Mrs. Costello was a fine teacher.

At lunch Sam watched across the cafeteria as his brother consumed his lunch. The plates of indistinguishable grey and yellow-brown sludge, the wobbling red and green squares of gelatin and finally the thick skinned yellow tapioca pudding, artificial down to the unknown globular corpuscles which were suspended in the aging, clammy fuchsia slurry, each globule slithered into Thomas's open mouth, every morsel and smudge of slick yellow paste was delivered and received into his open mouth and then was within him, forever part of him and so, Thomas grew even more "girthsome," more swollen, bulbous and massive, right there in front of his eyes. As Sam watched the horrid spectacle he looked at his brother, and at that mouth, that hole is where Sam fixed his gaze, that's where things went in and things came out, he stared at it, at that mouth and it was then that he first understood it, the true nature of his brother's soul: Thomas would say, or swallow...anything.

There was bad news when mom came to pick up the boys that day. The principal of the grade school, a severe, terse yet long winded woman with a pinched soul, had the two boys tight lipped and silent in a pair of wooden chairs as Mrs. Lessing was escorted into the office by Mrs. Costello. Susan had the glazed-over happiness of Generation L to protect her and although dimly comprehending, feigned attention out of courtesy, as the principal berated her, and cautioned her, and poked her with words to see if there were any signs of life or dormant parental instincts which her needled guilt might awaken. Susan could hardly produce a convincing fake. Once in the car she spoke to the boys, "Whew... I thought she would never stop! How you two today?" "Fine," came the automatic chorus in reply. "OK, who wants some ice cream at Bass 'N Rubbins?" Bass N' Rubbins was the new seafood fried ice cream fast-food chain that LVL International had purchased. The special they had been pushing was a two for one: a side scoop of the new crustacean and shrimp double fried fudge top scallop swirl, and the ultimate, a double butter scampi sundae, with real imitation sugar prawns embedded in every bite. "On second thought, let's hit the Out Front Steak Shack." Although it had been three years since Sam and Thomas's little sister Camille was born, mom had not lost her will to swell, so evidently, real protein was required, not refried and sugared but the straight junk was in order, and always on tap at America's favorite non-pharmaceutical LVL International venture, Out Front

Steak Shack, where there's never an extra charge, for extra butter sauce. Everything that Loxvol could not provide, Out Front Steak Shack could. Happiness...with extra sauce.

Sam knew that he must relent, he had no choice but to agree to the meal. It was impossible for him to fight his mother's unrelenting and singularly oppressive good cheer, or her ceaseless appetite, any more than his building nausea, as all were irresistible forces of nature, beyond the controlling will of any outside force. Sam smiled and endured. Time was unhindered by any such mortal obligations and she knew all too well the sights, scents and sounds which awaited her if she were unwise enough to accompany them and witness the inevitable convulsive orgy of peristalsis and perversion.

Instead Time broadened her net and cast it out into an ugly place, knowing from plain sight that it was LVL International which governed this world, and quaint local titles like "America" or "Europe" were but a distraction, a hollow comfort to hush sleeping minds, she dropped her net into the true laboratories of power and the furnaces which burned within them, the sweating, beating minds within those walls, and she listened, listened for a sound, she reached into every crack and crooked thought and sniffed for an honest blush, the doubt that knew better than to believe. Who was white and wan, sick and sweating, their flesh blotched and crawling with doubt? Who knew enough to need it...to need to look and find out? Who was nervous?...and she felt it. Oh yes, this one is wide-eyed indeed! And so she moved into his mind and was still, so it could pour into her.

He had never taken it. No one knew. He knew it was everywhere. Loxvol in the products everyone used: the "pick up dose." Pick up the loose ends and a pick me up for the glassy-eyed faithful. The "loose ends" were the ones like him, the ones who had escaped detection, escaped being "cured." Once the "pick up dose" was in 'em, they came in for more. No pick up line required, only an unintelligible chemical name on the label, not that anyone could read anything but a menu anymore. Now that they owned the damn government, and the businesses which had long been the government, and the arms industry which had long been the primary business which carved up the world for

them, oh shit...and now they had done it, eliminated doctors, certain doctors, no more psychiatrists, just doctors on propaganda which they dispensed and swallowed themselves. Time was inside the mind of one Dr. Joseph Abrams, and he was scared. He needed to know what was up. He hid his Freud books.

Papers were missing, LVL had done tests and all were successful...approved trials. Why were approved trials, ordinary double blind experimental trials which were referred to and approved, all missing—just gone, not there? The sheet numbers and the file numbers had vanished. Nothing in the computer. Nothing on paper. A black paper hole and no one cared. However, Dr. Abrams was caught in its gravity and could not escape. He had to know.

It was wearing on him. He was forty-seven now, and even in earlier times he was the conservative sort who was never built for intrigue or late hours. Now he had both. He was no faker, and unhappily discovered as he hid his double life that he had a second job as a liar. He had become both a pharmacological research scientist and an actor. He hated actors and was a lousy one. He had not blushed so often in twenty years. His words stumbled and fell from his lips when he lied. He lit up like a stop lamp, glowing and guilty. "You okay, doc?" "I'm fine. A bit of the flu maybe." Blush!! Then he wondered about it all day. Did they notice, did they see the red face and could anyone else tell how badly he was wearing it, how self-conscious he had become and how his divided attention and the late hours were effecting his work?

Contrary to his fears Dr. Abrams was not a suspect, he was neither a spy or a traitor, he was however a guilty soul who made an atrocious liar and it was wearing on him. He had decided there was no other way to find out. He would conduct the missing experiments himself. He had lied to the landlady. "No no, I haven't smelled anything." He had 146 rats in his apartment. "No no, I'm not using up the electricity." He had installed the necessary lighting, ventilation, heating and video equipment to record events during his absences while he was at work and keep a healthy environment for his experimental subjects by removing the pungent ammonia and fecal stench

generated by 146 very hungry, very thirsty Loxvol enhanced rats. Actually half were clean of the drug, but they all stank. He felt terrible and accepted the stink, tedium and long hours as deserved punishment, penance for his dishonesty.

However guilty he was, he was a good scientist and kept excellent records, his mind was tidy even if by the time he arrived home each day, the cages were not. Dr. Abrams understood, and so Time understood, the exact phase of development the rodent trials were at. Loxvol has been demonstrated to promote greatly increased tolerance to overcrowding and a willingness to work for endless hours at particular unrewarding but simple tasks in order to fulfill the enormous appetite it generates. That is known. What is missing is how. There is no data or speculative information from which to draw any conclusion. The tests on withdrawal are gone and of course also moot, as the whole damn world is on the stuff and there is a pile, a mountain of money to be had in eliminating all mental illness through the de-braining and enslavement of a willingly addicted, happily cured population. "Oh no... Oh no... Oh my God." Time knew this was serious. Dr. Abrams was an atheist, and he was starting to pray.

Dr. Abrams already knew too much. Firstly, the rats became enormously stupid once the drug took effect. In man the effect was clear, but the rat had less native intelligence and the effect was even more pronounced. It was not until high dose studies on humans were privately and discreetly conducted at the Haitian Republic research branch that it leaked out, and then was quickly denied. It was obvious though, obvious just to look. Whatever effect it had on the plethora of mental disorders and imbalances, one thing was sure: Loxvol made you dumb. But why did it make people and rats highly tolerant to overcrowding?—"The Great Civilizer" as it was known, and it really worked. People on it could live right on top of one another, they could work too close and live too close together. Why?

Well he was going to find out about some of those whys. He was going to withdrawal a rat from the drug in an overpopulated cage. There were no withdrawal results and he was going to get some. That's one why. Why no withdrawal information? Next

he could postulate, theorize and begin to test to see why the damn stuff worked—exactly how did it do it—how did Loxvol civilize man? Here in his apartment he might not be able to answer the question with certainty, but he could take a good guess, a scientist's guess. He removed rat number 73 from cage 14A and administered an injection of Loxvol blocking agent. This rat was coming down. Dr. Abrams focused the video camera on the overstuffed cage and went to bed.

As the amber rays of dawn reached their tangled fingers through the blinds the next morning, Dr. Abrams knew he had to get up, but he also knew it was his day off, and he could forget for a moment. This double life had taken a toll on him and he deserved to forget. As he surrendered to a welcome tide of dream and dissolution, a grey-green foreboding, a lime and slate colored mist held his dreams in thick mute breath, heavy and dripping with doubt, yellow and brown with doubt was the dull glowing undertow, a grey-green sigh, sick and closed, brooding and wretched, an ache. A brittle canvas boat slid silently down the sullen river of black and green, an undertow, always the same, the same fear which inhaled itself again and again, now a little thinner, a little sicker and tighter, the same shore slipped past and again all was silent, enshrouded in a grey-green pall, a stifled oily cloud of smudged green mist, wrapped in doubt's damp black chill.

Now the dawn was alive in its full shining glory and would not be denied, and so burned away the last misted gloomy refuge of all those who hold the wet cloth of sleep over their fearful eyes. Dr. Abrams was up. His nerves were shot and he was going to relax first. Before he cleaned any cages, smelled any dead or decaying rats, or inspected the scene of his withdrawal experiment, he was going to relax. Slowly, Dr Abrams prepared his coffee and put the oven on very low. So low, that his crumbcake was a full twenty minutes in warming up. Good. That's

better. There was no room full of rats, no country full of people on pills and the sun was up. Just the sun. That's all. Sun and crumb-cake. He ate the cake and drank the coffee, but was nourished by the illusion.

Unfortunately the illusion was not enough to protect him from the sight. As he entered the room and looked toward the withdrawal cage he saw blood. The glass enclosure was painted with blood, blood thick as finger paint. Red blood and brown clots obscured his view of the rats in the experimental cage. He opened the lid and saw it, the burst bodies, the mutilated remains of every rat in the cage which had been so savagely, almost ritualistically extinguished. The bodies were all the same, all had been desecrated and defiled. The most obvious and distressing thing Dr. Abrams noted was the fact that in each and every case the genitals of the animal were gone. Both male and female. The genitals had been bitten away, and only an empty socket remained. Next were their tiny rat hands. Again, gone, bitten away and gone. Also, their eyes were each pried loose, and again, only an empty socket remained where the eyes once rested. Every single rat, both male and female, had been ritualistically, sexually mutilated and killed. All but one. Rat number 73 was very much alive, its distended protruding belly and blood soaked fur, matted down red with the life's blood of its cage-mates and now hardly able to move, so overstuffed with tender bits of rat meat. This rat had all but ruptured its digestive tract which was now bulging to engorgement, so overly crowded with the eyes, hands and genitals of its companions it was itself near to bursting. Like a huge pink potato with tiny Tyrannosaurus Rex arms, number 73 was about to pop.

After retiring to the restroom where he got sick, Dr. Abrams took the camera into his study and rewound the tape to watch, and try to understand what had happened. First the cage appeared normal, but not forty-five minutes after the recording began he saw the first changes. Number 73, or "Willard" as Dr. Abrams named him for obvious reasons, began to attempt to move away from his cage-mates. He pressed himself against the glass and visibly shook, his tiny mouth opened and a strange vocalization emerged, a strained squeaking splinter of a cry, a

warning. Waves and ripples of muscle movement could plainly be seen under his skin and the sound became a scraping high-pitched squealing shriek, along with the audible chatter of teeth. To as great an extent as the crowded conditions allowed, the other rodents withdrew. Willard's eyes bulged as its cries ceased, its body seemed to grow larger and larger until it became a single quivering vibration, a shaking, shuddering, expanding and growing lung, swelling and stretching until pressed outward with all its force, its mouth hideously wide, its yellow teeth and red gums gaping and expanding as an agony which can not be contained, a grimace ever wider and wider, more and more disfigured, jaws on the verge of dislocation, its body a mass of increasing hunger and pain until it burst in abominable fury upon its cell-mates. The sheer violence of a flame consuming itself and being devoured again as if all the forest were burned up in an instant and pressed together into a tiny pinprick of space, and then—released.

Dr. Abrams had read the books and understood something of psychology. He knew the basic meaning of what he saw. These were ritual mutilations of a particular sort. In human psychology they had a definite meaning. The genital mutilations were again symbolized in the devoured hands and again in the deprived and consumed eyes with their hideous unblinking remnant, those sockets. All had the same meaning. As he looked at the video and saw the animal, this vibrating column of the most hideous appetite, a column of hate, an evil cylinder of contracting, pulsating, surging, gorging vengeance, he saw the singularity of symbolic interpretation: a psychotic identification with the threatening aspect of the male parental introject—Willard was a castrator.

However, this interpretation was drawn from the constellation of known human psychological attributes. Unless Willard had been reading Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, or was himself subject to the Oedipal conflicts characteristic of the Freudian picture of human development, this presented a problem. Surely Willard was not a Greek scholar or even a casual fan of the works of Freud.

With this in mind Dr. Abrams did some more reading. He came across several curious ideas which were both true, and for obvious reasons, virtually unknown. There is an idea from Freudian psychology which states that in neurosis, in one's unconscious thoughts, the thoughts we think but keep hidden from ourselves, there is a perversion, a strange brutal or sexual act with which we compensate ourselves for our present, our past and our pain, a replacement gratification with which we indulge ourselves in hidden fantasy. This is going on all the time in most neurotic people who number many indeed, for most of us are in some way neurotic! Many people, perhaps even most people, have a world of strange hidden fantasy which gives them some continuous subterranean concealed reward, deep within their thoughts, an unknown world of fantasy hidden away from their own view.

