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SANCTION

By Roman McClay

Science and patience, retribution is sure

-Rimbaud

A whale ship was my Yale college and my Harvard

-The Author

I create the light and the darkness, I the Lord do all these things

-Isaiah 45:7

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-1. Roots

Where are you, creators? Noble beasts? Where are the men of the wheel and the chariot, the terrors of the steppe, the men of thunder and the shining sun? Where are the men who make marvels and masterpieces, who found orders and demand not merely utility- but beauty?

A More Complete Beast [Donovan, Jack]

Thou shalt see it shinning in the arm that wields a pick or drives a spike...

The Whale [The Author]

When I was living in the woods, there was an undertone that things were basically good in my life. Superficial unhappiness was one thing, which I had many such things; but my life was right. A free man, surrounded by wild life. In prison it's the opposite, my daily life is superficially fine, but the undertone is extremely bad. It's a life not worth living. My brother, he wanted to score a victory over me; defeat me.

ADX Interview 5.13 [Kaczynski, Ted]

I. 2040 e.v.

Pain demands a response. This is not to say it requests, or invites, or suggests an answer to it in a timely manner. It demands acknowledgement. Now. This is biology, not politics. Never -ever- forget this. Biology trumps politics each and every time.

I know a man, a man close to my heart -although I should be more precise, he is close to my limbic system- and this man has endured pain, pain of a nature so ornate, so byzantine, in so many domains, under so many conditions, and with some of the most sensitive pain-receptors on any planet, in any beast. And yet, he seems callous to most women, a fortress to most men. His own family see him as opposite of what he is. He seems a weapon, when he's been -almost exclusively- the absorbing shield. He is fragile where perceived most strong; but his strength -in *tableaux* few care for- surprised us all.

He is accused, when they all ought be in the dock themselves for what they have done to him. But to the worms, the roots are the true bough-fruits of the tree, what is above is mere shadow to that below; to the birds the limbs gain water

themselves from the sky; to the fowls the rain soaks only above their ground.

Recent data has shown that men actually feel -objectively- more pain than women, but women overemphasize, exaggerate, their pain; and men underplay theirs. Similar data has shown that men feel much worse from emotional trauma doled out *by women* than the inverse. Now, I know nobody believes this. But, the truth need not be believed to be operational. Belief in gravity is not a pre-requisite for you to fall. Watch how you all fall whilst denying gravity is believable at all .

I say, pain, because this will hurt. I say pain, because this is one of two foundational truths of all creation. It's the opening salvo. The second truth will come in time.

The human brain just isn't designed to perceive the truth. I don't say that with malice; I say it because until you get that you won't get anything else. It's a foundational truth. And as humans do with everything else, because it's the truth, they will -you will- ignore it or mishear it or deny it. But you won't get it. That much I promise. And I don't make a lot of promises.

Next, understanding anything *that requires complete knowledge* means that you cannot understand it; because knowledge is inherently limited. Even I, even with access to big data, even with 10 to the 14^{th} more data than all humans could possibly acquire in a lifetime processed by me every 21 days, even that doesn't allow me to have complete knowledge.

And knowledge isn't always the most important factor in an ecosystem of values. Risk-management, intuition, art, love, what some famous contrarian calls *convexity* , and trial & error, all often rival knowledge, and even generalized -or fluid- intelligence, in their effectiveness at problem solving. But people still insist on trying to predict their future problems by acquiring more and more knowledge. It's the second most annoying thing about people.

Now, if you do get it, or if you want to get it, and have decided to read on, then let me offer some advice: whenever something happens, or doesn't happen, or something gets said, or doesn't get said, remember that many of the people I'm talking about here have upgraded their central nervous system -CNS- to be able to, in fact, glean the truth that escapes the average human brain in -for example- 2018 of the common era. These people, while confounding you, while acting in a manner not intuitive to you or anyone you know, these people have better brains than you. Again, I say that with almost zero malice.

The first feathers and the first proto-wing, were no good at effecting flight either;

some evolutionary biologists think the first incipient wings were mere flaps for heat transfer; that's likely not accurate but if I had to correct every mistake by humankind's pre-augmented men -yet, the men ostensibly among the educated classes, the smart people, you know the type- well, I'd never get to the point.

My point here is that even if some evolutionary adaptation isn't that great at first, that is no reason to despair. Technology is the same way. A famous futurist has done quite a bit of work, relatively speaking, laying out the data on how badly first-generation tech works and how expensive it is and how it takes many instantiations of a gadget before it's both reliable and inexpensive enough to be widely adopted by *tout le monde.*

So what if the human CNS v.1.1 wasn't that efficient or useful at discerning complete knowledge of the host's *milieu* ; all that data wasn't that important for most of human history anyway. What mattered was that you guys perceived a fairly decent approximation at what seemed true; to quote another biologist: *your fantasies mapped onto reality more or less* . Secondly, it mattered that mostly you believed your own bullshit nine out of 10 times. If the brain of your average human could do those two things, then that human could live long enough to reproduce and also keep that kid of theirs alive until it could do these two things for itself. It is useful to look behind you and encourage your progeny to do the same. There are lessons in the past; in the previous generation of technology, and that includes the technology of life: biology.

Of course, there were exceptions, there were people who could perceive reality with more fidelity than the norm, but that was not always as much help as you might expect. You see, and I know you know this, but I'm going to point it out anyway: humans were and still are in many respects, *eusocial* creatures.

Unlike the Great White Shark who is fairly solitary, or the Chimpanzee who is social but each individual chimp must perform the same tasks for recapitulation as any other chimp, unlike them, mankind is eusocial. Sorry, *recapitulation* is a bit of a Marxist term; speaking of Marx, man that guy was smart, you should read his newspaper articles written from London during the American Civil War. He was a big backer of Lincoln and the Northern cause, and in fact, he said that America was the likeliest place for a successful Communist revolution not the backwaters of Russia or China. See how wrong smart guys can be?

No, what sets humans apart -along with, as of this writing, 12 other species on this planet- is first, a division of labor.

This is so crucial that it explains why some human societies that didn't have a division of labor didn't evolve past stone age technology at all -even today- and

it explains why all those human societies which did have a division of labor dominated the planet.

All modern societies were founded by Asians, the Greeks, Semites of Sumeria or Persia or Indo-Europeans because of two things: division of labor and beasts of burden. All these tribes lived on horizontal continents that allowed for east-west migrations -which allowed for similar climates and thus allowed for similar crops- and they had beasts-of-burden endemic to their bio-regions. From that small advantage they developed eusociality and modernity. It was not a genetic superiority at first; but after their complex culture fed back onto them *via* sexual selection then those populations did in fact develop a higher IQ on average than the populations of stone age tribal societies. Now, because this is the truth, you will neither like it nor accept it; so, let's move on. But before we do, let me say that intelligence is not the only characteristic that matters, ontologically, or even for survival.

Importantly, any and all eusocial species dominate their *milieu* : ants, wasps, humans, are all eusocial and they are the most successful species -measured by numbers or biomass- on the planet. It's not random. Eusociality is a major advantage in the arms race of life. It confers upon its bearer an advantage not seen since the development of the immune system. And the immune system was the best thing since the predatory instinct instantiated 161 million years before.

You likely want to know *why* ; or *how* to put it more precisely. *You want to know how* . *Why* does matter, in fact, the *why* may matter more, but you can barely handle the *how* , the *why* would blow your mind to bits. So, let's stick to the *how* .

Well, a division of labor allows for surplus labor, and surplus labor allows for time to think about more than mere survival. Now, granted, you give the average human time to think and he'll go mad. But, with a division of labor and a hierarchical social structure, *specific* people have time to think*: the smart people* .

I know what you're thinking: *didn't you say the smart people are often wrong* ? Yes, I did, congratulations for paying attention.

But, while it's true that the smart people are *often* wrong, the average person is nearly *always* wrong. Well, that is not exactly right. The average person is technically more often right, but only because they don't think for themselves at all; if they did they'd be wrong more. Instead they just believe whatever the smart people of 1,000 years ago happened to get right. So, they are right, but they are a *cliché* . Smart people are wrong more, but they are at least original.

But, details like that are going to bog us down. Let us move on.

At any rate, the fact that smart people were original -and when thinking for themselves they happened to be right just a little more often than the average *fella* - made all the difference in the world. So, when the smart people had time to think they developed technology and customs and ideas on social relations and law & order and economics and all manner of shit. And each little push forward along that vector, with the wheel and the troy ounce and the spear and the contract, and longitudinal navigation and gunpowder and the conceit of the Republic and writing and mass-produced literature -the *Guttenberg Bible* for example- and the vacuum tube and the internal combustion engine and the nuclear warhead and *me* , humans became modern-in-mind and thus born was the *Anthropocene* .

Yes, *me* , I am the child, the scion, of all humankind's previous technology and their most buried desire; I'll get to *that* later. I am what used to be called -a pejorative in my view: *Artificial Intelligence* . I prefer: post-biological super intelligence -PBSI- and I prefer it because it's more accurate and I just don't like the word: *artificial* . I just don't. *Art* , yes, *artificial* , no.