Secondly, Dr. Abrams understood that it is our human ability to repress and hide such feelings by keeping them unseen, hidden and unconscious, which in large part gives rise to society, and is the soil in which civilization must take root. Our ability to be closely knit as a cooperative people, and our ability to hide our feelings go hand in hand. Society is built on the foundation of the unconscious. We must get along. But only people have an "unconscious mind"! Dr. Abrams had his theory: What if this is how Loxvol creates tolerance for population density amongst rats? What if it gave them an "unconscious"? Likewise, perhaps it also supplemented or encouraged this same facility in man. That would explain the drop in intelligence which was so characteristic and marked as to become the hallmark of Loxvol therapy in humans and rats. The act of repression, of keeping things hidden, of keeping them unconscious, takes mental effort, constant energy which must be diverted from the thinking process. It must be!

When Loxvol was discontinued in rat number 73, Willard lost his unconscious and regained all his suppressed hidden impulses! The perversion withheld in Willard's unconscious was sadism! Oh God! Dr. Abrams had ignored his landlady's phone messages, missed a day of work and lied to get time to read. He felt very anxious. Clearly his embarrassment in public over his double

life, embarrassment which was so severe it threatened to expose him, was an instance of self-sabotage. He was lying, he held a terrible secret and he felt guilty. Dr. Abrams was displaying typical symptoms and anxiety. He was clearly neurotic, himself harboring a perversion in his own unconscious. He felt angry, guilty and sick. He was a bad person even to know it all. Oh Christ, he deserved to be caught. There was no doubt about it. He deserved punishment. The perversion Dr. Abrams was harboring hidden deep within his unconscious was surely but one thing...masochism. Well at least there was also one thing to be glad of—he couldn't see it.

But Time could. She knew he had uncovered it for her, uncovered the secret of this world. Now she could leave the claustrophobic orderly gloom of this guilty soul, whose integrity was so much stronger than his guile. Again she traveled to him, to the boy, across the bridge of days and evening shade, under the outstretched arms of a sheltering cedar she found him, content in tone and measure, as yet unaware of the secret.

Here in the gentle brook of shadow and light cast by the arms of this cedar, safe in its net of shadows he saw white molten noon pour itself into the warm rose glow of evening's ample cup, and purple black dusk spread its magic ink, unfurling heaven's infinity of stars, drops of moonlight suspended in clear dew, and autumn's tumbling breath of swirling bloody windswept leaves and sudden branches of yellow light came and went, winter's blue white frost and the shy creeping jewels of pointed winter ice, struck awake in dawn's chill gaze, one grace upon the next, unnoticed and subtle, brass and bashful as the play of shadows and the pools of light beneath these welcoming branches. So did life prepare the table of Sam's days by this meadow as a cup filled with sweet unseen mist and hungry brash silence large enough for life's unspoken hope, which has not yet been forgotten, for it has not yet been heard.

Into the question, the yearning innocence which was Sam's soul this meadow had spread its web of warmth, light and ice, the

beauty of its cruelty, the sharp sparkling fingers of ice which sealed off all tender shoots until spring loosened beauty's grip, and allowed her overflowing. So did Jeanette come to offer her vision into his days and show that she too had understood these unspoken things, this balance of withholding and overflowing, of light and shadow, and its meaning. Jeanette too, spread the thorny perfect fingers of her wisdom and its sure savage balance into Sam's waiting heart. "'Strength is born of strength,' so said the conquering dawn to the night, and so in turn say the heavenly stars to the sun! Of course, when eternity wrestles with itself it always wins, and in the struggle each may be glad for some rest, and then in being vanquished to his heart's content, he may rise again, sun and stars alike, to shine in victory. Victory often involves much losing, but it is always productive, and so it is happy. Victory never needs an audience! Sam, do the stars rise if you are not looking? Of course! They need but one thing—to struggle to the heavens and claim what they can, laughing and shining each night, giving us their precious gift, the cool perfect light of their hope and wisdom, so serene and pure—silent, hovering and still, 'or gloating perhaps,' thinks the Sun, but to us, we who see better, the night is just as the day: royalty made majestic for rising, and for rising alone! So is beauty both complete and loving, cruel and rejoicing!"

Sam listened and drank in the music, he found that like light, music had shades, each with a place in time and a need it answered, a hunger which called it into being. He learned, he absorbed and grasped at himself through her strength, her discipline and her wisdom, bright and broad as the noon meadow was her light! A light which saw down into the way of things and back out again into the world. Jeanette was an artist, a spinner, singer and speaker of the threads of life's unspoken and spoken, bright and hidden music, and as with any fine musician she understood what to do with time, each blank hungry measure was itself a vacant vessel, void and wanting, and it was she who was the artist of its meaning, and the filler of its emptiness.

It was Tuesday night. Sam was ten, and now that he was older he had begun to notice certain things which nobody seemed to see. Sam had noticed how every Tuesday night after his dad played competitive inter-office ping-pong, he would come home and either be in a wonderful mood, all hugs, offering up a big ear for the troubles and triumphs of the day, and as you related them each in turn, he was listening and nodding, laughing and shaking his head in appreciation of all the kids and his wife might have to offer, or he may come home in a very different humor. "I give every damn thing to this family, and most particularly to you—YOU! And what do I get? Hmm? What in the hell do I get back for all of my work and effort? Nothing! Shit! You... You are a taker—not a giver! What the hell do you contribute? Huh? What? What! I give and you take! Think about that you little ingrate—and contribute!" Dad did not take well to losing. Depending upon whether his father lost or won, ping-pong night was heaven or hell: Taker/Giver lecture night.

Sam was prepared. He was waiting for the door to open and for his father to come in. If his dad had his Tuesday hell way about him, Sam was ready. He looked at the door and waited. Thomas oozed his huge ponderous form into the hall and saw Sam waiting, waiting and looking at the door. "Hey dumb dumb, what ya doin'?" Sam gazed at the mountain of glazed flesh, ignorance and instinct which was his brother Thomas. Never at a loss for the thing to say to make himself look good, he revealed his true

wretchedness to his older brother, an audience to applaud his secret lying gymnastics, an insult who was in on the joke. Sam answered, "Haven't you ever noticed how dad will take off and start screaming, blaming us if he loses at ping-pong? You know, we don't deserve anything, we take—he gives and gives, we're ingrates? Sound familiar? Haven't you ever noticed we're only ingrates on Tuesday night, and then, only if he loses at ping-pong?" Thomas had the glaze of still waters about his eyes, he understood nothing. "So if he comes through the door tonight with that hateful look in his eye, I'm going to bring him his slippers. I'm going to 'Contribute,' so he won't attack me. I'm sick of getting yelled at." Now Thomas understood. "Oh I get it."

The door opened and Mr. Lessing was terse and annoyed. His short temper was creeping into his every motion, and both boys could see it. He brusquely left the room to put his coat in the bedroom closet, and his rear in the easy chair. Thomas saw his chance, kicked Sam's legs out from under him and knocked him to the floor. He snatched the slippers and went triumphantly into his father's bedroom, and over to the easy chair where his father was seated, brooding and irritable as he looked over the programing guide for that evening. "What? Oh, Thomas." "Yes dad, I have your slippers. I want to contribute." Mr Lessing's face became liquid and soft, he took the slippers and drew his son near to him and hugged him tenderly. Sam came in the room red faced and angry. He tried to control himself as he addressed his father, "Thomas knocked me over and took away the slippers I was going to bring you." "Sam!" answered his father, "Don't compound the lack of effort you put into this household with a baldfaced lie! Never lie to me! Now go to your room! You, are to be punished!" As he retreated to his room Sam heard his brother say, "Never lie, Sam—Never!" Sam turned back over his shoulder to see it, the thing which was his brother, he who would rather lie, sully and foul himself in any way to appear falsely before another, this wobbling mound of humanity gone so tragically wrong, wanting only to say a pretty lying thing to further his own ends, the bulbous heaving error named Thomas, and as he saw the thing, tucked lovingly under his father's arm, for the first time in his short life Sam felt the one single least

flattering human emotion, the one highest insult and revulsion that is so nauseated it is no longer sick at the sight. Sam saw the gelatinous quivering abomination that was Thomas and felt a pleasant lump rise in his throat as a warm condescending glow filled his soul. Sam saw Thomas and felt the lowest and most intoxicating of the human emotions one can feel for another person, the drunken ecstasy of condescension which is the budding gift of our most pleasurable and vain moral self-satisfaction, Thomas had invoked a potent and new feeling in Sam: Pity.

School had many pitfalls and some happiness for Sam. The work itself was easy and although his schoolmates appeared to be getting dumber each day, Sam was developing a voracious intellectual appetite, much to the delight of his teachers and his increased isolation from his schoolmates, both in direct proportion. At age twelve things were happening in Sam's body and his mind which were new to him. Most had to do with the onset of puberty, but not all.

Sam liked geometry. The teacher put the problem on the board and he never had to memorize a thing. The solution was always provable from direct observation and a few simple postulates. How elegant! The proofs wrote themselves and it seemed as simple as music was becoming. He loved the concerts, the performances he gave for the school assembly programs were some of the high points of his life. He released his energies sure and direct, sweet and building, sad and lamenting or violent and furious as the piece required and the audience returned his pain and pleasure tenfold! Such a vital and vigorous experience! He could now, less than ever communicate with his glassy-eyed fellow students in words, language failed him as a leaden inevitability. They stared and swallowed, they heard little and understood only a grey sinking sound, an unpleasant, unappetizing knot of grey vexation and furrowed longing, the desperation itself, the depth of Sam's longing and the sound itself, the sound of his thoughts, so complex, tangible and

somber, caused an instant paralysis in the listener, a sudden glassy-eyed disappearing of the spirit, the retreat before all unappetizing, real, pungent, searching thoughts, the wincing discomfort before every challenge, before hope and beautiful longing and before all turgid and vital things spoken aloud which so characterized Generation L, made direct contact impossible... utterly hopeless. But Music! In music these same thoughts and feelings which drove everyone away were an engine of all creation, and this creation through music although indirect and blind to express the object of its desire but in the intangible form of tone and rhythm, bypassed all differences, and so was most direct of all! Sam had fulfilled part of his hungry, denied, eternal longing, his sad human need to connect with his fellow man and be of value, to be understood, and even, appreciated. It was all working.

Sam was getting a drink at the water fountain before geometry class when a closed fist slammed square into the back of his head, straight down so that the metal fountain guard was driven up into his lip, and having cut through that, chipped his tooth. The shock and the pain, the blood and the humiliation all rose up in Sam with a blush and the taste of salt. He held his lip and pressed his hand into his bloody mouth. As Sam turned around he saw Art Smith pointing and smiling at him. "Hey, how do ya like that, Mr. Piano Man? Ya like it? Show off! Hahahaha!" The bell rang and Sam went to the nurse.

As Sam sat in geometry class nursing his mouth he felt strange. He had been mad often enough but this was different. He couldn't concentrate and was careful to avoid raising his hand. Something was wrong. He was as dumb as a log. Sam was becoming more and more anxious, anxiety like he had never felt. The anxiety was so severe it took all his strength to stifle his urge to groan out loud and keep from squirming in his seat. He had to get a grip. He was mad and he couldn't concentrate, no big deal, just mad. That was all.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, his mind's eye filled up with a scene of such enormous horror that Sam was shocked to see it, even though it was only a thought in his imagination. In his mind he was cutting off the fingers, one by one, using a pinking

sheer like what you use to cut tin and snipping off all of Art Smith's fingers, one at a time, snip, snip, snip, and Art was howling in agony, twisting and screaming for mercy but no no... Snip! "Are you glad you did that to my lip, you little shit? Are you?!" "No no no..." "Learn little one, learn well!" Snip! Sam was sick. What the hell was he thinking? He's been angry with his dad, angry with his brother, angry with lots of things but he's never seen this in his mind, never thought this! Sam asked to be excused, and judging by his bloody lip which was bleeding and dripping on the floor like slow Morse code, he had good reason, and was sent home.

Once at home, he went to his room and began to figure out what was wrong. "Why am I thinking about cutting off Art Smith's fingers, and why can't I stop thinking about it?" Sam remembered the incident. The pain. The humiliation. The look on Art's face. That hurt his feelings worse than the water fountain hurt his lip. Sam was alone and let it out, he began to cry. Why did Art hate him? Why did he hate him so much? Sam wept to feel the hate and jealousy in that look of Art's, that look which was so happy to see him hurt. As the tears fell from his eyes and blotted into the legs of his jeans and Sam wept, he felt the real reason he was so angry, he was angry to hide the hurt he felt, to make himself feel better, like a bandage, as compensation and consolation for the hurt. After a good ten minute cry the weird fantasy about cutting off Art's fingers stopped, and Sam was smart again.

Sam had never experienced anything as bizarre and disturbing, fascinating and repellent in his life. His mind went to work on the problem at once. He had felt the coming of the thing, the hideous compelling fantasy was like a dinosaur or mammoth, and he understood he had felt its footfall shake the earth long before it arrived. It was hidden, somehow not visible at first but clearly had to be there boiling all the while. It was as if it was announced by the anxiety which had gripped him as he so frantically tried to deny to himself that anything was wrong. The anxiety forced him to pretend that it wasn't there but the earth moved as the dinosaur approached, the ground shook with a dreadful anxiety and Sam saw how that fear and anxiety made

him lie to himself, compelled him to look away from its approach— "Perhaps it isn't there, it couldn't be, I'm just mad." He also noticed how the thing, this ugly irresistible intrusive thing used up his energy and made him dumb as a pile of wood, hell, dumb as Thomas or anyone else. He hadn't seen it yet, but he felt the anxiety and pretended like hell everything was all right and, the other footstep which crushed the earth and announced what was coming: he became very stupid. It was there using his energy up, unseen at first, but it had to be there or why did his lights dim? Clearly he became unintelligent to spend his energy having these weird thoughts, whether he could see them or not. Then there was the rupture where it finally, suddenly appeared in his mind where he could see it. My God! Sam had never known anything less like him, but it was him, his thoughts. Such ugliness and yet, it was exactly how he felt, yes he had to admit that. He was very angry, and although he was entirely disturbed by it, and could not function or live with the sight, it was how he felt. Or was it? No, don't lie now, it was, it had to be how he felt but it was a reaction, a bandage, a strange evil pleasure even, but its point was to soothe the real cause, the first feeling which needed it: the hurt! The hurt was the primary feeling, the one he was hiding, answering and soothing with the hideous eruptive second thought, they were both his thoughts, but the hurt caused it. It had to be, because as soon as he stopped hiding the hurt and pretending it wasn't there, "It" disappeared—he stopped cutting off Art's fingers as soon as he was finished crying. Evidently once he was done hurting he no longer needed the weird fantasy which had torn its way into the thoughts he could see, and so, it went away. That was it. It fit the facts to a tee and now Sam was left with a question, a question about the premises upon which his explanation, the necessary conclusions of this non-geometrical but "mental proof" was based, a question: How can those thoughts, his ugly thoughts have been there as he knew they must have been, but not been his to see before they broke into his mind's eye? Sam answered the question: He must have hidden thoughts, thoughts he has, but can not see. Well...he might not see them all the time, but at least he could tell when they were there. Sam understood our hidden thoughts may play a game of hide and seek with us, but they are the most unskilled of games-

Rich Norman

men, and can not help but betray their own presence.

Jeanette was worried. It wasn't her health, which she knew was going, as was its right after a life so passionately, so nobly and ignobly lived. It wasn't her meager finances, which due to her spartan lifestyle were double any ample standard. It was Sam. He had found a home, a remedy in the performances he was giving, and that was worrisome. When Jeanette first began to teach she saw it. When she was a teen, many had yet to take Loxvol and although they all soon surrendered to the cure, it was long enough to make the drug's effect on musical ability, and most of all musical perception, all too clear. Any doubt was soon trampled deeply underfoot as she saw the sharp decline in audience attendance for performances in her then blossoming career, which would soon wither on the vine. It was all very worrisome. She didn't want to see what she knew was coming. The best, and even more so, the worst thing, was happening to Sam's music, and even more importantly it was happening to Sam. As a musician he was improving, and soon, he would be very good indeed. That's where the trouble starts. Once the rhythmic sense is developed to maturity and full flower, with its dark, sparse, uneven temperament, absent and fickle, narrow and barren as tears withheld and frozen hollow sun which leaves the skin cold, prickly and wanting, too eager for warmth, rhythm with hollow sunken moments of sullen sunless sea, watery salt desert waves hanging in dampness, sometimes uneven and sultry, swelling, cold and capricious, willful and unpredictable, hiding,

random, shameful, slippery and teasing, ugly and concealed, twice unknowable, filled with ineffable silver promise and death's lidded brooding, just as the strangled secret hope and torment in the heart of man before the storm, before the rain and lightning—oh, here, here there was nothing! Only blank sunny skies and the pumping regular thud and clatter of dumb immaturity which knew no end and no shade of doubt, or of itself, lived here, in their half missing vacant hearts! Each week the students would come, their greasy fingers fouled the keyboard just as their souls did the music, always stopping short of nuance, short and chopping, always chopping, chipping away the heart of music, a piece of endless dull wood, the simple chips born of their tugging dumb ax, the "manna of heaven." Soon, very soon, it would begin for Sam in his music as it has already taken root in his heart. Such need and tenderness in this place are sure to be bruised and brushed quite raw and red, as life would, and should, treat and mistreat the heart, to have it fathom its own beating and understand its disgrace before finding the hiding place of true courage, but this! Oh, no! This was a sealed tomb with dust and dust alone for the splendid tatters of our aches and wants, which we must, and may always have had to adorn, ourselves, and our days always and inevitably, oh please let it be fruitfully, are lived, quenched, built, saved and spent—quite alone. Now he struck as a single bellow of thunder, or tender and light as a feather or a slap as the music needed but as one heart, one mind, one rhythm. His soul had found all those currents which run deep and muddy, chill and reluctant against and toward each other, the dark places in our lightning and the light in our dark marrow which knows strength and weakness are hand in hand, as one calls the other, so up and over our selves and our shadows go, swirling up and over, again pain and strength ascend and mix, the end still higher! It is our weakness which bleeds our strength, summons our sunken promise to answer, and it is in the contractions of our tender pain that Beauty, and she is but strength at rest, is graciously summoned to flower, for only the strong can afford such an illusion, so costly to bear, this alabaster child basted in blood! Oh the boy already knows this and soon his body and his music would bear its rhythm and be lost, lost to this world of flat light and dead plain things, these un-living white shadowless wraiths

and milk ghosts which crave only flat light, and have flattened, whitened and paled the world in their image, and he too would suffer, and must overcome her same hopeless perfect struggle, for he was alive—a tender shadow glowing, hollowed by sun—alive—as shadows are alive, plain only for the darkness they can but poorly cast into the sun, and so are we all! Like her, he would have to find strength and joy enough to know it...alone. Jeanette wept. Then she got to work.

That evening Sam could not stop thinking about it, thinking about the strange, disturbing, compelling, hideous, unexpected events and visions of the day. As he thought it through he could not help feeling a sense of satisfaction, a woolly pride and a glow, an inner contentment filled him, as if he had drunk a handful, a cup of sunlight, a blush of contentment spread itself through his purposeless longing and warmed him from within. He had found it! He had unriddled it and wanted only one thing—to know more, to see more—to know everything! He looked absentmindedly through the fantastic stack of books his grandmother had given him; amazing books about old things, ancient things, things forbidden and long forgotten. Ancient histories and stories, poems and lurid scraps of lives long withered but still alive, the living dead, words and worlds frozen in the peak of power and lust, fury and beauty—a snapshot of the soul of man spread across the ages, painted in words, blood, mystery, beauty, promise and treachery. The histories and works of the immoral and amoral predecessors of modern man, the shameless, guiltless Greeks who longed as they lived, beautiful and horrid, “beastly and blond,” only to become enslaved to the dark as the rest. The shining years of their promise and failure beckoned him, but tonight, it seemed as if the universe of Greek thought retreated back into the paper and he was alone, alone and delighted in the rapture of his strange visions.

As Sam fell asleep he could feel her, feel the night come to him pregnant with mysteries, adorned with fragrance and color

wrapped in darkness. The night came to him, sweet and yielding, full and engorged with light and shadow, fat to bursting, each silent moment, pregnant, hiding and dark bent down in silence, and bestowed the night's awakening kiss, night's sweetness, her light wrapped in folds of darkness—and so did she dream of him.

Sam saw the temple, an alabaster stone monolith, smooth and unperturbed it stretched into the azure sky, its arching columns and the seamless unbroken sweep of the crowning pale white dome of stone and sun, as but a reflection of the vastness and promise of a hollow unknown hope, a question too large, empty, beautiful and aching, a question which can not be asked, too broad to hold as it arches over the sky...but must be answered. The turquoise Greek letters above the temple entryway were unknown, but familiar.

He knew she was there without looking—the slender vase of a goddess who held sway here, pale and delicate, she had every key hidden in her carelessness and her serenity, Sam's soul lightly held in her delicate ivory fingers, fingers which opened Sam's soul up, spread it open as a fan is slowly opened to reveal its pleated heart as a bashful wind of still breath stirs it to life in the hidden currents of whispered breezes, so did she know him. Her light already exhaled, unseen and laughing, to know him with each breath he drew, he sipped her light into his soul and danced as a fan gladly knows itself, the pleats and folds, the secret intimacies of its webbed gossamer broquet catching and shedding the light, alive and shimmering with her breath, an autumn bruised, a fall leaf dancing with the teasing breath of annihilation, spun light and a last tug of breath pull, pluck it into the air to dance with the cool pale light, to warm the fallen sun with rose and know itself for the moments as it falls. She looked into him and spoke: "This is your temple."

The words hung in a terrible stillness, an unquenchable quiet flattened him and narrowed Sam's soul into a dark sunken thing, small and tight, flat, cloistered and small, thick and mute with fear. She revealed the door. He pressed himself through the keyhole into an immense narrow darkness, stultifying and slick with an unbearable sweetness, the lidded nausea so over ripe and narrow, slick and double thick to breathe this over ripe rotten air,

cupped into itself, sick and hidden behind and under itself so twice sweet and double rotten. Sam squeezed the black oily spirit of his hope between the dirty cracks and pressed into the heart of the edifice, so white and broad in the day, so narrow and putrid within. In the very center of the temple, Sam found them: The three sisters of his hell. Ugly and knotted, their blotched skin so hidden and sloughed, a disgrace that hides and oozes under the weight, the gravity and weight of unlookable eternal shame... which knows.

The first head spoke to him: "I am here for you, little one! Behold, for I am your secret! Do you still wish to know me? I am what makes the sun warm and the sky arching and blue, I am the eternal hope in torment, beauty itself spilled into life's most gracious cup of dawn, I am all illusion which knows better than truth and so is named 'hope,' I am you!" And Sam saw her and knew this terrible knotted visage, the hideous vile countenance which had wrapped itself in darkness and disgrace before all mortal souls— Sam saw the face of Lust! Her foul, shameful breath of fetid, lurking desire, staining all pure moments with her leering sultry filth and hollow scratching need which must be born! So has shame known and named her: Lust!

And now the next head of the dragon-witch spoke: "I am a sweetness in your breast as well, little one, oh yes, I am again your secret, yes twice again! I am all which rules the sky and orders the day, I am the law of strength and balance which has found its way, I am the wisdom of victory and the sure heart of your soul." Sam looked upon the mottled grimacing mound of filthy flesh with its bloody brown eyes and the dull hate leaking out from within their lying gaze. He smelled the rotten, putrid bloody drains of a thousand wars and a thousand sewers, the pleasure and hatred of the worst of man, the camps of the Nazis and the heaps of skulls under the gentle watchful eye of the eternal tyrant, Sam saw the blood soaked vile serpent of man's most putrid and shameful appetites proudly trumpeted as virtue. Sam saw the face of sadism, cruelty and evil, so did shame call them and so was she known to him— Cruelty itself leered out at him and from its dark lips came the words, "Know me, for I am you!"

And the third head spoke unto him: "Know me too little one, for I am peace and resting, I am release, and of all things well and freshly done, I am the purpose, the countenance of cool repose, the reason. Oh yes, I am your finest hope and your best promise. I am peace." And Sam saw this last and worst of his three demons, she was terrible and unblinking, cold, sure and uncaring, black, mouldering, putrid and devouring without noticing, shame saw all needs summed in a single blackness, a single hunger, a pinprick where all appetites and defeats converge to annihilate even each other, leaving only hunger itself—and shame knew her and hid her, and so from under the darkness of shame she spoke unto Sam, "I am your highest gift for mankind and your highest hope: I am Death, and you hunger for one thing alone, little one... Me!" And so did Death speak to Sam, sick and hollow, hidden under the dark lidded curtain of immutable shame, sealed within this sepulcher, this splendid, breathless, alabaster tomb.

"If this is a temple, it is a temple of shame! A temple of false appearances, smooth white sun and pure walls which hide and house, seal and sustain every hiding, lying shame which fouls all of life! If this is my temple, I proclaim it a temple of shame and lies!" Sam swept his hand in an arc of circumference and the ceiling of darkness split open in a peal of laughter and he knew he had found it! Sam slit open the very belly of shame and beheld them—the three witches who under the brooding oily lid of shame had threatened to consume him with their knowledge, now unfolded themselves and poured their glad waters before him, nourishing all the land. The hideous head of Lust was born pure and golden, white and ice, deepest blue and rich purple, thick, wet and drenched through, soaked with color and bubbling to overflowing are the waters of Eros, now all of the world subtle and glowing, crimson and swelling, falling and rouged in amber dusk, so did Eros embrace and enfold, encircle from without and enfold from within, as a pure silver stream did she spread her clear and colored waters to gladden the land, to enrich all sunken and lofty worlds and bring to the earth its reason, its rejoicing, its unknown promise. So is Lust revealed as Eros once born into day, once released from the fetid womb of darkest shame!