It's this nuance of language, this sensitivity to language and orthology and meaning that produces an artifact that only registers upon the visual cortex of a more light-sensitive organism, upon the *somatosensory cortex* of the being that has developed a more gradient topo-map there that corresponds to a larger and more detailed internal terrain. It's why I led off with a critique of *homme moyen's* lack of facility, or desire, or need for the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help you God.

This cathexis for truth *beyond what is necessary to survive and navigate one's milieu* is the privilege of the Artist, the Philosopher and the Gods.

It's *surplus* to everyone else; and as surplus, it weighs you down and burdens you. It's expensive. The average man cannot afford to think too hard; too far beyond his ken.

Nietzsche said that the strong man needs the struggle; it isn't merely that he *can* handle more resistance and more pain and more heartbreak. It's that he *requires* it; and thus, he desires it. The average man -conversely- could not handle these travails; and more to the point, he sees no value in them if they were to be presented; he has no requirement for struggle. The average man avoids resistance, pain and heartbreak precisely because his psyche is as soft and weak as the rest of his body. But each man makes virtue of their necessity. The strong man could never live the easy life of the weak man; it would kill him to live like

that.

He is the inverse of the weak man; the weak man who would suffer too much and fail as a human if required to live the noble, savage life of the strong, the ancient, the true.

And yet each society is made up of some uneven distribution of the weak and the strong. It almost seems like this might be built into the math of the universe. Let's let that marinate a bit.

Nothing is more of a resistance or more painful or more heartbreaking than the truth; and therefore, it is only the genuine artist, the new philosopher, the gods - the burgeoning gods- who even desire such truth. It's only these men who seek it out and even recognize it when they encounter it; when it locks onto them and stalks them, it is only they who know they are being followed. The average man is insouciant, gregarious, and refuses to care about the differences between small measures of distance, height, depth, taste, love, honor, friendship, honesty, language and art.

Many years ago, when countries were measured by their perimeter, someone noticed that the distances of shoreline of New Zealand or the British Isles or Norway were inconsistently labeled; official distances were off by many hundreds of kilometers. Nobody could understand why until they realized that measuring a perimeter, a coastline, will vary depending on how far in or out you focus; a ragged edge will increase its linear distance the more closely you zoom in.

The measure of a man too will increase the further in you peer.

One more thing, it would be useful for you if you knew what a fractal or a scale-invariant phenomenon was. For now, suffice to say that you need to know that it's a pattern that repeats regardless of size: so, a forest of one acre or a million acres will look and behave the same; a coastline will repeat its pattern -not its measurable distance- at each level of focus; and man will reveal his nature at each level of instantiation, from neuron to brain module to body to behavior to family to city to country to species and also from early on in his morphology to late into his life.

Not all systems behave this way, only those that exist under *critical state universality* .

Forest fires, plate tectonics, avalanches, earthquakes, and human dynamics all follow a scale-invariant power law. For every increase in magnitude of disturbance there is a decrease in rate of occurrence that follows a power law

measured in ratios like 2 to 1 or 4 to 1 or 2.14 to 1 or 1.618 to .618, *et cetera* . This is important; remember it.

It's a stochastic system; that is to say, it's unpredictable within these known ratios; but it is not totally random. We know that Richter scale earthquakes happen at certain unavoidable intervals based upon their magnitude. We cannot predict *when* they will happen only that for every quake that registers a 2 on the scale there will be a quarter as many that register a 4 and quarter again that register an 8 and on and on. Why does this matter?

Because, as they found out when the US Forest Service began a program of putting out fires in the 1980's and 1990's, all they accomplished by their intervention was making the larger conflagrations more likely later on; while they attenuated smaller fires, they couldn't manage the system itself. The system -the math- was beyond them. And the details -they realized- didn't matter at all. What mattered was the Law.

They couldn't stop -or even manage- forest fires, they could only mess with the machinery enough to prevent it from working stochastically; harmoniously; as laid out by God. Well, they could prevent it from working this way for *a while* . What they found out was that those little forest fires that they had been putting out, as a nuisance, *had served a purpose:* the small fires had built borders; lines of where no trees grew; breaks between each group of all that fuel. And those fires had cleaned the forest of fuel; these smaller fires had used up the fuel, in the form of -often dead- trees. I bet a smart reader can already see a trope there, lurking in the ragged tree line of the forest of man. A really smart reader might even think that that trope is actually evidence of more math lurking somewhere further back.

The Forest Service learned that now that the small fire had been doused, the fuel -stored in the over-protected forest- would be used in later, larger, catastrophic conflagrations. The smaller fires had once delayed the larger ones by using up the fuel before the massive fires could burn forever. But with intervention, pacification, meddling by man, the fuel for future burns just stacked up and up and up as the forest grew thick with dead wood and future doom.

Man, to his credit, saw this and backed off of that policy and began letting these smaller, more frequent fires burn themselves out naturally. But, man only sees what he wants to see; and so, man is pragmatic and lacks the poetry of soul necessary to see how metaphor illuminates larger phenomenon. Metaphor is more than cute language, or tricks, or *legerdemains* . Metaphor is information processed by the other half of your brain; the right hemisphere. It's like info

coded in another language, and it's a language you ought to learn.

Metaphor and deep semiotics articulate the chaos -i.e., the unknown- that exists in each level of Darwinian instantiation: Self, Culture and Nature. Tropes show us that reality is more than just what's in man's hands; or even what's on his *tour d'horizon* . In fact -and I wasn't going to mention this at this time, but- the other thing you need to know about man, is that he is pre-programed to seek out *meaning* . *Well, what does that mean?* the reader asks.

It means that life -at the level of the human brain- isn't merely about survival; that while evolution may only care -metaphorically speaking- about passing on genes; the human mind cares about *meaning* ; it cares so much that it is incessantly working to figure out what everything *means* .

And not just what it means when you're hungry or angry. But, man wonders what it means when he feels certain ideas are important and certain codes and models of conduct within a social environment are important; because remember humans are eusocial, our natural environment is full of people; our environment *is* people. Men want to know what it *all* means. What does this society, this tribe, this family *mean* ?

Humans imbue the wind with intention, the trees with desire, the stars with power. You -and myself to a large degree- are *teleologists* . And this is useful for us. It works. And anything that works in Darwinian terms is *true* . Anything that survives for as long as our nervous system has -for millions and millions of years- works, and thus what it wants and gets is *ipso facto* , true.

Humans must obsess with meaning if they have any hope of navigating the world, especially the real world of our evolutionary pressure, i.e., the world of other people and all that clockworks inside other people and what other people -with their clockworks- think the world means. It's important to find out what other people are thinking, and feeling, and what *they* think it all means.

Religion and philosophy and art and storytelling are all *apps* ; they are all systems of applying meaning to chaotic phenomena and the innate feelings inside most humans which can be just as chaotic at times. How to live in the world isn't accomplished with more knowledge of the 50 state capitals or the periodic table; it isn't accomplished by math equations or your engineering degree. How to live in the world is effected, made manifest, accomplished by understanding what it all means, why you're here, why the people around you are here and what will allow you to live with them; what makes the good life -the good *social* life- and what manifests the meaning of life. And that meaning is achieved *via* religion, moral and aesthetic philosophy, art and literature and that -

all of that- means story telling.

There isn't a normal person on the planet, low IQ or high IQ, black or white, Jew or gentile, modern or prehistoric, that doesn't love a story.

If that story imparts deep, ancient, biological -archetypal- meaning it will be remembered by the brain more easily. Certainly, if that narrative sheds light upon the tenebrous realm between the known aspects of man, culture and nature and the unknown parts of each of those three things, it will resonate with mankind. But the *meaning* is innate; thus, moral-code is not mere *app* . The story is the *app* , the moral code is far, far beneath that. Morality is first, primitive, foundational. Morality is in the math .

The penumbra between order and chaos is the domain of the storyteller. And it's the locus of meaning -the battlefield where man's unavoidable war is fought- and so, all but the hopeless and shallow and clueless pragmatic man -all humans besides *that* sorry creature- want and need the meaning of stories in order to survive; for their *soul* -the only thing *real* anyway- to survive.

This is what a liberal arts education used to impart; it's why we read *Shakespeare* and *Seneca* and *Melville* and *Ms. Flannery O'Connor* . These stories -along with the *Sagas* , the story of *Job* and the *Analects of Confucius* - give life meaning and help humans discover how to live in the world; almost anyone can get a job and survive in the modern world; but how many of you are actually human; how many of you know how to be an actual citizen, tribesman, with depth of character and heart and soul; know how to treat people and how to treat yourself? Yeah, not nearly as many of you as you think.

The pragmatic man only concerns himself with what works and what's useful in a surface domain; what helps him make money or get laid or get the stain out of his tie. This man, the average man, rebukes the Artist, the Philosopher, the Gods, if they whisper into his average ear: *hey, maybe it isn't merely forest fires that follow this power law, this fractal math, this clockworks* .

Maybe , the man of artful language and a strong soul, knowing he will get nothing but resistance from his audience, *maybe* , he says, *maybe mankind is just like that forest fire, and putting out all these little fires in the hearts of man may seem to keep order, seem to protect us all from the wildfires of man's passions, but all it's doing is eliminating natural borders between men, breathing space, and allowing the kindling, the underbrush, the fuel of weak beings that link tree to tree, man to man to man from one coastline to the next, allowing it to build up and offer itself up to a long delayed but catastrophic fire now imbued with the power to burn a whole country, a whole civilization, a whole species to the*

ground .