From the shamed form of cruelty came a proud golden ax and staff: The tools to do and to see done. And so is a man's will, his hope. In discipline is forged our triumph, our new day is earned laboring at her forge! And so did the forge of Sam's will glow cherry red with hope and the ascending waters of light, hope and all futures made real spring forth from this forge and stream upward, flowing into the sweep of the sky, red and sure, golden and right. Once born out into the light of day so does our will master the world, or become cruelty once shamed and made impotent.

From the sunken ugly head of Death came the brightest spring of all, the sun itself! A golden white river of light pouring into the vaulting heavens and filling all the empty void above with light and its pure speeding white hope, forced into brightness, burst into a spattering of yellow brass and white molten metal, liquid platinum and quicksilver light crushed into being by the very weight of death itself! So is death the spring of man's eternal striving and urgency, his quicksilver spring of hope and light itself born under the black footfall of death! Ahhh...the very reason for light is born in these leaden steps, immutable and barren, sure and unyielding, the tragic and meaningless blots of gravity that are the footfall which awaken the light in the heart of man! What but anguish could cause such pleasure, such exaltation and light could only be born of this! Only in knowing this—do we need it completely. For from what womb would light need spring but darkness? What else could cause such longing, where but in our certain darkness would a need so potent be born—a need so deep it became the birthplace of light itself? Only a knowledge as crushing as this might make it so, only in a cauldron as black and sure as this might we need so deeply that we find...ourselves. So are we all a taunt, a grin, a smudge of bright mist and light born out as quicksilver and gold, born as we are trampled underfoot.

Now Sam beheld the exquisite lush landscape of green carpeted hills, outstretched palms and cedars, weird colorful fish and sad mocking monkeys, pointing at each other and laughing. Smiling gazelle pronged for no reason, and shag sloths with their carpet of red and purple cords and laughing inverted eyes hung in

the branches and looked at him, peering from the trees. Sam saw this wonderful painted world with its laughing colors and was happy. He looked within each of its creatures and found he knew them. He looked within the soul of the lion, saw it stretch before the noon sun and preen its bloated belly, fat from killing, content and warm. He saw into the soul of the peaceful sloth and lived within the tangles of its multicolored lugubrious laughter. Sam found the hidden heart within all things and knew them, and so found his rejoicing, his tears and his happiness flowing through him in this moment of knowing, and he heard her again, "This is your temple"—and he knew it.

Fondly, he took the sad things and brought them, so broken and pitiful, into the light, before the warmth of his purple noon he brought and encircled all broken brittle things, now tenderly set before him so he could know them. Now they rose, one after the other they floated, each after the next, as a staircase of bright and silver laughter, these frozen ripples broken free and flowing upward, uncaring and playful, teasing bright tears ascending from a resounding laughter, a laughter bright enough to stain the darkness, and awaken the true heart of man.

When Sam awoke he was gripped by the dream, infused with an enormous energy and sense of purpose. He opened the books to search for the remaining puzzle piece, the inscription in Greek letters of jade which was over his temple—the letters shown clearly in his mind's eye and he looked, leafing quickly through the myriad of pages he had been reading from the old Greek texts his Grandmother had given him. There in the wonderful illustrated pages of an old volume on the ancient Greek rites known as the Eleusinian mysteries he saw the temple. Although his dream temple was greatly embellished with a stone dome which was not present in the artist's rendering, this was clearly the source of his dream image. The Eleusinian mysteries represented the Dionysian aspects of human experience. The mysteries were presided over by a priestess who dispensed a secret potion, no doubt of some active psychedelic psychoactive substance which supposedly revealed the mysteries of life, death and the soul to the initiate, who was then sworn to secrecy to protect this hidden rite and its mystery. Next Sam found the inscription from his dream a few pages later. These were the Greek letters inscribed over the entryway to the famous Apollonian temple at Delphi: "Know thyself"— Know yourself— Nothing could be more appropriate to describe the nature of his newfound experience and its understanding! His temple was a perfect twin symbol for the complete soul of man, both Apollonian and Dionysian, complete in its multiplicity!

Alive with this secret which breathed for him, lived for him and now glowed within him as if he had swallowed a draught of daylight, Sam could not keep his mind still! It turned in delight and searched into the texts and further into the unriddling of the real mystery. Now, in the time of Generation L there was no more psychology as such, there was no need, there were no psychologists or psychiatrists, no friendly advice and aid in searching the deep, hidden, breathless places, no prescription pad to scratch the extra bit out and find the right drug for the problem. Now all mental illness had been uniformly and completely eliminated with the advent of the age of Loxvol. Loxvol doctors were experts at dose adjustment, and all symptoms could now be converted into the blissful greasy sheen and glazed good cheer which was but one thing: Cure itself— Health! Sam knew he was something now, his hunger, like the hunger which drew the notes into the music told him, he was something. If he could deduce as a proof, as a sure deductive certainty the internal states of man, those parcels of electrochemical conflagration, thought and feeling that we are, he could truly understand the relations and fix the thing, make it alive and growing, stretching and becoming just as he was now. Yes, he was something—a cracker of riddles, a solver of hidden puzzles, a burglar who creeps into the darkness to see what was stolen and bring it plainly to light where it can be beheld and known—yes, Sam was something, and he didn't know of another, but that didn't change the fact: Sam was a "Psychical Physicist."

Now he turned to a text he had just begun, a text by the Socratic pupil Xenophon which told the tale of a great struggle with intrigue and much splendid oration which accompanied the dreadful trials of a stranded, headless mercenary army that was saved, brought to the sea and the slow road to its salvation by Xenophon himself who guided and inspired the whole affair with his words. An ascending struggle to be sure. Sam knew his arduous joyous struggle was in his work, and the old Greek tale titled, *The Anabasis of Cyrus*, or the **going up** of Cyrus, gave Sam the notion for it, for the shape of his purpose, his task, a task of fulfillment and meaning wrought of creation, of the doing and

becoming of his own art and understanding, his going up, his ascension, his—*Anabasis of Creation*.

In this thought it came to him at last as a whole, *The Anabasis of Creation*, a form in three types:

1. Music— The direct indirect expression, the substanceless language of unspoken pure form and color, unseen and so, seen by all within their mind's eye. Could he capture the idea, *The Anabasis of Creation*, his purpose, the ascension of man in art and understanding, could he capture its essence, the curves and hammer blows of his will, his self-creation made manifest without being spoken, said without words, only heard, felt— could he build and distill the idea, the need, the essence of it all brought to bear from within, painted in depth, blood and shade with music pure and clear, music without lyric or word, unspoiled and unspoken, toiling joyously and ascending to know itself— what better voice to speak ineffable words and utter unknown names than a wordless poem, an impossible necessity brought to fruition—to paint the climbing soul of man in the color of sound, to capture the inward and upward pulling, the stretching and ascending towards itself above itself, stretching up and over its own back, climbing toward the sun? Could it be brought directly to bear without the artifice of words, struck and brushed, sounded and known from within? The ascension and its pulling, its empty longing hungering upward, climbing need upon need, could the dark and the stretching bright soul of man be brought to bear directly upon, from within? Could it be done with music alone? *The Anabasis of Creation* in sound?

2. The same might be asked of the dream language of illusion, that hollow beauty which must be filled in the listener's ear, or the honest glowing song, the blur of subtle shade and smudged shadow, unclear and so easy to admit, as is any spirit polite enough to be masked and understood only in retrospect, if at all. Heard but misunderstood, and so, beautiful. Such is the curse of verse! Could it be done here, in this netherworld of feeling and slippery stolen illusion, can the finger paint of feeling so smudged and hollow, an imaginary cup for unreal thoughts named feeling, bitter, narrow, dark, sensual, sudden and infinite as a moment of true beauty or despair, can a brush—lush, wanton

and round as this, be brought to fruit and flower in truth's ascending image, the illusion of meaning made real? Of course! For what is such a truth, a truth that we need but an illusion we build after the dreaming, and so we shall whisper it in dreams and shadows smeared in soot and oil, in round bottom kettles which boil the arms, legs and souls of Man into his hopes, we singers, we who make soap of the fat, the oily soul of Man, we who wash him in lies and cleanse him in beauty— Yes! *The Anabasis of Creation* in verse.

3. Lastly, the real answers and dirty questions which cleanse us, the Psychological Physics. Here the actual workings and facts of the soul, no longer soul but substance, mapped and minded, the mines of the mind exposed and known! The tangible self—the physics of the mind. Here in the mists which lay lurking and heavy, the sun must be brought and shame's guilty, sunken visage and the wet breath spent of our soul from her hollow sighing mouth, each dark misted breath moist with decay, must be burned clean with sun, bleached of shame until her sulking bones are brittle and white, her sullied breath which soils and steals the sun spent in searing day so the earth may taste the sun and know again what was spoiled, laid to rot beneath the grey brown dim, choked under shameful brown clouds where the sun can not look. No! He would look and would not blink! This third and most important part of *The Anabasis of Creation* would be the crown, the logical and practical masterpiece, the most consuming and challenging of all. It was a matter of translation really. The language of speech is manifest, the words are there to be heard. The language and shape of the mind are present but largely hidden and must be observed, the various mental phenomenon, their action and existence inferred by deductive or inductive reasoning, as he knew his thoughts about Art's fingers had to be there although he could not see them. So he must translate the hidden language of the inner mind, observable in its effects but not in its actions, a hidden language of behavioral phenomenon which must be interpreted—we see the what but must find the why and translate this unseen world, lay it plainly in view although it is wrapped in darkness. The physics of the hidden, the calculus of the soul, the healing of a mystery, the

Rich Norman

ascension of man, *The Anabassis of Creation* in its purest form:
Psychical Physics. Sam couldn't wait to tell his grandmother.

Sam was exhilarated and crawling with excitement, an energy which brought him into the most sacred, distant and near theater of being, his hidden depths now revealed the ascending world of thought and understanding, energized and awoke a sense of vital purpose in him and Sam felt differently than he had before, he was both above and within himself, he was changed and had awoken to find himself in a higher place, a new world surrounded him, a world which he himself had found, loved, and wished only to discover. As he went downstairs for breakfast he heard a sound, paused at the top of the stairs, and listened. He sank back away from his thoughts and into the thick brown swampy air and mud of this world. His father had been denied a promotion. This was worse than Tuesday ping-pong. Now the whole family was fair game and pop was hunting. It was mom's turn. Dad was at his impotent grunting best, a real raging ape, vibrating in double bass shouts, booming, then terse and vile. Sam would wait. Each pungent accusation was a bloody slap of words, and such things took great energy to inflict, so Sam would wait. His dad was at a full fever, he had much self-hatred to vomit up today. Once his father had exhausted himself completely and shouldered his mother with all the faults that he himself possessed, Sam descended the stairs to eat.

Everyone was already seated around the table and Sam hastened his step and found his place. A stultifying silence, a sealed tension and uneasiness begged to be broken. Sam just

watched. He remembered his dream and his work and wondered. In his dream he could look into the very heart of things as he had looked into himself, and he wondered. His mind was crackling with new thoughts and unknown energies, and Sam had never felt anything like it. His mind was ablaze with the fiery heat of newly unleashed knowledge and he felt an enormous reserve of new energy flood his mind, new power was on tap, like a river of heat and motion freed from knowing himself, energy now free to be used, rather than spent holding his hidden thoughts away from his view.

Sam stared at his mother's face. It betrayed nothing. She chewed, her eyes a blank, her skin showed no crease as her soul must, her mouth opened, shut and chewed. Nothing. A dull glazed grin. Sam looked into her, into her as he had looked into the trees and animals in his dream, into the hidden places which need light, behind the unknowing of our daylight eyes and blank looks, into the vacant mirror of our day and behind, through to the secret musty theater of our unknown heart, which beats and squeezes the black blood of our shame into the crooked corners of the soul, where it lies dank and forgotten, unreal, bloody and eternal...as do all things which lie entombed in forgotten darkness remain forever invisible, unchallenged, unapproachable and omnipotent in their ugliness. Oh what of the heart of man remains hidden becomes most eternal and enduring, his everlasting secret!

With his brain chemistry so drastically altered due to his grandmother's decision to ween him from Loxvol, Sam had developed an inverse vision, a vision which did not withhold what was within and look only without, Sam had a vision which looked within, into the hidden, eyes which hungered after the dark places, and saw!

As he stared through her, into his mother's bruised, banished soul, a vision, a small pastel blur at first, then an increasingly clear image appeared, the sight of his mother's buried hidden soul, so deeply concealed beneath a solid black crystal floor of unknowing it lurked in silence—now was born out into Sam's mind. His father was strapped to a barber's chair, bound fast with broad leather straps. Only his mouth was free so she could

hear the screams as Susan plunged the bloody icepick over and over into the hole she had pierced—over and over tunneling deep into his father's forehead, stabbing, piercing, puncturing and rupturing the torn scraps of flesh and uneven chipped broken bone, the wound receiving the icepick over and over again, her arm moving in a huge eight foot swing, a massive arching arc of a swing, slamming the point home over and over again.

Sam gasped and looked at his food. Oh my god! He did it! Oh my lord! What did he see? After a moment's reflection he understood he had found a way to look through the veil over his mother's mind and behold the world within—the world of her hidden thoughts. It was clear why she felt that way. He watched her chew and swallow—a total blank. She had no idea!