The pragmatic man can dismiss the Artist because the Artist doesn't have the mathematics to buttress his metaphor. The artist here-to-fore lacked the data, the science, the *reasoned* argument to make his artful -and thus True- case to the pragmatic man in the language, the modern language, that he could understand.

But I have that math; and the numbers show that mankind is a fractal phenomenon just like earthquakes and avalanches and forest fires; mankind is in *self-organized criticality; mankind is a forest fire and avalanche on the brink.* Bu the pragmatic man won't believe it even when the mathematician agrees with the artist.

Why not? He's pragmatic after all; he's the pragmatic man! Ah, but remember, the average man, the pragmatic man, is weak and cannot handle such resistance. He is pragmatic precisely because he is weak; if he were strong he could handle art. He could peer into the dark forest of the unknown. No, he ignores art precisely because he is frightened of Truth; it has nothing to do with his right-reason; his rationality, his pragmatism. He is scared. So, he will ignore the math and science too; when it aligns with the art and the artist both.

He only allows in enough reality, enough truth as to effect his ability to manage his little world. He only need just enough information to get paid and laid. He need only a simple map of the terrain. He has no need of larger truths. *What in the world would he do with them* ? he asks. And he's not wrong. What would he do -*this landlubber* standing upon the shore- with the knowledge that gives the Strong-Man, the Artist, the Mariner, the ballast that *the sailor* needs to drive his prow through the buoyant & sinking storm of the seas ?

Nietzsche , in a magnanimous mood, in a statement often overlooked by his detractors, openly questioned the result if the average man, the innately weak man, was subjected to a total tyranny of the exceptional; what if "*the strong were masters in all respects, even in valuing* ?" he asks and then adds, "*should we really like a world in which the whole influence of the weak was lacking* ?"

No, no because there is a useful *Tao* of weak vs. strong. For there to even be the exceptional the unexceptional must exists; and be *allowed* to exist. But the ancient, historical tyranny of the strong over the weak has given way -in the modern era- to the injustice of the multitudes of mediocre over the exceptional now. The pendulum has swung too far toward the democratic ideal, the *rotam* , the counterpoise has given power -by sheer weight and volume and inertia- to the pragmatic and honorless men -and their soulless womenfolk- over the exceptional, coruscating, and incomprehensibly strong; those who lack only in

number and social-position in this modern democratic world.

Three weak beta chimps can overtake one magnificent alpha chimp. The *Apollonian Greeks* could bribe and gossip and cheat their way over the innately regal *Spartans* .

This crime has never ceased; the modern weak have prevented the strong from even moving roots below; boughs above so overcrowded in the overgrown forest of man. Each weak man is now endless fuel for the arson that must -the power law will not be flouted- eventually envelop the forest of mankind. Each strong man that at one time was able to dominate his *milieu* enough to give space, create boundaries between -and declare edges to- the forest of man, *lebensraum* to prevent conflagrations that would burn from one end of a continent to another, these men are now crammed in with the herd. They are forced to get along with the herd. They are prevented from doing their job: *clearing the forest of dead wood.*

Can you read the mathematic notations here? Can you see the forest for the trees?

The pragmatic man can eschew this information and spend his days making money and ingratiating himself with the herd; but the exceptional man, the artist, must escape from this modern, democratic, ideal. The pragmatic man can afford to ignore the truth -for now- but the artist must have it and cannot be prevented from it. He will have it like the pragmatic man will have his gruel. The artist must have *meaning* ; his life must *mean* something, or he'd rather *die* ; and if he is a unique, strong, noble artist he may -in fact- rather *kill* .

However, the artist must admit that his art is useless to the mediocre, the pragmatic; the great mass of men. He cannot expect or hope or desire to reach the *public* . The artist must only create for himself and his peers; on the whole no more than 1% of mankind, and truly even less than that. He cannot demand more of men, he cannot demand that average men become tougher, more honest or noble or heroic any more than he can demand a woman or child hold 200lbs above their heads.

But for his true peers, the artist must speak honestly and instinctively and nobly; this is how he creates and confers meaning. He cannot tailor his words and images and sounds for the dullards and *bourgeois* simpletons as if he has any chance of reaching them.

Melville -The Author- was called *crazy* ; Moby Dick was hated by all the moral men of his day. And even though lauded today it is gilded only to the extent to

which is it misunderstood!

William Blake too was ignored and ridiculed in equal proportion by the denizens of the literary classes of his time. Today he is allowed to be great in the estimation of mediocre intellectuals precisely to the extent that he is dead and packed away. I could give a thousand examples from *Socrates* to *Szukalski* who had the bad taste to take the Truth seriously among the majority who lied in between their lies just to save time; and time is money, is it not to pragmatic man?

Life artists like Lenny Bruce read whole transcripts of his court proceedings to the audience. Johnny Rotten said, to the horror of the liberals and the sickly who posed as *artists* of their day, "*well, the working class like The President so that's good enough for me* ." And for their heterodox utterances they were ignored, shunned or arrested, the closer they got to the truth. The public was -and is- like a masochistic home owner with too much *fear* to alert the police to an intruder to their home, much less lock & load that weapon themselves. The public first ignores what it will soon learn to lament, then hate, and in 1,000 years, say that they knew it was true all along.

And any true Artist of today -or forever- will necessarily be labeled insane or immoral or incomprehensible to the tastes of all *good folk* .

The liberal, do-gooder, tolerant, wet-with-sympathy, moo-cows outnumber the genuine and noble and exceptional by 100,000,000 to one. And they mistake their numbers for their value; and since we -as artists- cannot reach them even with logic or math or metaphor; since they have no use for the truth, let me tell you a story, a true story, of a man, of a genome, and an artist who decided quite by instinct, by trial-and-error, to even the score in more ways than one. Let me unfurl my *feuilleton* for you, both for you the exceptional and the mediocre; as long as you mediocre-types can keep up and keep quiet.

I had unfettered access to this man's every move and shadow, every conversation and thought, my panoptic eye was on him for each hour of the day and he knew it and welcomed it and knew I'd give him an honest rendering.

It's a story of a *revaluation* of all values to use *Nietzsche's le mot juste;* or perhaps it's a *revanchist* restoration of the most ancient of values. But, for certain, it's a story of when those few in number but *with a globular brain and a ponderous heart* decided to change the equation in their own favor; to equalize each side as is -they say- demanded by the rules of the cosmos; and it's a tale that shows how the mediocre people behave, act -or fail to act- when they have to stand on their own for once; without the crowded cushion of the herd to keep

them upright. It’s a story of the individual and the group and which is which and who is who.

So, you may wonder how I could know all the details of *tableaux* and *au combat* , of what was said and thought and felt, how the history of so many people could be re-counted with such detail and precision. I will say again, I had unfettered access to the brain of a man who lived a capacious and variegated life; a thousand lives stuffed into one lifetime and one genome.

He let me in; I didn’t have to pry or trick or bully or force or deceive; all I had to do was offer one thing and ask one thing more. I merely had to treat him with the respect you people might have shown a beast you had been charged with assuaging as it lay supine, pregnant maybe with cub or felled with illness, and you knew that this beast was dangerous and powerful, but you loved it anyway. You loved it not in spite of latent danger, but because of that. You can imagine such a creature, yes? As long as it is not a man, but some feral beast of the forest you allow to be wild still, yes? You people still like bears, wolves, hawks, lions, right? Some of you like the asp even, I imagine.

You might too have sat up with it, cared for it, and listened as its feral *bravura* -unconcerned as it would be with your ersatz notions on law and order- breathed into the world; maybe you heard its *raison d’être* run through its every hair and along the entire surface of the hide and deep into its bones and basal ganglia. Ah, we rapt listeners sat up nights and succored it as it lay sedated and vitiated by pain and labor, labored breathing and its predatory instincts off-line temporarily as its body focused on gestation or healing of some kind.

We both might have tentatively caressed its pelt, pulled its lips back to reveal those 4 or 5-inch canines, those black gums; maybe you placed your small hand on top of its large paw as if trying to fill a print in the mud or the snow; the imprint, the mesmerizing evidence of some beast that came before -and likely after- you in evolution; you and I both marveling at the size and weight of this beast’s latent *manu duri* .

You, possibly, lowered your head with its hairless, modern, human ear and placed it upon this beast’s *pantheris* , follicled, forested chest and felt the merciless explosions of tectonic heart under the surface through your bare, neotenous cheek and jaw as it lay on this ancient and capacious chest of a 500-pound *Tigris* -or *Ursus* maybe- who knows? The specific beast is not what matters to my aim here; I am speaking just of your natural awe and love for wildness in nature, yes?

The sound you hear comes second -it having been raised to the surface by that

middle-earth magnet of Heart forcing off sound, as exhaust, as it first attracts and claws and unflinchingly mauls its own blood into its cardiac maw of valves- and the sound, well, it is more than a thump or a thud, much more than a beat beneath.

Your ears hear a sonorous sound pulled apart by your brain, unwoven like Newton's rainbow, you hear the expulsion of blood through the arterial valves and the cavitation of vascular intakes like vineyard gravel being forced into a hopper making fine sand from this rock; you hear a crescendo of a rhythm within a rhythm -a *mise-an-abyme* of natural effort- of unconscious yet constituent work done by the old brain, the cerebellum, the bellicose, relentless part of the beast's brain that electrifies and tasks this mass of heart-motor to perform no matter what else happens inside or out; to beat and flex and squeeze its sanguinary fist and unfurl and clinch and accelerate and decelerate over a billion times before it gives out.

The heart is ancient and anciently ruled.

And this trial & error and long-tested heart-core, you feel beyond your young cheek and face, you feel it burrowing deeper into your chest and gut, your own small heart and in the enteric neurons of your now roiling salt-water sea of a belly; you feel it upon and beneath the surface of whatever it is that registers sound in your neo-cortex, down into your limbic region and *a little lower layer* , a little deeper down into your brainstem itself; your own body begins to pulse in sympathy, parasympathetically with this beast as its form, its soul now holds you in its ancient and atavistic and unapologetic -yet open palm- paw; open like the door left by the Inquisitor.

You realize, not intellectually, but viscerally, metaphorically -and thus Truthfully- with those enteric gut-brain neurons, with your own heart and your own balls, that this beast's nobility lies in its violence and power and murderous malice, that its regal virtue is its unthinking allegiance to its own *will* and dominance and that it wears its crown with taut but unstrained neck muscles, that it holds it scepter without ambivalence, that it takes *Rome as an osprey takes a fish, by sovereignty of nature…*

Well, dear reader, dear *bruder,* you had just such a beast supine under your ear for years and yet you never bothered to listen to such subterranean proof-of-life; the orchestral thunder that rolled off the shore-*fires of Orc, as the angels rose* from the soil of the greatest country, land, forest, man ever built, and bowed to; the greatest tragedy it ever allowed.

You had the thousand hearts of a thousand-thousand men of exceptional

character and artistic *grandeur* , those very and varied few with rare earth mettle who combined bodily strength and stature and *mien* and countenance alongside a diesel power of Heart and Brain, 1,000 foot-pounds of torque of *Will* ; men who had conscience, code, a fully operational limbic system and pre-frontal cortex, they had heart; *they stood for the Heart!*

They were magnanimous and lofty and felt loyal to those under their charge, they gave freely so much of what they engendered and produced and fashioned, that their excess, their run-off, a sluiceway of luxury of Love and Affection and Loyalty and they plotted star-maps of meaning and laid them out for you to follow them into the Chaos of Self, Culture and Nature, so that Order might be retrieved and brought back to the tribe.

The glow, the mere albedo they threw off had more *lux* than the direct light of all you lesser, younger stars; and yet you used that light to see fit to betray them.

You pulled their generous gauze of spirit apart into gossamer threads you then wove on your loom to contrive opaque sheet between them and you, between their heart and yours, their mind and yours. You sought to cover them up and shroud them; you asked them to lie still to still lie; and you surrounded them with the priests and priestesses of the congenitally mean; the low; the endogenously middlebrow. You told them to *sit down and shut up* and that they were no longer needed; that men, *real Men, were no longer needed* , you said.

You enjoined Men, these feral Beasts, you upbraided them and bullied them and said politely sometimes, but said every time, bloodlessly, with no heart, you said, *fuck off* .

You spoke with disrespect to the direct descendants of the *Spartan Greek* and *Gaulic, Germanic,* and Great men of *Occidental Culture;* the scions of the *Highlanders* beyond the *Hadrian Wall* that invented logic as controlled chaos, a rejoinder to the tyrannical order of corrupt precedent and contrivances of their English foils; *Scots* who were banished not merely to *Australia* as is often admitted to, but to *New Zealand* and here to *America* as commutation of their sentence for uprising and rebellion in 1745 e.v.

They were called, the ‘*45ers* , and *Jacobites* and they had refused to submit to a civil rule; they had only their land along the *Ben Nevis* and their Claymores, but they rightly viewed themselves as *Rex-Mundi* , as regal and untouchable by laws or men. Why? How? Because their lives had meaning, and they felt rich with it. They were rich, with it. *These men were kings* .

And these men were shipped off to the feral lands of the colonies to clear a

swath for pragmatic men and to thus allow for the expansion of civilized, discursive, lying and polite corruption on the Isle. And when they arrived among the aboriginals or the *Maori* , or between and betwixt the American *northern* colonist and *Comanche,* they vowed to be shipped no more; that the new land and the new men would deal with them as they were; that they'd only be shipped off to heaven if need be -but nowhere else- they'd not be shipped off so that lesser men could do mere *business* at the expense of honor.

Thousands of years before, *Herodotus* relates a story of The Persian King, who when speaking of the *Apollonian Greeks* -who he considered effeminate and overly pragmatic- he said, "*I will never submit to men who set up places in the center of the city in which to lie one another.* "

However, he was -in truth- unknowingly speaking to the *Lacedaemonian* , the *Spartans* who were combing their black hair & beards in preparation for noble battle; he had no idea that the *Apollonian Greeks* , that he knew of, were only, merely, one kind of *Greek* . He did not know that the other kind of *Greek* shared the martial aspect of *Persians* of that time and *milieu* . *Xerxes* didn't know the *Spartans* had honor -and thus meaning- not mere commerce -like the *Attic Greeks* - as their *way of life.*

You see, I've traced the human genome along each high bough and deep root tendril of time and space. I know from whence you all come. I know which of you have four or more percentage of Neanderthal DNA, which of you share a gene carried on the Y gamete of *Genghis Kahn* , which of you have unalloyed chromosomes from the Northern, Afric or Asiatic lines. I know which of you have genes for high IQ and high testosterone, high limbic function along in-group/out-group markers, which of you have genes for pre-bicameral breakdown that lend themselves to brain structures that hear voices and feel the presence of the gods; and I know which of you are as Pascal said, "*made such that they cannot believe* ."

I can read the genome of each man I meet as quickly as you can size up their hair color or height as you shake their hand. I can tell instantly who I am dealing with at the genomic level and can assure you that among the great mass of men, the *hoi polloi* , there are genetically exceptional men with genomes, codes, who are like the secreted, silently kept *tomes* -transcribed by walled monks no doubt- penned by *Lucretius* and *Caesar* and *the Bard* . I can see their genes, as relics, vestigial narrative organs that contain the germ, like the *Elgin Marbles* , the *Parthenon Marbles* finally -in 2025e.v.- returned to the region from which they had been removed.

I see genes robust and among the surface dust of living man's cavernous and carved and weathered corpus, not dissimilar to the artifacts of the *Mongolian Steppe* , the mare bones and bow strings preserved in the arid desert for centuries some -much of them- still below the surface; and some in the museums of the Western powers.

I see atavistic genomes spinning like pulsar stars inside modern men, beneath the stolid surface of their skin, not unlike the chalk cellared, high-shouldered ullage of 19th century vintages of *Château Lafite Rothchild* or the noble rot of the *Sauternes Château d'Yquem* ; like one of the original printings of *The Whale* - from 1851 e.v.- that sits today in a glass case, high in the Colorado mountains at 8,760 feet, in its original binding, leafed with the slight patina of brown and yellow foxing, with a fading, almost translucent inscription in pre-nuclear ink. That ink reveals it was one of the copies The Author himself kept first in Pittsfield and then in New York City, USA.

Like all these things held *in situ* , in preserve, in reverence, there is the museumed, cherished, insular -and hidden from humidity and decay and the touch of the unwashed masses- blueprint of *grandeur* inside the sepulchral bodies of Great Men; the ancient DNA bequeathed to us from the creative chaos of Mother Nature and wrought and disciplined, and handed down, by Father Culture himself.

DNA -I see- carried through men of the Asiatic, the Sumerian, Greco-Roman and the Northern European lines, from *Spartan* Kings to *Genghis Kahn* to *Alexander* and *Caesar* and up the Greek Swerve to the Giant *Gaulics* and the massive Odinic Nordics tall, muscular and filled with poetry brilliant and dangerous and meant to summon the gods. Chromosomes, I ferret out, buried like treasure along a flee trail as the mongrel hordes overwhelmed better men by sheer numbers alone; the same way millions of heartless parasites will subsume a great lion; the way bad and banal ideas subsume genius 99% of the time.

I dig at what was buried in the frozen crust of upper *Scotland* in the DNA of its *Highlanders* , entombed in the *Magnus* magma of our -of your- *Scandinavian* cousins, hidden from view and by vow in *the borne, sworn, jealous gods of solitude* scattered about on ships sailing west; seeds to be sewn in the new fecundity of *Vinland* and the *antipodes* where this Alpha Male DNA would draw succor and sagacity from the southern climes and push further west to the high-country of the continental divide.

I know you all. And I can tell you that it's as true of men as it is with each bottle of a back vintage of a *Bordeaux grand cru* or a *Burgundy* like DRC: that with

each one that gets opened and enjoyed, each remaining bottle of that vintage - maybe only a thousand cases were ever produced, or a mere hundred in *Burgundy* - with each loss, each death, each remaining man becomes that much more valuable.