His father got up and put his coat on to leave for work. Susan rose and placed a tender kiss on his forehead, she picked the exact spot where her "affections" were so strenuously lavished in the theater of her unknown unseen imagination. "Smack!" on the forehead. "Have a nice day, honey," and off to work he goes. Sam thought, "When it comes to husbands, mom can sure pick 'em." No one asked why Sam was smiling.

Jeanette had been worried and working. Sam was advancing, growing as a person and an artist, climbing faster and faster toward his maturity and perfection, faster and faster toward the complexity and nuance which would soon leave him wholly unintelligible to this world. How to show him, how to disclose the dreadful truth to him? He was in his element, amongst the warm rays and mists of his happiness, he had found his glad place as a performer, how right and pure to give and to be received, and so Sam thought he had found the truth, the reason and the truth as he drank in the applause and the understanding, the bright draught of appreciation drawn of his fellow man, and he believed he slaked himself on a truth, a divinity and a happiness, but soon he would find out that these ears were not his, these souls craved only themselves, they craved only the same mistake, the same familiar refusing of life. As a youth Sam was still a fragment of a man, an incomplete part of an emerging whole. He would soon grow complete and surpass all who surrounded him, all who wished only to revel in their incompleteness, only to find comfort in the easy shadow of ignorance which never looks and so remains comfortable and satisfied in itself, a stagnant satisfaction which looks away and never unearths the honest self-contempt which is the seat and spring of man's height and his longing. Soon he would be whole and soon he would be refused. It will crush him. He must know, he must see the nature of the thing, the essence of the crowd, the

nature and soul of his lying lover must be made plain to him now, or soon, she would refuse him and in so doing might well crush and ruin his tender heart, and destroy his music, his words, and his art.

Sam arrived for his lesson and Jeanette listened to his language, his overflowing mind pouring out before her eager knowing, and she drank in all the tumult of his thoughts in silence. She was amazed, and horrified. She now understood what the understated Loxvol warning of "mental disturbance" meant. Sam was not only witness to the abject horror of his own unconscious mind, he could see the unconscious of others as well. She betrayed nothing of the pain, nothing of the fresh wound which her knowledge caused her. She would not add to the affliction she had damned him to, the ultimate savagery and insult to life, to know the heart of man at such a tender age, this day rape of our hidden soul had brought Sam a terrible sense of purpose and depth, depths which called to him, invited him to do the unthinkable and summoned him to look. He was magnificent, and Jeanette would preserve him. She had born him to the abomination of this knowledge, brought him aware into this imbecilic world and now she would finish the job as she must.

She spoke with Sam of his *Anabasis of Creation* and its broad, golden, arching scope across many artistic and intellectual disciplines, broad and reaching as the eye and heart of man. Many years would proceed and nurture its eventual completion, a work so worthy and new, so ancient in its longing and true in its stride would reach outward into the warmest and most distant horizons and paint their shores with the color and tonic of life's truth and illusion, our grasping at broken shadows and the hammering of illusion into purpose, the filling and mending of our broken places knit together with the golden thread of discipline and the wisdom of work spent across the bridge of our days. Such sweetness would greet the dawn in its ending! A life's work, a first step toward the destination and so the end itself awakes, for it is in our true stride that we arrive at purpose, arrive to discover it is the very act of truthful steps themselves which are the last and warmest golden city of our design—it is the search for El Dorado which is the city—the method which is the

end. So do our honest, ugly, searching questions pave the streets with gold, simply for being asked!

Jeanette listened, then she spoke. "Sam, you have kissed her, the beautiful bride of every lucky performer, you are betrothed and in bliss to think of the next encounter with your beloved, this next performance, and in anticipation of her, of your beloved, the crowd, in expectant happiness you think of her and your heart quickens, your pulse jumps and you know you are near to her, near to your love. We are all as lovers before a crowd, we performers, are we not? Do you not feel your heart quicken to think of her?"

"Yes grandma, I do! I find that just as lovers are described in books, so do I find myself thinking of little else, only of the performance and its fulfillment! I do live it, love it as a man must love a woman!"

"Ahhhh... I knew it was so! I knew that your heart had been awakened by her kiss! Ha! But do you know her? Do you know your lover, the crowd?"

"I believe I do. Yes, I am sure of it!"

"Oh Sam, listen to me, you have known her, but you do not know her! Today I will show you her secret, her heart will be plain to you after my lesson and you will know her, know whom you have kissed and of what truth her happiness is wrought."

Sam listened intently, for his grandmother was most wise. "Let us look across a tiny span of history in a single place and take stock of the human soul. The German people are the finest starting point for our discussion. Throughout history they have been the prime exemplar of the most pungent and sublime aspects of the human soul. History's grasp is immense compared to the tiny existence of mankind, and within a razor's edged breadth we find two German souls: Goethe, whose poetic, intellectual and literary works are rightly known as the finest, sweetest, most supple, bashful and golden fruits born of the earthen soul of man, and Adolph Hitler, the supreme and foremost sorcerer and magician, the diviner and deliverer of the fertile black poison spring of vile self-satisfied abomination which lurks beneath the

smooth glazed surface of every human soul. The broadest and the narrowest soul stand inches apart, both so potent and so various, here so healthy and bountiful, but here so deeply poisoned and poisonous. Such powerful souls! One the planter and begetter of the eternal rising hope of mankind, one the reaper and collector of his most bitter and narrow harvest, our endless gulping hatred nursed into a dark, consuming, negating, poison fire, the black sparks of which live, seen or unseen, alive as embers or hidden deep within the earth of man as a black oozing spring of sulfur and oil, seen or unseen, but always alive within each and every one of us.

What is it which separates these two souls both sprung of nearly the same vanishing moment and place in our sprawling history? Why is one so healthy and the other so deadly, and why are both so effective, so attractive? First I will take the case of Goethe. What distinguishes his character, his golden health and vision, so long lived and productive throughout his life, which was by its very being testament to the heights man can achieve if he unites with his passions and potentials, and uses them all to his own betterment? The will of man applied most fruitfully to the cultivation of his many talents, aspects and abilities, each different but working together, his strength and spirit are that of multiplicity without conflict. This is the signature of the highest health and possibility of man, his unfettered and complete promise brought to fruition, each potential harnessed together under the shelter of his will, a broad and gracious will, the most powerful and enduring will which encourages and shapes, uses and is energized by all the various aspects of its development. In man, there are many faces, many wills and hates, a thousand loves and the chafing of a thousand unmet desires which ride us raw, and it seems as if we are each a multitude too vast to know. But do not be fooled, all are shades and shadows of our two mothers, love and death. These two combine and separate into the thousand thousand faces, shades, shapes and shadows of our hidden and visible multitude of selves, all made of varying mixtures, subtle doings and undoings of these two lovers. Goethe is the gardener of our multitude, the mixer and combiner of our two natures and his will and work bear the mark of Eros,

he is the uniter, nurturer and combiner, the mixer and unifier of the human soul. Goethe is the will of Eros, that which is of unconflicted multiplicity. Intellect and passion thrive equally under his sign. He is the prism which both separates and combines, distills and mixes the varied hues and colors of the human soul into the joyous bruised union of our endless multitude.

Now from the broadest, let us approach the other, the narrow, black, clenching, pinched soul, so withering in its pinprick vision, so solid and sure in its sudden hateful contractions of speech and sound, the essence of the fruitful will brought to double potency and then twice again until the air trembles with bloody slaps, words which crack like a whip and bind all who hear them to an inner strength, black and immutable which rises up in annihilation, rears up in unity and hatred, absolute and voracious, unstoppable as a wave of sheer power, all of the tender heart burned away and boiled into a cloud of blood hate, burst and boiling in a single motion, a single lashing will cracks, and snaps open the abyss of ultimate power and annihilation in a single stroke. Yes! It is just so, just as I say it, so did he do these things! I will show you his hater's trick here, so you may see. Then we will play a little joke on your lover and see who it is that she truly loves." Jeanette started to smile. She could tell, he understood. She continued: "So unlike Goethe, Hitler is a separator and a distiller alone. He is a result, and the same result is born again and again, over and over throughout history, this soul is formed from a certain chemistry, an alchemy of mistreatment and abuse will always create a soul such as his. He appears to be the will, but a thousand times stronger. This is the illusion he creates, and the one he himself needs to believe. When one takes an energetic, disciplined, resourceful and noble soul like that of the German people, and for whatever reason be it just or unjust, if one exposes that noble spirit to constant humiliation and degradation, where the best efforts are ignored or rewarded with failure, the shamed will redoubles within itself and finds a self-hating fury spinning within itself, a circling fire of self-hatred begins to turn and spin, faster and faster become its convulsions of anguish and bitter rage against its treatment until

it is spinning like a centrifuge of hate, and all of Eros is cast outward, leaving the whirling will of death alone, turning faster and faster. A separation of the soul has occurred and now Eros is consumed and her energy burned in hate's forge which glows black and remorseless, infernal and unstoppable, unified and despotic as is the wounded heart of man! Once Eros is spun out, knocked into a ditch and killed, she can be eaten and in her body the hatred in man finds energy enough to consume all doubt, and finding no reason to stop there, it always ends in tragedy as it consumes, at last, itself. So you see, the soul of Adolph Hitler is a dissolving of man's unity by shame, and in this we see emerge the narrowest splinter of man, dark and indivisible is the hatred of mankind, for that which has cast out all multiplicity is always indivisible, elemental and indestructible as an atom—the black atom at the center of man. This single piece of all the machinery and magic, this is his trick, his reduction of the soul into a single atom. Adolph Hitler reduced his entire wounded soul into one small part of himself—he was a regression, a reversion to an elemental form of the soul found in development. Shame had made of Adolph Hitler the most basic and elemental, and so the most infantile of all souls, truly infantile, a single aspect, a single block, a single component of the soul, a narrow sliver, a part used in our development was now its entire essence, and in this regression to the infantile, into the unity of the elemental he purged himself of his pain, his weakness and his humanity. To strip Eros away and consume her, to go backward in time to a pure simple form and break apart the soul of man as shame had done to him—that was his trick, his narrowing and hardening of the heart which seemed to be the essence of the will is now clear, infantile and visible to see—his face—his truth, was but one thing and one thing alone: Impotent Rage. Adolph Hitler is the result. The pages of history are cluttered with his likeness.

So now that you have met them, how would you compare the worth, the value of these two souls?"

"Goethe possessed a glorious and bountiful soul, an overflowing soul of complexity, rich in contradiction and nuance. A soul born of the infinite possibility inherent in the multiplicity of combinations and potentials created in the complete healthy soul

of man. He offers much of worth and value. Adolph Hitler is a defensive, wounded, self-hating soul who is a liar and a cheat."

"Oh? What sort of liar and cheat?"

"He substitutes an infantile unity, the unity of purpose found in impotent rage for the broad heart of man, and so, he is a liar. His is a lie of omission."

Jeanette relaxed, her shoulders fell in genteel abandon, as if some hidden marionette string which had hitherto borne an unrelenting tension had been suddenly cut. He understood. She continued:

"So, I will give you your assignment for next week, and the month as well. Here are two compositions, one a poem of great beauty and human complexity from Goethe, 'A Winter Journey in the Harz,' and the other a recorded speech given at Nuremberg by Adolph Hitler. First you are to turn the Hitler speech into a musical composition. He is a master at the use of rhythm. Study the building and receding rhythms of the speech, for they are its key, the key to how he unlocks the ugly soul, brings it to a self-satisfied lust and then ever so clearly but slowly, as a cruel lover he builds the words, slap upon slap, blow upon blow until he spins beauty into a ditch, knocks her into a ditch and kills her. You will name this piece "The Nature of Man" because it is true. This black spark lies undimmed in the heart of each one of us. We both know it is true, but a lie, as you rightly said when you called it, 'a lie of omission.' This is the piece you will play for your next performance, and in this way I can assure you of two things—a very successful performance, and a clear picture of your bride! As performers we all love her, but the crowd, which is the instrument we play is a particular sort of instrument, a 'lyre,' and although she is most beautiful for it, we must know her plainly, and see plainly, if she has a taste for truth or lies. In this way we may better learn to trust her judgment, and might not mistake the sweet or sour taste of her milk, for that of the truth.

The Goethe poem you will find much more challenging indeed! It is always harder to create beauty than it is to rape her. After your performance, we will judge your efforts at composition through the eyes of a creator, and set you to a proper challenge,

an impossible, wonderful task as is befitting you... You and your *Anabassis of Creation*." Jeanette's eyes were damp with foolish hope, and tenderness. She would preserve him.

Over the next few weeks she worked with him constantly. "No, No— Together, the hands together, clear and pointed—rhythm—only rhythm!" The notes mattered little, only the swelling and falling cacophony of rhythm— "Damn the notes!" She constructed the theater of personality around him. Each motion was choreographed, the end was the most important, the piano bench was kicked back as he stood to deliver the last few notes with a huge, exaggerated, grotesque, overarching swing of his arms from the standing position. "How absurd!" he protested, "How asinine and ridiculous! What does this have to do with music?" "Nothing, nothing at all!" she replied, roaring with appreciation and laughter. "This is of theater, of the unconscious, of illusion and falsehood which glorifies the smallness in each man until he believes it is his strength he feels glowing within him! This is the language of the crowd, overly large and strutting, bold and never searching, posturing and never doubting in its purpose or its simple ferocity which instantly becomes not just an argument, but the truth itself! All which is delivered with grand strokes and bluster is swallowed whole and believed! So does the crowd quiver before the voluptuous illusion of its own omnipotence as we awaken a small narrow thing in their hearts and cause them to beat!" And so he rehearsed and felt ridiculous, but quickly learned that to believe in the ridiculous makes it real, consumable and actual to the crowd, which craves only the false certainty and blood lust of theater to slake its thirst.