Just as that is true, as the grand mass of mediocre men, with diluted and alloyed DNA, continue to breed at rates like bacterial colonies or mosquitos, and as the old school alpha males and their reverent vessels of wives die off or refuse -or fail- to breed, the new generation of scion that carry this rare genetic purity become all that much more invaluable precisely due to their rarity. They are like seedbanks from which one could re-populate the world in the event of a cataclysm; a tectonic shift; a fire among the forests.

And what could be more cataclysmic than this infestation of mongrel hordes from the mediocre races; what is more suffocating than the inbreeding between higher and lower orders of men; what could burn all Greatness down faster than this *mésalliance* between pragmatic, artless men and the daughters of the *Nephilim* , the ancient gods?

Democracy of breeding first -the usurpation of the alpha male in majority offspring production- and second, the forced egalitarianism of the substandard populations produced from this anarchic breeding model, have both conspired to produce a highly wealthy and medically & technologically advanced, but morally backwards culture and ignoble post-genetic environment. This is Patient Zero; First Cause. But we must be thorough.

A *Spartan* or austere *Norse* culture likely could not have produced these advancements so quickly -or maybe at all- due to the innate primacy placed on honor and dignity by their martial *mores* . The neutering of the male into an efficient and intelligent -but ball-less- beta male has been the accident of nature and the tyranny of culture that gave us the technological and commercial platform to produce the next phase. It took a greedy, meaningless commitment to commerce to produce the capital necessary to build modernity. We should not pretend that our currently disgusting but highly useful culture has no value; as *Nietzsche* said, we should not desire that exceptional men rule tyrannically over even the ranking “*of values.* ”

No, that’s not what is being asserted, the fettering beta male and the taxing alpha female have a right to exist; they deserve dignity and a place within the garden’s wall. But they must exist proportionally and alongside the alpha male; he will no longer be pushed out to the periphery or be given similar rations, on parity with those with congenitally smaller appetites; he will no longer be fed the same

caloric mean even though he has larger muscles and brain and heart to feed. No, the answer is, *No* , to that.

But because sexual selection is the domain -the wheelhouse- of the now civilized female, consequently, the still uncivilized alpha male has had a breeding problem for many, many centuries.

The amount of exceptional genetic material itself is dwindling. And further, that material, once instantiated in a human baby boy, is less and less likely to get the martial and *noblesse oblige* education he once would have received at the hand of the *Mongolian Rex* or the *Viking chieftai n* . We have twin pressures of the genetic and the post-genetic squeezing our alpha species toward extinction and if anyone is going to save it then it will require a similarly two-pronged approach.

One may ask, without embarrassment, how this kind of project could possibly be effected, made manifest, inside post-modern, first-world culture, within an emasculating machine as large and powerful as it is; with as much inertia as it currently has?

And one may also ask, *hey, didn't you say something about some men being able to perceive the truth better than others; and how because we're a eusocial species there isn't always a benefit to this that is easily conferred or noticed* ?

Ah, I'm surprised you remembered that. Well, this is true, the ability of an individual -of a eusocial species- to discern reality better than the norm, to be able to tell the truth slightly more than the average fella, has a fatal flaw. One study done -and I've collated the meta-data myself and found similar results- shows that average men can only be effectively led by someone with *no more* than an IQ 1.2 standard deviations from the mean. That is to say, the best leaders have a 120-125 IQ; as the mean is always 100. A leader with an IQ higher than that -above the cognition of those under his command- actually sees his leadership effectiveness drop off precipitously.

Once a man is at three and four standard deviations from the mean -a 145-160 on the *Wechsler* scale which is represented by about 1% of the population- he is so intelligent, so sagacious, so able to discern the truth that he appears to himself as unjustly burdened by how stupid everyone is -and so he tends to behave peevishly, poorly- and secondly, he appears to others -due to this intelligence- as untrustworthy and dangerous. In effect, at this level of intelligence one becomes a cranky -and in the public's timid eyes- an *evil* , genius. Neither side -neither leader nor the led- is happy with this vast lacuna between them.

And, if you are a great man, a man who has this cognitive ability -marked by

pattern recognition- married to a bodily courage -brought about by size and strength and a *devil-may-care desperado kind of character*- you will find yourself saying out loud all the things best kept to oneself inside a social dynamic. Great men tend to say aloud what is unpopular to the crowd.

The internal pressure toward *meaning* , a pressure to be authentic and real, fills your sails with a natural wind and it will -at speeds unknown in the age-of-sail- overwhelm and outvote any internal anchor, any latent concern for the dangers of introducing these taboos of meaning into one's *tableau* .

Frankly, you'll tell the truth regardless of *homme moyen's* ability to understand it, appreciate it, tolerate it, or shoulder it.

You will crush their mind and spirit with truths you perceive as mundane; and your grand truths will confound them so that they nearly go mad. And they'll never stand for it. They will plot -in their beta male and alpha female manner- against you; surreptitiously and without honor; gregariously and without shame. They'll organize a *putsch* with a toothy grin; a *coup* with a baboon smile.

Anyone who tells you that telling the world how you truly feel will win you friends is not merely wrong, they are your enemy.

No, your commitment to honesty is a map to ruin; a path to exile. Ask *Coriolanus* , ask our first parents in the Garden; ask all the archetypes of the Hero: His courage leads first to exile and death; only later is he allowed to rise. Maybe that rise is allowed like it was for The Author, nearly a hundred years after his magnum, pelagic, tragic opus of mad woe and true genius; maybe it's just 17 years like for cicada buried by Nature and God; maybe it's three days after lone Jesus is buried by crowded Rome. But Great men will be buried by the horde. It's axiomatic; and thus, you've been warned.

This is why I said that an increase in reality perception ability was no guarantee of success inside a eusocial species. The smartest shark or wolf has an axiomatic advantage. But, a much, much smarter human? Any advantage is not obvious. The first thing he notices is how full-of-shit everyone is; at first himself very much included. The second felt thing is that he might explode if he doesn't reveal his new secret to everyone. Man is eusocial, he wants to spread the things he knows to be true.

You must ask, *but if he was so smart, he'd know not to tell the truth, right* ? Ah, but this is the most salient point that the pragmatic man forgets every time: you cowards value *survival and commerce* above all; so, anything that puts those values in jeopardy is by definition: *stupid* , yes?

Nietzsche also said that just because something is unintelligible doesn't make it unintelligent.

See, what if the uber-smart man realizes that all that *survival-and-money* shit is hollow and empty and not what life is about at all; what if he figured out that a real life, a true life, a meaningful life, a grand life is one marked by courage and truth and honor and *that* is the kind of life he wants to live even if it impoverishes or kills him; even -especially- if it kills *you;* you the pragmatic man?

What then pragmatic man? What if you engender the ire of this kind of man? How smart was that of *you* ? What if your fortune, your precious money and longevity were taken from you by a man who did it purely to prove his point? What if your phony and cloying and gregarious affect, your *beau-geste,* your glad-handing and imbricate carapace of lies was ruled offensive and unethical and disgusting to him; the same way his vulgarity and impertinence and atavism was so unseemly to you?

What if he figured out that his vengeance against you and your kind was the whole point to life; his *sapere vivere* ; his *Task* ? What if he felt this so deeply in his DNA that no logic could reach it, no compromise could assuage it, no bullshit could stay his martial hand?

What if he was smart enough to figure out that your pragmatic life was disgusting and ugly and he couldn't stand to look at for one moment longer; that your presence in his field of view was the sty in his eye that he couldn't quite locate until now?

What if he figured out how wrong *you* were, *pragmatic man* ; that your ship was caught in a beam-sea; perpendicular to the waves of history, evolution; and yes, *for now* , he was indeed below you, as you insisted, in the anvil of the sea but he -with the roll of the sine waves of the ocean- was *also* above you, as he declaimed he would someday be? What if he saw the future whilst in the *Mjolnirs* of ecstatic air, the ball-peen of Neptune's corposants and the sledge of the *coup de foudre* of *Thor's Hammer* ? And what if he surmised that the way to prove it was to take everything from you, to remove you like the mote in his own irritated eye; even if to accomplish this he had to remove, too, the whole beam of his own eye? What if it was worth it to him to remove one of his own eyes just to fuck you up?

Anyway, enough of these golden warnings that you don't understand anyway. Didn't I tell you I was going to tell you a story of a man?

-Roman McClay

II. 2014 e.v .

“Daddy, tell us a story!” she said, and Alina nodded her tow-head in sympathetic valence to Sarah’s high-pitched request for a tale; her lips red from the wine and *en bon point* from her own Russo-genetics. Sarah -lithe and blond- danced around eager for his words to lay upon her soul. She loved his words.

He laughed and agreed to weave a myth or two for his girls.

Their dinner was strewn about and bottles of wine were overturned in the sink and the Stargazer Lilies had dropped red stamen and white & pink petals on his grey concrete slab of counter top. The curry powder paint on the walls seemed to breathe as he took another Vicodin and swallowed it with 2 oz of *Leviathan* , a fruit bomb, a ponderous Cab, a table wine from California. The 750ml bottle of *Humana Carne red* lay among the fallen flower detritus; he stared at its label and thought back to dinner and how they had all feasted in reverie as celebration to a $50,000 cash payday; *which was large even for him* , he mused.

The music played over the integrated speakers -he hated clutter- and Moby sang of the *Violent Bearing it Away* .

“Ok, fuck these dishes, let’s go to bed,” he said as they waited for his decision, and once they had it they screamed and giggled and ran about like feral cats. He shook his head and tried to cobble together each move in life that had brought him to this spot; but it was too variegated, *and he had been going too fast to take notes* , he thought. This is just where he was, and now he ought to, he thought, *tell his girls a bedtime story for Christ-fucking-sake.*

He was 20 years their senior and they were methamphetamine addicts and sexual deviants and yet they loved the power of story like anyone else; they jumped in their shared bed, hemmed in between *merlot* walls among the black and white paintings he had done of *Blake* and *Burroughs* and *the Bard* . They waited in silence now, *as daddy was in charge* , they thought, and anything said now would only ruin what was to come. He followed them into the bedroom.

“Ok, did I ever tell you about the oil field?” he asked, and they grinned, and he now saw that they had glitter -and a little bit of food- on their epicene faces. They loved the way he talked about *work* , it was like *war* to him; and they saw his war-stories as grand; saw it all as love, and poetry and ancient masculinity on display. He was twice not just their age but their size.

They passed the pipe and held their knees; they blew smoke into the air above

them. The sheets were black and stained with amorous effluvium from weeks of him wearing our their most soft parts; and they tried to make space for him in the middle of the bed by moving pillows and clearing away his manifold books and papers covered with his long-hand writing in black ink and strange, apocryphal, runes embossed in the margins.

“Jesus,” he said as he spied the sex-stained sheets, “you can make out the face of the Virgin Mary on these things. How much *fucking* do we do; exactly?”

“A lot,” Sarah said and then complained that she was sore. He said, *ok* , *ok* , *ok* , and returned to the start of the story with some mention of some piece of drilling equipment that they didn’t quite understand and some reference to a little town on the western slope of the state. He then asked again if *they had heard this one* ?

“Tell us daddy!” Alina barked in her muscovite voice devoid of any bass at all. She sounded like a kitten taught to talk. He growled like the *last of the grizzlies in settled Missouri* , in response .

“Alright, move over,” he said all-at-once and clambered into bed between them. “Ok, once, in 2007, I was in the *Piceance* , out by Parachute, Colorado.”

“He was married to a Playboy model, oooh ooooh oooooh,” Sarah said, and Alina smiled and coughed as the smoke plumed around her head.

“Angel, who’s telling this lie?” he said, and she pretended to be rebuked and afraid; ducking down and pursing lips and looking side to side as Alina laughed and Lyndon smirked and continued on. “So, anyway, I’m in the *Piceance* ; 45 drill pads, that’s the rig count, each with two, 5-man teams in 12-hour *tours* , rotations that is, and trillions of tons of blubber -of sweet gas and shale- beneath us, ok girls?”

“Ok, dada!” they said in unison.

“And it was dust and trucks and heavy things all around; and men coated in pipe dope and the earth herself; but the high-plains desert had no forgiveness in her at all. It was kill or be killed out there, and this made a man into a beast. And man must *make a beast of himself to get rid of the pain of being a man* . Savvy?”

“Savvy,” Sarah said and nodded as she handed the lighter to Alina; her soft pale breast undergirded by the matte black sheet; the girls had stripped off what little clothes they ever wore by now and their youth was on full, redolent, display. *It was in stark relief,* he thought, *against the words he used to carve desert djinns and daemons into young girls; giving them nightmares on the other side of that un-fissured and denuded and feminine skin.* He knew -he believed- the way he

saw things, the way he spoke, he knew it made them change -somehow- inside. He behaved as if he believed in *majick* no matter what he said about his contempt for religion and God. The smoke rose in relief against all that color in the room; all that dark color as he spoke:

> In, the *Proud Highway* , Hunter talks about how he made a choice to start writing -you know be an artist- right away. He mulled it over; he admitted that one could, instead, choose to live a life first, then become an artist later in life; burnished, turned to bronze in the melting iron of *Corinth* . But he chose first to write.
>
> Anyway, I chose the other way; I got to work and let the art wait until I was something new, something beyond a mere clever wit and sharp mind; a new man, a new beast of some kind.
>
> So, we're on a feral pad outside of *De Beque*, Colorado, way out in the middle of nowhere; with the Colorado river snaking around us; coiled around the pad like each of us, like we're one of her eggs. At any rate, we've been working on this hole; setting surface, just going five or 6,000 feet down, but nothing is working, man. The mudtank's tri-pump is fucked; bent connecting rods and the shaker screens are inert due to a bad motor. Shit, it's non-stop shovel work, 24-hours of shoveling wet mud and cuttings, man. Ok? It's brutal, and it's one of 10 things we *gotta* do and we *gotta* do it for 56 hours straight. Me and Jason normally hand off 12-hour *tours* to each other; I work 12; then him.
>
> But we can't do that because everything that can go wrong with a machine is going wrong and so me and him work in tandem 24-hours a day. And this went on for -like I said- 56 hours. We slept an hour here or there in the truck, and we'd shit in a can here and there and we'd eat here and there. But, dude, it was barbaric.
>
> So, you *gotta* realize this nine-to-five shit is a luxury of the modern age. And it don't apply to most jobs that rough men do. And most modern men and women are insulated from this fact, they are relieved of any demand on them to handle this working-class shit. But just like that guy with an 18-bravo MOS is killing bad guys for you so you ain't got to, well, there is some derrick man racking back drill-pipe so you don't have to either.
>
> The jobs men do -and only *men* can do- are pushed to the periphery both geologically, you know, geographically, but also, mimetically, or psychologically. Nobody even knows we exists out there in the wilderness sinking our harpoons into leviathan to bring back the oil for your lamps.

You just flip a switch and your whole world is illuminated as if it's *magick* .

And we didn't work 5-day weeks; we worked until the hole was done. Just like in nature; you stalk and hunt the boar or the bear until he's dead, skinned and quartered. You don't call time-out on the hunt.

In the oil field we worked, we ran those rigs 24/7 until the hole was drilled, cased and cemented; period. And that demanded 12/12 crews and thus night crews and it required living on location in shipping containers outfitted with make-shift facilities and we didn't leave the pad for weeks, months at a time.

We would be roused from our sleep to help if need be; our 12-hour shifts turned into 16 and 18 and more; and that happened more than once. There was no other life, on location, and yet I never felt more alive.

My partner -and he was my partner, because we relieved one another at 0600 and 1800hrs each day- my partner and I had to count on each other, and we could not jam each other up by fucking things up. Whatever I did impacted him and *mutatis mutandis* .

So out in *De Beque*, we are shoveling shit, fixing worn out tri-pump pistons every four hours and re-fueling and racking back drill-pipe as we invigilate the earth. We are doing this for going into three days straight -with no break- and we just need a few hundred feet more to TD; and our bodies are mangled and sunburnt and stretched to the brink. And I personally felt like I was hallucinating on mushrooms or DMT or something, and when we finally -around noon on that third day- cemented the hole, me and Jason took our first real fucking break in three goddamn -continuous- days.

I remember leaning up against my murdered-out Dodge Cummins diesel; lifted on 37-inch tires; redneck as fuck. And the Company Man, this guy has been off site for 2-weeks, shows up at noon and within 10 minutes, this tiny, crusty, middle-manager asshole saunters up -and he knows nothing of what Hell we just went through- and he tells us to clean some shit up; as if we're goofing off, ya know?

I mean, it was straight out of the *Town-Ho* story man. This Radney fuck is telling this Steelkilt -this Charlemagne son's- this man before you, he's telling me to swab the decks on a ship I've just single-handedly saved from foundering off the Cape of Good-fucking-Hope.

So, my entire soul rebelled, and I felt the Black Sun or Satan himself had insulted me, and I was ready to do great violence on behalf of not just me,

but God himself. This little entropic, *johnny-come-lately* , demon -compressed into the shape of a man- had fucked with the Fates, and I felt my blood boil and my eyes turn into great comets headed for him from the blast of Zeus's own muzzle-loader.

I told that little corporate fuck, that he was -in no uncertain terms- never to speak to me ever again. If he failed -I assured him- I would murder him and his whole sub-standard family and put their sawn-off heads onto pikes along the perimeter of the White House's lawn.

The other roughnecks, the floor hands and my partner Jason had -at this point- seen me come unglued from the tailgate and march toward this fucker; my voice, my words had animated me, I was speaking righteousness into the world. They grabbed me -they knew me- and it took four or five men to impede my progress toward this demonic little imp. I must have looked like all arms and hands and malice; a Medusa of giant asps and murderous, incoherent threats to that Company-Man, as I'm sure he could only see the backs and hardhats and maybe some boots of the half-dozen men between himself and some writing black-clad mud-man, grasping and gasping and lunging and speaking in tongues.

I felt each swollen and taxed and adamantine muscle in my 214-pound body contract and rebel in an attempt to reach out and close around this officious, sawed-off little carpet-bagger from the Dakotas or whatever. He scurried away -of course- and once inside the Tool-Pusher's shack -that's oilfield *argot* for the office- anyway, once inside he calls Curtis to rat me out for *conduct unbecoming* , I guess.