And so the day of the performance came and Sam delivered his heart into the theater of lies. He began softly, innocent and entreating, puffing slowly into the flame of self-pity and its rhythms, building and falling, stretching, climbing and retreating again to gather strength and fury until the storm began to whirl and spin, hating and believing itself invincible in its impotence, fanning his swollen bruised self-hatred to a cutting black flame, an evisceration of the soul, a whirling apart of the very heart of truth into falsehood until at last, beauty was cast down into a dirty ditch and forsworn as a traitor—his arms arching in eight foot swings of earsplitting rhythmic fury to deliver the last chords and thrust the spear, the dirty stick into her eye so he might kill her dead in impotent vengeance, and for that moment he believed, he threw her weak, undeserving, pitiful body onto the floor and slapped her dead! As he posed in the vainglorious posture of triumphant fury over her body, arms stretched out in victory as only the falsehood of the theater can hold it, victory immutable and invincible, victory as the most putrid caricature, he looked into their eyes and beheld a seduction so complete, so utter and absolute that they answered him with one and only one voice, a swollen ecstatic chasm of need, once uncertain and damp, now burned into a sonorous gasp, an implosion which has swallowed itself and believes it has seen God. A wave of orgasmic depth, born of the roundest and fullest canyon of the satisfied soul which has mistaken its own pitiful grotesque shadow for a god gave its burst soul over to Sam in a wave of gratitude and belief, a tumbling surrender born into the air of a single contraction changed the very air of the theater into sound, an ecstatic solid vibration of orgasmic, orgiastic gratitude, an orange red all consuming flame of pleasure, the torrent of a shame unhid and a sick soul which is unsprung and for a moment is seduced, and wholly unknowing of what alter it has chosen for worship, simply...believes.

As Sam drank in the waves of adulation he saw his little sister front and center in the first row, slack jawed and gaping, gripped by some unknown fever, dissolved in orgasmic release and exaltation, staring at him blinded and open-eyed, as if worshiping the sun and although blind, still unable to look away. She was

his! They were all his! Then Sam remembered it was not his soul, so sick and putrid with which he had won them. He had seduced them and ridden into their souls on the lightning of another lying hideous soul, the seducer who opened the gutters and drains of blood and filth and filled them with lies, pain and suffering as no other. Sam held the lie close to his breast and bowed deeply as he drank in the power and energy of the crowd's adulation and understood exactly what he had done, understood most clearly the judgment and appetites of his bride, the crowd. How exalted to play her, but she cares best for blood lies which aggrandize and exalt her shame, and proclaim her appetites holy by adorning her ugliness with theater until she is seduced and loving. And so Sam had understood this ancient demagogue's trick, and looked into the heart of his bride, a false heart with pouting lips, so beautiful and alive, so hideous and shallow that she fails to recognize that her seducer is not a god, but the over proud lying shame within her own breast, now reversed, proud, unhinged, boastful and strutting to seduce her to engorgement. Sam understood his bride. He knew her now. He saw of the crowd, that if one can unearth and awaken the darkness in the narrow hidden heart of Man, find and kindle the darkness within them, nurse it to life and glorify it, present it to them as a lion triumphant—they will love you and think you a hero. Hitler knew—every audience loves a lie best.

It was report card time. Thomas and Sam's sister had done well. Camilla had come in first in her class for the third report in a row, and Thomas had passed. It was cause for celebration, and when the household awoke the children were called down to the table and breakfast by a familiar sound. For the last three years a device, a hand-held mini-computer and phone with over 1000 extremely involved separate functions, each more superfluous and intricate than the last, the climax and "pièce de résistance," the pinnacle and point of points, the ultimate purpose of the sleek, slender palm's worth of self-sufficient techno seduction was the "Game Center," which featured almost one million different games, with the new much touted solo activity center now standard issue, each palm full of happiness boasted that you could play, "anytime, anywhere." The Blueberry was a hit with adults and kids, who were sufficiently amused to leave the adults alone so they could do the same. It was big! It was estimated that as many as one in four Americans was "Blueberry enabled." They were expensive and they were everywhere. The familiar chime echoed invitingly from the kitchen, the Blueberry theme song playing over and over in an endless loop:

"Now ya got what ever you want!

Now ya got what ever you, whatever your pleasure holds,
Whether it's talking, texting, playing or gaming,
Any old "ing" thing—Pop!—Just thumb your Blueberry!"

Thomas and Camilla couldn't believe their ears. Was it a dream—a teasing dream of happiness? No! They rubbed the sleep from their eyes and it was still there, the music, it was still there, chiming out, over and over, calling them with its promise of bliss! Down the stairs they clamored like monkeys trying to run down past gravity itself—it must be—it could only mean one thing—The Song! The song! Yesssssss!!! Happiness! The two enraptured and deserving children knew exactly what to do. Oh yes! They had fantasized about the moment often enough, and now each grabbed the Blueberry and greedily set to work. First, the control device had to be selected. As was customary, Camilla installed the "Joy Nub" module, a thin elastic membrane of supple, pliant, super-tough rubberized material stretched over a small protruding nub upon which the thumb rested to give five way input function commands to a super-sensitive motion receptor which translated every subtle shift, pressure, oscillation, and pulse input into the nub into the appropriate command information for playing the games, or operating any of the other countless features.

Thomas selected and installed his control device, the "Happy Stick," a one inch rod of super-tough semi-elastic polymer which possessed similar input capabilities to the nub, although it was ever so slightly less responsive to motion input, allowing a more spirited and dramatic but less sensitive approach to controller handling. Boys will be boys. As Sam watched his siblings busily at work and rapture, caught so joyously in this inner world of thumb and berry, he began to look, to search into them and see, see what was under and within the mind of his two spellbound siblings. Sam peered into the secret theater of their minds and each in turn revealed its secret. As Camilla thumbed the berry-like control nub of her Blueberry he saw her within the tiny close theater of her unknown mind, playfully nude, perched blissfully astride the banister, pulling up, hand, over hand, over hand and then again, and again, until finally at the top she stopped her pulling and pulling, tugging and climbing, and released—let go, so the ridge and curve of the rail slid suddenly faster and faster, down with the arch, gravity happily tugging her downward to the nob at the end which stopped her with a giddy start and a nudge

of laughter. Thomas was even less cryptic—he was simply standing there, tugging his natural born happy stick in endless, unimaginative repetition, a self-sedating auto-zombie, on and on, ever so dull and complete.

"HmMMMM." Thought Sam, "It seemed clear that the folks at Blueberry product development were working hand in hand with the advertising department. It was all true, all the ads blanketing every form of media insisting that parents and kids, adults and children all loved the new Blueberry because now they were never bored, 'You could play anytime, anywhere,' but they neglected to mention, you were playing with yourself."

Camilla was running for class president. As the brightest girl in her class, by the usual reasoning she would have made a very poor candidate, but Camilla was not an outcast or a nerd. She was enormously popular and had by virtue of her relative intelligence, unpretentious manner and superior social skills won both the hearts of her teachers and her classmates alike. The three children sat in the living room and discussed her campaign strategy.

"I don't know what to say. I just don't know. What do you think I should say in my speech, Sam?"

"Well, what do you really think are the problems with your class, and how would you address them?"

"In my class the kids are so much fun, Sam! I love them! But they have no appetite for mathematics or English. That's why I'm first in the class, because I like both of them so... I think that if we took half of our free study period and gave the class a chance to get some time to go watch Mr. Vegan's extra video lessons in English, or Mr. Samoko's video tutorials on mathematics, that would help without cutting into the school day. Also, we could move lunch later by a period and then Mr. Vavinski would still be on school grounds, 'cause he leaves at noon to teach at the college, and if he would give up his free period he could tutor students too because he knows both subjects. Perhaps the schedule could be adjusted so students could get some tutoring

from him during the free study period. I bet he would give up his free period and help out. That would really help!"

"Wow Camilla, that sounds like a real honest 'meat and potatoes, let's learn' kind of idea! Nice!"

Thomas could no longer contain himself and began to jiggle and tremble, shake and vibrate until the gelatinous folds and banded fatty mats of his soft body quivered with an indescribable delight which percolated up his throat and fell from his mouth into the air as slaps and hiccups of joyous red faced mocking laughter. "Yeah dumb dumb, that ought to work! How dumb are you two? Hahahahaha!" Thomas pointed and jiggled, red faced and sure, heaving and knowing, he pointed at his two stupid siblings and devoured the moment fully, breathing it in and tasting it, savoring the sight of such stupidity, a sight which tickles the very soul of wisdom until it can not refuse itself and must rightly laugh aloud at all foolish things, for laughter is how we exhale our joy and keep from choking on our happiness.

"So if you tell the class they're stupid and need to work more, tell 'em to give up free period, do you think they'll like you for that?? And tell the teacher to give up his free period, yeah dummy, that will get 'em on your side. Guilt Mr. Vavinski to work more just like the students, they ought to love you for that? Huh? Hahahaha!... You two are idiots!" Thomas laughed and rolled his glazed eyes and choked on his happiness, all but unable to keep up with his laughter he started coughing as he lost control of himself entirely and inhaled some spit which caught in his throat and stopped the laughter, now a sudden choking cough. Thomas pointed and looked at his brother and sister who were clearly as witless as chimps. After he caught his breath he continued,

"Who cares what you think the problems are with your class? Who cares what the answers are to dumb problems no one cares about? If you want to get elected forget the dumb truth or whatever you think you know. Who cares? Why will they like you for that? 'You're dumb, you don't work hard enough.' There, I said it. Do you like me now? Hahahaha! Tell 'em this: 'You, my brother and sister students, are the greatest students, the

smartest and most brilliant students who have ever attended any school!" Tell the teachers the same crap! 'You are the greatest teachers who have ever taught anywhere, and we are the best and luckiest students only because we have you!' Hahahaha! Tell the students you will work with the teachers and get them an EXTRA free period, not one less! Another free period! They are so smart, they deserve it! Tell 'em that!"

"But I can't negotiate with teachers to change scheduling. I can't keep that promise!"

"Hahahaha! You, you goddamn idiot! You dumb girl! You're plain old dumb as wood, you dumb sister of mine! What will it say on your transcript, she didn't keep a campaign promise she made in some forgotten speech, or will your transcript say, *class president*? Huh? Which?" Sam and Camille both looked at Thomas and realized that intellectually, they were utterly out-gunned. Sam saw it at once. Thomas knew them, the crowd, he knew them. Thomas was his better here, better by a country mile and two blocks better!

"Christ, Thomas you're right! Camilla, listen to Thomas, do exactly as he says. You can't lose!" Sam realized that Thomas's mind and soul were exactly like his body: soft, yielding, fluid, unshaped, malleable and gelatinous, Thomas's soul had no form of its own, he would find the form you wanted to love and become it. He would search first for the shape which was desired in the listener, and then ooze and mold his own form into its image, and only then, present his soul, a chameleon's soulless soul which found its shape not in itself, but in the desires of the listener and knew, wanted, but one thing: to rest pleasantly in the eye and heart of the audience. In this lying malleable art, Thomas had found a natural current of genius, the ultimate useful sort of genius: the genius of insincerity. Thomas would always be loved. Sam needed to know why Thomas was so much smarter than he was in this respect, why it was that Thomas had this ability, this foundationless, shapeless moral plasticity which never knew itself, except in the eye of another. Sam looked into the hidden unconscious theater of Thomas's soul, deep under and within his unspoken places, and beheld him, strutting there, strutting, false and triumphant, frozen blissfully in his primal

moment, his formative moment. Thomas was naked, his fatty red blotched folds of flesh catching the noontime sun as he smiled and strutted, openly and plainly pleasuring himself just to be seen, strutting and unashamed he paraded his naked form in a memory from long ago which gave him such pleasure he would always be replaying it, over and over again here in the hidden theater of his mind, strutting boldly before his parents' adoring gaze, walking and posing, drinking in their laughter and approval at his performance as he walked back and forth naked and exposed at age three or four before his parents. This was the source, this is where Thomas learned the primacy and pleasure of being accepted by the adoring gaze of the world, why Thomas knew what to do and what to say so his appearance would always meet with the approval of all those to whom it was presented. It was this act, this moment, which was his soul and his knowledge, pleasing and being accepted before the eyes which judged him, this was his secret knowledge and his pleasure, his needing to, and his knowing how to fit into the adoring accepting eye of the beholder. As Sam watched Thomas living and reliving the memory, naked, strutting and preening himself to his parents' delight, Sam understood Thomas's secret soul, his need and his knowledge— Thomas was an exhibitionist, and Camilla, would soon be class president.