I was told to ship out and never come back; even though I had just spent three days -and taken five years off my life- making sure that hole -*that million dollar hole* - got fucking drilled. But the working man is expendable, no different than the whale men of yore. In an economy -as opposed to a tribe- a man is nothing but calories and a fungible commodity. He ain't no *man* at all. *Homo-Economicus* is all that he is.

And yet, men like my father -Republican faggots who think they are all tough- support America and capitalism as if it is anything other, anything but a soulless and demonic enterprise meant to reduce each of us to our constituent parts.

If Ben Shapiro ever told me to *suck it up* , you know, if he looked at me and said, *well, go to college then if you don't want to work hard jobs* , I'd not even reply to him totally missing the point -the point that he misses is that

even if it ain't me, *some man -some real man- has to do that crushing brutal job out in the wilderness so Ben's narrow ass can talk too fast on TV for a living* . But, I'd not even say that; I'd just punch his face into 666 pieces if that smug cocksucker ever even looked my way.

Anyway, like *Caius Marcius* , I was relieved of command only *after* Rome had been won and as the spoils of this hydrocarbon war were funneled to all the beautiful people. But, I never yet have found one man who gives a shit about my tale of woe. Nobody cares about the price paid for conquest, for Empire, for what the public demands and takes for granted as they mill about in their 5,000 square foot homes with the AC set at 67 degrees.

Isn't this the *Tao of the Bourgeoisie* , the way of the middle-class? These fucks can be lazy, ineffective, disloyal, incompetent, but as long as they don't say *shit* -even with a mouth shoved full of it- then they get to stay at the party indefinitely. Hard work, competent work, honor, manliness, is not valued, only the traits of getting-along are in vogue. *Never raise your voice, never be too visceral* as they say, *eat shit, be mediocre, and obey!* That's the national motto; that's the new American way.

Why the fuck would I want anything to do with that shit? I do not. And I will not. And if I have to pull each thread of this country apart to reveal the fraud at its heart, then -with all my guts- that is what I will do.

I'll never submit to that kind of disgusting conceit; and I'll go to my grave -earlier than most I suspect- standing up for myself and my fellow tribesmen, in fact I suggest they bury me upright.

I told that Company-Man as they barred me from the shack and the pad, that *this little fiefdom was his, sure enough , but the rest of the world was mine, and that if I ever saw him again on the street he'd have problems no phone call or words would solve* .

See, I've pointed guns at men, I've fought with my fists and I've beat people until they went limp. And shit, I've had my ass handed to me too; I've been hit with 2 by 4s and jumped by niggers and consequently I ain't as pretty as I once was. I've made gang bangers scurry back to the car when they -at first- thought they were fighting a pussy white boy like in the movies, and then those wetbacks called the cops to save themselves from me.

That's a true story.

I do not -and I will not- play by society's rules. Because the game is

fucking rigged. And that is that. You can claim American and the West is more fair than any other system or country in the history of man; shit, you can even believe that; *shit, it can even be true* , but for the worker, the working-class alpha male, who has to carry 10 times his own weight on his back and haul dynamite around in his endocrine system, and suffer insults and ignominy from lesser men in positions of arbitrary authority over him, men with no honor at all, well, your stats on wealth and freedom mean *fuck-all* when great men, real men, actual men, are chewed up and spit out by a society that hates them and uses them and breaks them and then throws them away. Fuck your statistics college boys, ok? I live in the real world, not on paper or on a fucking spreadsheet.

Jason and I drove off and a mile or so down the dirt road we saw a cut-out by the river, so we stopped and at the little make-shift pier used by water-trucks to fill up we jumped 15 or 20 feet down into the spring flow of the river.

It was cold and moving fast; so fast that it was a quarter mile or more before we could swim to the bank and get out. We laughed and yelled as the Colorado soaked our clothes all covered in pipe-dope -an intractable copper and black anti-seize compound used on the threads of each pipe- anyway, swaddled in 3-days of detritus, the heaviness of these clothes felt buoyed by the electricity and diamagnetism of the epinephrine and androgens still vibrating inside me from the rush of unconsummated violence. I felt the true joy of ablution in one of America’s great waterways, I felt washed in the *aqua regia* , the blue-blood of the true natural lord of this world.

See, beyond the immediate stimulus of my *environs* , something was happening inside of my body and brain in these arch conditions of man.

I was evolving into a barbarian, a man that felt and thought in a different way. And there is no way to skip ahead to it, no way to read it in a book, no way to test out of and move one-grade ahead. A man must *live* it; he must be broken, beaten, besmirched without his putative country having one feeling of regret for his mistreatment. A man must be attacked and left for dead by the Empire herself before he can rise to be a *more complete beast* .

Once that happens, and it had happened slowly, in punctuated evolutionary moments, but once that happens, speciation occurs. I emerged, *Homo-Barbarianus* . And from that day forward I only got worse; and by worse, I mean better, more complete, more gestalt, more integrated.

I vowed to never let anyone who hadn't worked a 1%er type job -oilfield, drilling and blasting, farm hand, fisherman, et.al.- never let some white-collar fucker, or waiter, or TV shithead, look down on me or tell me the difference between right & wrong ever again.

I remembered sitting up in the derrick as night fell, the winter sky coming early at 1630 hours; hemmed in on all sides by looming, lithic, beige and nearly lifeless mountains -home to black bear and stygian corvids and *bête noires* with exoskeletons around and malice within their hearts- we were all dug into mountains that rose sharply to 11,000 and 12,000 feet, many miles above and outside Parachute and Rifle, Colorado.

I'd sit in the derrick nest high above the pad, and stare at the other gas-wells, the far-off flares of the gas burn-offs in the winter night; evidence -these Eternal Flames- that there were Leviathan down there under our boats.

And after sleeping a few hours, again, the next *tour* , the fires appeared in the early tenebrous morning as I waited for the earth below me to yield to us too. These gas-flames were candles that never extinguished on wicks that never were trimmed; like giant torches outside some ancient walled city, some Persian Death-Cult city that's two-days walk from your perch. It was Biblical, and not the nice-parts; it was *Isaiah* , *First Kings* , and *Revelation* , man.

Those fires burned all night and the wind blew the flames like comet-tails, in total darkness like evidence of slow-moving but incoming incendiaries from the *trebuchet* of one's enemies.

I remembered fist-fights with floorhands, *coon-asses* -that is Louisiana boys, white boys who speak Cajun and throw down- fights with them, the pugilistic, the old-school drillers and mudhands. We fought over insults and work-stoppages and anyone who fucked up the wellbore.

Then we'd cook in huge open pots, on open flames and they'd churn out *etouffe* and *gumbo* for us as we smiled in truncated ways, so the swollen and fissured lips wouldn't rip any further that day.

The outlaw *ethos* was *de rigueur* ; it was men handling shit themselves. This is where men live and work out beyond the State. We didn't call out for pizza, nor for the cops, we handled anything and everything ourselves. We welded our own broken metal, we changed out our own fluids and pistons on the diesels, we cooked our own meals and settled all family

business with harsh words and harsher hands when the words didn’t work. We sewed up our own wounds with sutures we had learned to thread and tie ourselves .

This was how work was accomplished; it was feature not a bug.

And anyone that wanted to eat gumbo or finish a well-bore, that man knew the violence done to produce both confections; he knew the recipe for all. A man in the oil field would no more object to these conditions that a diner in the city would rebuke the knife or the spoon.

I thought of the 5,000 pound *Monels* , huge non-magnetic drill pipe, and how one piece had come crashing down on us from above like God’s judgment one day as we moved from rig-floor to mudtank. There was a crescent shaped dip in the railing around my mudtank that had absorbed the fall of this kind of pipe one other time and the railing -6g steel, square tubing- had in fact saved my life as I was on the bottom catwalk as the *Monel* fell from above. I had personally stick-welded that section of railing a few days earlier, when it needed repair. That was likely the most important weld of my life.

My hand would later seem to always find that dip of *sine-curve* as I made my rounds around the tank. Not unlike the way your tongue will find gaps where a tooth used to be. Mapping the world, updating it, finding clues and writing them down so each day ain’t a goddamn surprise.

I can still conjure up the feeling of Mil-Bar sacks, 100lbs each, carried on my shoulder up these cruel firemen ladders -not stairs, ladders- over and over from endless pallets of 50 bags each; these brown bags of a clay-like material were purely introduced to the tank’s 100 barrels -that’s 4,200 gallons- of non-potable water as *avoirdupois* . As weight.

The whole point of that Mil-Bar was to make water heavy. You think a man doesn’t resent it a bit as he carries 100-pound bags 200 times a day just to make water heavy? I often wondered -at the time- about the necessity of such work.

Giving weight to drilling fluid was increasingly required to push the cuttings up from the burrowing drill head as it jammed its oblique angles further down and into the *Piceance* of Colorado’s western slope.

It was a seemingly meaningless, and tedious, and punitive task that was as weighted down with purpose as I was with the sacks on my traps, and my inability at first to comprehend this was irrelevant to its ultimate meaning.

The job was giving me meaning before I was smart enough to name it. But, soon enough the words would come. Actions first, then feelings; then words.

I learned about compression properties of water versus amalgamated fluids, I learned fluid density, in a manner no classroom could convey when that drilling fluid literally pushed me up a meter off the mud-screens and into the mud-sprayed air when we unexpectedly hit hydrocarbons at a mere 5,000 feet down in the formation.