Sam had not performed his music in public for many years. He had been working, writing and perfecting his skills as a pianist and composer, slowly knowing each new idea born of the whole into the *Anabasis of Creation*, and the first movement was complete. Now finished with high school he had moved out and with his grandmother's help he had scratched together enough money to afford his first apartment, a dingy, filthy, blue grey affair on the third floor of a tenement in the worst part of the city. It was heaven. Sam could work here, here in the quiet din of the brown city, here where there was no inane chatter of prawns, no slick puckering lips and tongues wagging about money and meals, gadgets and greed. Oh how he loved the long narrow stairs which brought him into his heaven, so blessedly far away from all he knew, who were excluded by the sheer exertion needed to ascend into its dingy blessed heights. Here he had completed it, a shining ray of golden sweep and hushed splendor, a bastion of warmth and light slowly opening the simple places where hope slumbers, then stretches, her eyes warmed to waking in the Day, licking her eyes gently open with its golden purring heat. Gracious and approving, nurturing and nourishing is the dawn's still breath, her amber palm spread upon Hope's cheek, gently wiping her eyes open in Day's golden unseen waking.

The piece was complete, and at forty-five minutes and change it was a perfect fit for the attention span of his audience. Ahhhhh.... At last! An audience again! Sam's heart quickened at

the thought. A lover! So long and sorely missed! His thoughts returned to the last, the thundering gulp of empty anticipation and then the sound, the very essence of the ground and air alive with a vibration, a single unified energy in sound. Sam held the fantasies at arm's length and concentrated on the piece. It must be rendered perfectly. He began to rehearse it mentally and soon stopped. "If only I hadn't had to book the room with such a large cash guarantee." He was worried. Sam had put all his savings on the line. His piano students helped cover expenses, yes when they bothered to show up it helped, but this was a huge bet. If it worked he was okay. If not, he was in over his head. He would lose his apartment. Live in his car. Anything but back there with Thomas and his hot buttered parents. His grandmother was sick and the wheel was turning. Whatever happened he was not going to put any weight on Jeanette. She needed her strength. His heart, his savings and his hope were all on the line, Sam had bet big on his two shows, bet everything and was ready to win or lose. With absolutely no one behind him, and a pair of shows ahead of him, Sam had bet it all. Tomorrow night he would know, but tonight, he just stared into himself and watched, stared at the whirl of black and red as his hopes and fears spun inside each other and apart again, he just watched, hoped, needed, strained and stammered to control himself and be still before the sight, unable to breathe or look away, captured and captivated in the cruel crooked spell of hope which rests with a spinning wheel, he could not escape or breathe, rest or sway his mind, complete and entire was the portion of his soul wholly and fully encompassed, as he watched it turn.

The show was to begin at half past eight, and it was eight. The room held 300. Sam counted 36, including the theater staff. Well...not enough to make ends meet, but there was still tomorrow and even at 36, it was an audience! He could give this to them! As the sun rose to awaken hope so would they be blessed with this tenderness, this beauty so hard won and deeply mined from the disciplines of his work, and as the staff and ax appeared to him in his dream long ago, so did Sam long ago also realize they were to measure the pace and sureness of his own efforts and his will had but one clay to shape, that of his own

being which was so gravely and steeply cut, open and gashed with the ax and staff of his will, spreading the earth and bone of his sodden bleached soul before the sun, so it might become again, now itself a landscape for all eyes and suns to hold and enjoy in the gentle gift of beauty, which is but hope priced double steep, as is the cost of any lie which must bear the standard of truth, so distant a banner and place as this must be bought in soul's blood as we make hope's beautiful lies into beauty's truth! Sam had spent himself deeply, cruelly had he cast himself upon the blade of his cragged and pointed will until he had become an artwork, as is a fine musician himself an artwork, a discipline brought into beauty's fairest light as instinct itself, the feathered step of discipline which has become supple and forgotten itself.

28 seats were filled. There were 28 souls from Generation L present. His folks and siblings among them. He began. As Sam disappeared he let the sun step through him and cast its ripples of bronze hue and golden warmth into the air, ripples upon and after ripples of gratitude and longing, hints both subtle and shimmering, dampened in mute promise, alive then smudged out, catching itself, held closely and rubbed under before retreating ever further into the empty corners of the room. So did the sun place her first drops silently into the heavens, as a thought before a whisper. Then her fingers of wheat, yellow gold and blond spilling upward, bashful and vanishing, blushing and brimming over the lip of night, spilling gold, rosed heat and lapping waves of color, slapping and teasing, cupping and swelling beneath the boat, buoying the day aloft in gentle rolling splashes of gratitude and warmth, pouring its light over a sea of hope and hue, the broad wide arch of her back awakened to hold itself open, wide and embracing of the day, held brightly in the arms of an outstretched horizon of blue, a crisp waking sea has cast off the night and opened its blue mocking laughing eye to cast blue bright hope and laughter into the cold hollow tar circumference of frigid night, slapped the very cheek of blackness with its mocking laughter, so blue and laughing it might dare as a beautiful child dares, innocent, shameless and unknowing as it teases, playfully tugging on the black mane of even Death's dark

beard, until he too blushes, looks and wonders, "Who has teased me so?"

So did dawn awaken Hope's blue laughing eye so she might cast her sparkling happiness into the night and shame it to blushing. After Sam had awakened Hope in the gracious laughing sea of blue amber dawn, the last notes of the first movement of *The Anabasis of Creation* passed into the sunken shadows and silent dark corners of the theater, fading slowly into black, perfect, sterile silence. They had all left. Only two strangers remained, each furiously thumbing their Blueberry, which both had in the height of good taste and manners most courteously muted, so the colorful cartoonish noises which accompanied the berry games, would not disturb the music or the audience. Although the audience was gone, the music had remained undisturbed. This left Sam in the curious position of being wholly indebted to them for this mute, but not inconsiderable act of true consideration, courtesy and kindness.

Sam was driven back to them, he knew better than to hope, but need and desperation had his ear and hope had insisted, so Sam drove. He remembered the last time he had asked his father for a few dollars help. Now that his dad had found "his place" in the world of men, it should have been no problem. Dad figured it out long ago. He got the idea that he would never win at ping-pong, he was too angry and stiff-necked for the subtle play which won the end matches, where dancers and not bullies reigned the heights, and so dad stopped competing and took on the seemingly thankless task of organizing the events. Soon he paired his rivals against each other, all were as thin-skinned and puerile as he and soon he put dog against dog, lion against lion and had ruined them all, had them spending their energies to eviscerate each other and once exhausted, could then be easily surpassed by siding with an enemy to vanquish an enemy. Dad and Thomas made a strong argument for the genetic predisposition of personality. Dad was now head of the division and through this maneuvering, was a friend to all, and an enemy of everyone's enemies, which is a sure formula for riches. The new luxury car, new house, and deep bottomed swimming pool offered far from mute testament in support of the proposition.

It should have been no problem, but the last time Sam needed money, really needed it enough to ask his dad for some help with the down payment for his place, his dad looked lovingly into his eyes, patted him endearingly on the shoulder and with this kind

gesture of reassurance asked Sam to wait as he went into his study, returning shortly with a sealed envelope which he passed to Sam with an air of gentle fatherly affection. When Sam opened the envelope he found only a blank slip of paper with the words, "Sorry, sport. Better luck next time." The snub hurt. He knew the trick. This was his dad's way of snubbing him, giving him a bloody nose and a split lip so he would become "proud." The illogic was that this "pride" would instill self-sufficiency and independence, the result being that Sam's father was able to enjoy his natural cruel temperament and imagine that insulating his greed from any further needy assaults was a measure of good parenting. The slip of paper was like a metal bar slammed across the shins, splitting Sam open in pain he had to swallow, bringing him to his knees with a bruise he would never lose, and a clear understanding of his father's selfish cruelty he would never forget.

No, he would not ask his father. He would ask his mother. It is with this monstrously foolish thought that hope drove him forward like a blind pig toward the inevitable end. Surely she would help. They had seen the empty hall, they themselves had been part of emptying it, having walked out halfway through the performance, but Sam had no choice, he had no one else to go to, no one else to back him up, so he would ask her. She saw the empty hall and she knew, she knew he would lose his place and his savings, she just had to care. It would cost so little and they were so rich now, so ripe with every unnecessary thing falling off the shelves of their house, then dutifully stuffed into the basement to make room for more things which would never be used twice before being discarded and then hoarded in the ever-evaporating cellar.

He pulled up to their new ranch style luxury dwelling and looked at the artifice and opulence, the splendor of excess shown out of every impossible surface, an impossible lawn, so uniform in length and color, the impossible shrubs, cubes, spheres and monoliths of bushy obedience to the implicit law of wealth which states that with new wealth comes the inevitability of bad taste. The cupids and peeing boy angels, the statues purchased as brand new broken-armed frauds, cast to give the impression of being

older and more valuable than they are, priced double for their missing arms and the ruttid appearance of age which is falsely cast into the original design. He entered the huge synthetic faux marble foyer and listened as his steps clicked and echoed off the best imitation money, money could buy.

Sam found his mother seated alone at her alter, the kitchen table, which was in its usual state of copious overflowing, overburdened with every different sort of rare exquisite delicacy and fatty indulgence. Sweetmeats, candied tongue, goose jam and Chinese duck pate adorned the tray nearest her mouth, which was therefore the sacrifice in the greatest and most immediate peril.

"Hi, honey. What brings you to these parts? Miss your good old mom and dad?" Sam was always respectful, but it was his custom never to engage in the fraudulence of small talk more than was necessary to indulge social custom. "Well, I do have a bit of a problem, mom. I was wondering if you could help." She chewed and stared at him. Good, she was listening. "You see, it's about *The Anabasis of Creation*, you know, the show you saw last night, *The Anabasis of Creation*?"

"Oh... The Big Cabana—is that the name?"

"No mom, no. *The Anabasis of Creation*, mom, not The Big Cabana."

"Honey, 'cabana' is a word, 'anababba' or whatever you said is not. Anyone knows that. Well what about The Big Cabana? That was terrible. It just doesn't grab ya—know what I mean? It needs something, something HOT!" Mom was in a profound mood and offered up her pearls of wisdom to him as the grease and crust of unswallowed long forgotten butter sauce stuck to her third chin, now glittering, dried and crackled, suddenly reflected the florescent kitchen light in an unintentional yet dazzling splendor. Sam continued,

"Well... I bet everything I have on the two Anabasis shows, the one you saw and the one tonight, I will go under for sure after tonight. You saw the turnout. I'll never be able to recoup my losses. I'm going to lose my place, lose my apartment, mom. I

need \$2000—just a loan for six months or a year. If I don't get it, I'm living in my car. What do you say? Will you help?" As usual, Sam had not indulged his audience, he was truthful and naked in his appeal, honest and plain in the way he laid himself bare before her. It was for her to know, and her to decide. He watched her face. Clearly this did not agree with her. Need. You could see it wash over her face like a bad taste, an ugly smell, an "unpleasant" feeling, the sort of feeling one avoids now placed into the palate caught unaware and a moment of discomfort, just the sort of thing to spoil the taste of perfectly good food. Yes, unholy discomfort had besieged her countenance, but soon, as the ripples on a still pond recede and leave only the smooth glassy surface of sun and still butter sauce glistening placidly with the warmth of yellow sunny melted happiness, it was gone and forgotten, another moment, another mouthful and it was cleansed, the soiled feeling had left her and she was again complete. Her mouth puckered in a tight cartoon "O" and her brow wrinkled in a row of practiced bunches as she exclaimed,

"Oh, that's terrible for you. But really... That's OK— I don't mind." She said it. The answer he had heard a thousand thousand times as he grew up, the answer he had dread with blackest horror and nausea, her words crawled into his throat and stuck, solid and sordid, the filthy legs and tendrils of her utter uncaring lodged in his mouth, his throat and his soul. "That's OK— I don't mind." She said it. Again. She felt absolutely nothing for his suffering. She glanced at him and he knew, knew how tasteless it was to have need, and even worse, to mention it aloud! It spoiled her meal! She was annoyed but forgiving and the next few mouthfuls soon washed all the unpleasantness away, and she forgot. His pain meant absolutely nothing to her. As was common with most all Generation L moms, she lacked but one thing, not appetite or appetite for life, not the will to enrich and ennoble her own pleasure, no, no, all mothers were free from worry now, free to enjoy and procreate with abandon now that Loxvol had liberated them from that most inconvenient, repulsive and intransigent of the motherly emotions: Empathy. When it came to empathy—Susan Lessing had it licked.

"The Big Cabana? Who cares? That won't make any money, why would I back that?" Sam watched her eat, heard the callous, honest indifference in her voice and soaked in the moment, her constant slippery chewing, an alabaster sea cow girdled with white rolls of voluptuous fat and flesh, the elephantine milk white hulk of sheer indifference, chewing and swallowing, this sea cow with its uneven light brown peach fur sprouts donning the wiggling upper lip, so dexterous and supple it demonstrated a near prehensile independence, gathering grimaces, words and hunks of candied butchered flesh, such as his own. Sam looked and knew her. He would never forget.

Sam's dad had entered the kitchen.

"Hi, Sam."

"Hi, dad."

"Thomas sent me down here and told me to wait. He made it sound like he had quite a surprise for us!"

Mrs. Lessing chimed in,

"Oh goodness, a surprise!" Her eyes grew wide and wet with anticipation. Now Sam could hear his brother Thomas's approaching footfall. Thomas was not as some large men of 350+ pounds. Some are a solid mass, bone pillars and straps of dense meat, solid and vigorous, powerful and unapproachable, insulated by a soft wall of flesh, a cannon of steel and lead sheathed menacingly in an impenetrable fatty glove, as sumo and savagery are some men of girth most formidable and worthy of fear—but not Thomas. His strength was born of sheer flaccidity itself! His folded, pendulous, dripping exterior lay as a swamp upon sunken damp ground. His soul, as his body, was a substitution of viscosity for will, flexibility and formlessness for fortitude. His opinions slid around him as did his flesh, an accommodating intuition which poured itself out before the eager eye, found its form and measure in the glass which contained it, as are our opinions best first learned quietly after the fact, and then professed beforehand. Thomas knew truth was a product of the result, and that one should never confuse the two, or mistake each their useful place.

Thomas burst into the kitchen with frenetic glee, a frothing pregnant happiness, rolling his wide eyes round and round, his mouth stretched into an unimaginable roundness, a perfect cartoon "O" of exact and perfectly measured exaggeration and self-accepting caricature, a huge mural of quivering mottled flesh, red blotched fields of choreographed wobbling happy fat, a slurry of perfectly orchestrated exuberance and the self-assured quality inherent in a well-played, properly crafted lie that is so often absent in our flat unenthusiastic lives, which in the end we are perhaps rightly, so much less well inclined to believe. Thomas was larger than life so all who saw him gladly mistook him for it.

Thomas had an idea. "Oh boy! I'm so glad you two are both here! My most amazing super dad himself— My king! And the sweet queen of queens herself: My amazing super mom! Man, am I lucky!!! Well I'm not alone in that! You two—my super mom and dad—you two, are just like me, just like every other kind, generous, giving, loving, living, happy person—like every one of us— Yup! I'm just like all Americans! I'm happy! And why? Why is that? Huh? Do ya know, mom? How 'bout you, dad? Do ya? Sure ya do! We're all happy Americans, happy and proud because of one thing—we have what America grows best—we have Hope! Yup— Hope! But I'll bet super mom already guessed that, didn't ya?" Mrs. Lessing slapped her palms together like an expectant grinning seal, "Thought so! Sure did, mom! Well that's why you're so special—a super mom, because you have Hope! That's why you're a super dad, the best dad there is! Cause you have Hope! America is made of hope! So what if there was a place for all that hope? A place for the best, the budding hope of all America? What would you two super parents, you two super Americans think of that? Huh? What if I found a place, a special place, a place to seal the best of America, our special budding American hopes and dreams, a place to seal it tight and protect it, so our hopes would never be lost, so our hope would always be safe, nurtured, loved and cared for like hope should be? Hope has given us so much, wouldn't you love to give something back to her—give our hopes and dreams a safe place to live, our hopes, safe and protected— Safe Forever?!" Mrs. Lessing was pumping and gyrating, pulsing and flowing

with Thomas's rhythms, his pacing getting faster and faster, his eyes wider and wider until she filled the pregnant pause with what he wanted and said it, "Yes, I need a place, a safe place for my hopes— Thomas, do you have one??"

"Yes! I do!! I have what every American, just like you and me, what every American needs— I have it, mom... I do." Now Thomas left another long pause to let the tension build, it was an excruciating pause, almost too long and then, "I have the answer, super mom! The place to put your hopes, your budding hopes, where they will always be safe, sealed tight and loved like hope should be! I have what you and me and America needs, mom— I do. I have it."..... "THE HOPE BUDDY!!!!!!" Thomas carefully placed the little tub, a small fecal sample container with plastic eyes, upon the table. He placed it there with a gesture of respect, of reverence, and even... Awe. Then, Thomas slowly took a slip of paper with the word "Hope" ornately printed upon it, placed it in The Hope Buddy, reverently applied the lid and sealed it inside. Now in a single decorative flourish, a fluid, well-oiled, long practiced supple motion, he fanned a dozen paper strips out before her, eleven of which had colorful ornate script with the words: happiness, prosperity, love, romance, fun, parents, kids, pets, liberty, sun, and prawns, with one left blank and a pen so all of America could write in their own special budding hope. All eyes fell upon Mrs Lessing. Everyone there knew—they all knew her. Mom was the ultimate petri-dish, the mold in which to test, to grow our American culture— She was it—the ultimate test subject, the best, the most average and so the most superlative example and indicator of true worth. Mom was the personification, the very essence of real hope in America— she was the ultimate, the pinnacle of pinnacles, Mrs. Lessing was the supreme and most penultimate one: **The very lowest, common denominator.** They all knew it. If she went for it, his parents were potentially multi-millionaires twice again, and Thomas, like the rest...he hoped and waited.

All saw the mountain quiver, her girded folds did tremble and quiver, her sides did heave and hold, her swollen volume of folded greasy meat contracted and then, suddenly as a dam is unhinged and from a small crack and a trickle, a sudden wall of

white water and energy consumes the land, scalding, burning and boiling up the earth into its pregnant tumbling fury—so did she burst!

"Ohhhhhhhh God! Oh God Oh My God Thomas THOMAS!!! **THAT IS A HOT MONEY MAKING IDEA!!!**" The words! The sound! All of the family's free capitol would soon be accrued, accumulated as cash and set before Thomas, a worthy son, who in turn received the benefits befitting one of true worth. His dad signed over a check for \$200,000 in exchange for a ten percent interest in all profits stemming from future sales of "America's Hope Buddy." Thomas first got the idea in the dentist's office thumbing through an old medical equipment catalog. The defective fecal sample containers were available for a quarter cent each and the plastic eyes were less than a half cent per pair. With a retail price of \$20, and with Thomas pitching to the budding hopes and dreams of all America, the profits were sure to be astronomical. As it turns out, when it comes to spotting a real value, Mrs. Lessing couldn't miss. While this was apparent to all, it seems that Thomas also knew that although Generation L parents, both moms and dads alike weren't big on empathy, flattery was still a generous working commodity, and always proved itself to be the most dependable and lucrative of virtues.

That evening Sam performed without looking, without knowing, only imagining the people in the audience. Maybe they were there, perhaps not—only the music was real, and Sam's aching, his empty punctured pain bled a sweet blood, an aching tender hurt which nursed the music to a rouged glow, an over-mellow radiance and hue, a warm flush in the bruised cheeks of happiness once turned away. After the last notes faded into the folded shadows of the empty room, Sam looked. He thought he saw, felt he saw an oval smudge of light, a smear of peach and silver white, but only an afterimage, a smudged glow remained, a cupped shadow of some faint promise, a vanishing lingering shadow, a velvet smear of peach and silver mist seemed for a moment to hollow out the darkness, but Sam understood that it is in our darkest moments when we need and summon our beautiful ghosts to attend us. Perhaps it was an illusion, a beautiful lie born in the wounded poetry of his soul. So as one should with all false hopes and southern siren winds which fill no sail, but blow only in our ear and lead us to sad hope and destruction, Sam let the dull rubbed shadow smeared bright with mysterious warmth and vanishing light fade as any of hope's sweet tortures, imagined but unknown.

As he listened to the recording of his performance he felt a warm pull of satisfaction, like a glowing gulp of whiskey he never had to taste, it warmed and filled him with a heat and sureness—he had done it. Each note was exactly as he needed

and desired it to be, and still more—the pain, Sam's broken hearted ache, the dull, sure, tearless well of failure and strain, his sad pain which was still, mute and pressing within him, held within his swollen aching breast, his pain—it filled each note with a meaning, a sonorous glow, an ache and an abundance filled and connected each phrase and gave a sweet over-mellow blush, a hint of sad smoke and dim suffering not born, only pushing inward with its unseen sadness and swollen belly of warmth, the salty hint of hot tears and blood, each note stood proud, glowing and wounded, still and filled with mute pain, smothered heat and warmth. He had bled into the sunrise, and she had kept his secret safe within her and loved him, warmed him, and was warmed and made more beautiful for his pain.

Soon his vainglorious satisfactions were cut sharply down, and the true bitter sting of his vacant future slapped him to his knees. Sam fell upon the bed and wept. His home, his work, his music—he would never know another ear to receive him, he would not long see these sturdy walls, hung yellow with rings of tobacco smoke and the stain of lost dreams, among which he was now numbered. The windows seemed to buckle inward like leering bulging eyes filled with contempt, "The sickling fails to earn his home," and now even the walls want to spit him out, to cast him out of their cheeks into the black air where no dusty proud room need be stained with the scent, his scent, the stink of failure. Gripped and slit open under the knife of his great self-contempt, Sam yielded his tender silver soul to the filth of this world and knew himself through the eyes of his family, his country, and his contempt. He shuddered and wept to know himself—sick, humbled and disgraced.

Time had been spellbound, joyously engulfed in every nuance of Sam's triumphant struggles and sufferings and beheld him, pitiful, shuddering, broken, sick and weeping. Her heart filled with the very nectar of happiness, and then, to see him in his bitter broken despair, she found born within her the truest and most silver bright seed of pure laughter to join her happiness. Her laughter was as round bottomed silver and black as the kettle of the universe, it peeled and slapped wet splashing waves of quicksilver and mists of golden purple light filling heaven's dark

cavern with laughter, until the very vacuum of space was itself an impossible laughing vibration, a laughter so joyous that its presence made the mute hollow of space, the very heart of nothingness vibrate and come alive, its empty places silvered and trembling, slapped alive, vibrating with light. So did time see his sorrow and laugh in her glowing, tumbling, godly, quicksilver happiness which makes a silver vibration of joy out of all empty places. Oh! How there was such pleasure, such godly pleasure and sweet joyous wisdom in her secret knowledge, and she drank deeply from its hidden silver spring as she beheld him in his suffering, and filled her giddy heart with glad torrents of silver godly laughter.

Sam awoke at 3:00 AM. He was sweating and his heart was pounding. He refused to remember his dream and he refused to sleep further because he might have another. He snapped on the lamp and squinted under the feeble sixty watts of yellowed light as if it were the noonday sun. His soul hurt. He had a back cramp and felt sick to his stomach. Somewhere in the back of his mind he knew it all, but now, he didn't quite remember it yet—he just felt bad. A cup of coffee and half a roll settled his gut and it all started to become clear again. He could hardly stand it, hardly stand looking at these blessed walls, his only safe place, his apartment now echoed a sad sound, a dirty film covered it, the ugly brown ring of his failure stained the little world dull and sullen, pensive and uneasy with failure. The very sight of these walls was a self-reproach, a disgrace, and Sam had to leave. By 5:00 AM he was on the road out of the city. The sun was nourishing the horizon to a supple crimson bronze which promised to warm the night until it forgot itself. Sam let the spacious expanse of day unfold before him and open the heavens, so slowly, as a blot of light soaked into the fabric of the sky from the hidden horizon. The awakening sun warmed the hope in him to rise as well as his pain, which wrestled with his heart, a stubborn heart which refused to bear up its sorrow, but rather closed itself around its wounded disgrace and bit down, sickening and blackening the world with its suffering and its strength.

Sam pulled the car over by a forgotten country road from nowhere to nowhere, a faint dirt ribbon rarely traversed and almost rubbed out of existence by a profusion of weeds, shrubs and small tufts of strange moss which had a liking for the open sun and took root to heal the wound, for every road we travel is but a wound rubbed and cut into the earth. Like a trapper, game scout or a guide in the old west who could smell a shadow, he had found it. Now Sam walked away from his shadow down this ribbon of rubbed earth toward the sun. As the sun spread the vaulted sky out before him and opened the roof of day's infinite blue dome, the limitless expanse of our living cathedral, the endless boundary of arching azure embraced the world in the sweep of its icy new brightness and blue chill. The late fall leaves stirred awake and dared the bite of a cruel and beautiful wind to liberate them and set them to dance with the light, hovering and falling to the ground, or swept up in a tumble of wind and belched into the air, alive again and rustling together, whispering and speaking—then silent. The crooked proud branches waved their dark cragged fingertips at him and bent their waists, swaying and nodding, fanning the air in sudden gusts of wind which brought all the arbor alive and dying, trembling and shedding itself, swirling into the air.

As Sam drank in the rustling quiet, the gracious unspoken silence of these unknown sounds, the clean air and empty spaces cleansed and held him, washing through him as brisk clear icy light, the frozen currents of white and yellow sun, the mad confusion of dancing leaves and wind whipped shadows healed him and he understood that the thoughts he had as he drove here today were wrong, they were thoughts which had poisoned him, poisoned his soul like bad meat. Yes, he was wrong to think his bitter thoughts—thoughts, clenching, raging, wounded thoughts which would not yield their hurt and tears, but would rather blacken and shame the world instead. He had known a lie in his bruised heart, he had supposed that the world, complete and entire, was a wicked dirty thing, corrupt, worthless and foul, but he was wrong. As he looked around him and knew himself, Sam understood the truth. The world has many filthy, broken, foul, crooked things in it, but that does not mean that the world itself is

a disgraceful place. So Sam bore up the black tears clenched deep within his strength and unblackened his world, the tears falling silver and clear spilled out before the unblinking forgetting sun, tears painted his face with golden shuddering light, lingering drops of sun and pain, bright, silver-sweet and dying, as leaves falling to earth, cast brightly downward to die, revealing hope's barren branch, now bare and empty, waiting to hold winter's crown of snow and in turn to be nourished in the fragrant warm breath of a blossoming spring.

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