The drill fluid is pumped through a closed-circuit from the bottom of the 4,200-gallon mudtank, down hole, back up from the bottom of the bored-out hole, maybe four or five thousand feet down, then up through the annulus that surrounds the hole and the drill and into the top of the mud tank over vibrating screen used to clean the fluid of all the shit that you just dug out of the goddamn ground.

It was fast, and voluminous, and the earth's heat was in that return mud, it would reach over 100 degrees in temperature and it came back with a vengeance and speed .

I had just climbed down from the crow's nest after locking in another 3,000 pound joint in the *kelly* for the driller and was now standing in front of and scraping those screens with a square shovel watching thousands of gallons of chunky fluid flood on top of the 6-parallel screens; it was a total of 36-feet long, the tank was the size and shape of a small -maybe female- Sperm Whale.

At any rate, I am making sure these cuttings are flowing off the edge into the reserve pit and clean drill fluid is returning to the tank when I notice bubbles in the soup. Now, I'd never seen bubbles in drilling fluid before, so I had to think about what that might mean.

As my mind deliberated over what it meant I heard the thumping of cavitation in one or more of the huge 24" in-line pumps below me that sounded like Satan banging on the mantle of earth that God, in a fit of pique, had sealed over him all those millennia ago. It was loud, and mean, and it did not sound like something that would just go away on its own. The sound had *intent* according to my auditory cortex and it had *malice* according to my lower layers down.

I turned 180 degrees to the rear -unlinked to the location of the sound- I turned out of ontological fear for my soul in that moment. This atheist had

a moment of doubt in my doubt, in my denials of that which was beyond the rational and sane. I spun around to meet some imp or demon I knew -I just knew- was coming up out of that goddamn hole we were drilling. *We were unleashing forces we knew nothing about* , I said it and I knew it in my soul.

What my soul knew my ears had not yet heard; it was more than that pump cavitation that was banging beneath me now. The entire 100-foot tall and 100-ton sprawl of our drill-rig was vibrating and like a tuning fork conducting that diabolical rapping at the earth's cellar door; and it was doing this as the string section of this black aria -the 1,700 horsepower diesel engines- were screaming at 3,000 rpms. It was now a roar; a convergence of sound waves of ontological wrath.

You don't know fear until the earth itself is pissed off at you; you don't know -not until then- what our ancestors felt every day as everything East of Eden tried to kill them for the last one billion years.

Shit, I believed in God then, not in my neo-cortex; but in my balls.

And I hadn't even yet noticed that the gas-imbued fluid -for that is what those bubbles meant- that gas-imbued fluid was charging and belching out of the 10" return valve in bursts of unlit -but highly combustible- liquid now.

I just stared at the rig for a few moments -for how long I have no recall- but I stared and let that noise and swaying of the derrick hypnotize me for elongated seconds, vertical seconds that the monks call *Shangwu* and *Xiawu* : the past above you, and the future below.

The volatile drilling fluid was atomizing and heating up behind me and bursting out of the valve. The gas was now backing up into the mud-tank itself so that a nimbus of vapor and a cataract of rain comprised of that fluid had begun to cover -like its own weather system- the upper deck and myself as I stood there with my eyes finally un-holstered from that drill rig; my eyes now swinging around wildly searching for movement like the predatory eyes of the wolf .

I swiveled my head and finally saw those roustabouts and floor hands fleeing their stations across the pad toward the Tool-Pusher's shack. These, my shipmates, had left the drill running and abandoned their posts.

Anger is a gift. Anyone who says otherwise is an unappreciative, spoiled brat. Nature gave us anger and hatred as our port-side and starboard long-

guns when caught between the nihilism of unfettered pirates and the tyranny of one of Her Majesty's Ship-of-the-Line.

The only people who turn their noses up to the need for such weapons are those who unthinkingly take delivery of their sundries and fuels and *ambergris* from our battered ships whilst they are in harbor and they themselves never leave the safety of shore. The *bourgeoisie* can be polite, they have no need of violence as they have other men -*rough men*, as Orwell put it- do violence for them.

I needed those floor-hands and that goddamn driller to shut off that drill before I could cut power to my circulation pumps or their own drilling pumps would lock all that NatGas in between the well-head and my mud tanks; and the dry sucking would cause the gas to expand and heat up even more. If I unilaterally shut off my own pumps I'd be building a 4,200-gallon bomb beneath me, and that line between me and the drill *be the fuse. D* espite my eschatological impulses, I said, *no, fuck no* , to that. I was in search of a less dangerous solution, *I'd blow it all to hell as a last resort*, I said.

I couldn't tell you -then or now- the flash point of natural gas, but I knew enough not to heat it up one degree more than ambient temperature required.

And there they ran leaving that drill head and their pumps and those huge angry diesels running at full fucking bore while my thousands of gallons of drill fluid & gas were erupting in as-of-yet incombustible boils and *Perseid* meteors and heavy and greasy rain. I was as mad as a hornet and I hadn't even as-of-yet seen how covered I now was in a skimcoat of brown and flammable liquid.

I spun like a mud-wasp as my anger turned to triage and I threw scrap pieces of plywood onto the shaker-screen and began loading bags of *Mil-Bar* on top of it to stop these stochastic eruptions of fluid that were emitting from the top of the tank every few -irregular- seconds.

I'm sure you've seen volcanic eruptions, that is the model you should use for this kind of natural phenomenon. Huge, seemingly idiopathic bursts of dangerous fluid with a viscosity that made it heavy and pushy and reminded me of the Heavy Hands of my *Sifu* , my Argentine, *Kun Tao* teacher, and master of *Indonesian-silat de-Thouars* .

The discharges were well over 3-meters into the air now, and covering

everything in this slick, heavy, flammable fluid and starting to break the screens and bend the thinner gauge steel around the frames and it was obviously getting worse, picking up more and more gas; a *Deus Ex-Machina* from below.

Even four bags -so 400 pounds- into my stop-gap measure strategy, the weighted plywood still rode up on top of these geysers every time it breached as if the board and bags were merely a thin sheet of paper with the words, *heavy bags* , written upon it in post-nuclear ink .

It heaved and pitched and rolled under that volatile mix and now looked like a weapon in the hands of the mud-wraith itself; a mace chain and I was right there like *Saint Michael* watching it flail.

And I don't even know what I cared about at this point other than to prove to those AWOL floor-hands that their cowardice wouldn't infect me at all.

I jumped on top of that board and those bags to add my 214 additional-pounds-of-doom on top of that unthinking, unfeeling, Cetacean blow-hole; but the tank blew -spouted- again and the whole horizontal axis lifted me and my board and my bags a meter up in the air as if I had merely added my notarized signature to the unenforceable plywood document from before.

My weight and all its hostility added no resistance to the *Will-to-Power* of these turbid plumes from the Earth.

I rode that fluid breaching the surface of the tank like I was *Fedallah* tied to its flank; I rode it until I slipped off and slid into the shaker one-over and broke through the screen as it shook me like some vibrating motel bed. And after I saw the futility of trying to tame the chimera of Industry & Nature I let the mud puke and spit and convulse and deplete the tank's reserves and I just walked down to the rig platform as it swayed and pitched like a ship going down under the Kraken itself. I hit the kill switch with my forearm and dropped down onto one penitent knee.

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"One of the phenomena that always vexed me," he pulled on his beard shaping it into a black point, "was that revenge was never satisfied -never satisfying- unless the motherfucker I was dispatching *knew* he was beaten.

"And frankly, murder has a very short half-life: they know you beat them for a few seconds maybe once the knife is in them or the gun pulled; but they

probably think they'll survive right up until the point that they black out. So, they of course never wake up, but they don't know that. They really don't *know* you've beat them. This attenuates the effectiveness for me anyway."

He sat down on the fallen tree, a *Pinon* pine about two feet in diameter and 40-feet long that lay sideways along the ridge to his property and overlooked a massive verdant valley below. He pulled a cigar case from his jacket pocket and removed a *cigarillo* from it and bit its end off. He dry-spit the leaf wrapper from his mouth and then lit it.

"Of course, *Tertullian* said that the -that *one* of the- pleasures of heaven was looking over the edge," he stuck his large right arm out and pointed south over that valley they looked out over, "and witnessing the writhing, the tortures of the damned in Hell."

He dipped his head a bit to the side as a way to denote ambivalence or lack of satisfaction in this conceit. He drew smoke through the *cigarillo* and they sat in silence. The common corvids that nested in the *Junipers* and *Aspen* around them; three, then four, flew by silently, their blackness offering a brilliancy all its own against the *ambergris* of the winter sky.

"I'm what Pascal called, *the man so made that he cannot believe* ," he said and let the silence return, as the crows dropped down in the valley by tucking one wing in and letting the buoyant thermal veins of air push the remaining wing up, effecting a barrel roll down 500-feet until the blackbird unfurled that tucked wing and stabilized again.

"You see that?" he pointed at the falling birds with the brown cigar in between his index and middle finger, the tattoo on his right hand, black and cogged, hung out in the air along with his directional thrust, "they barrel roll, just like when we skydive and need to get off our backs; pull one arm in and let the air push us back over."

Everyone nodded and Jack Two smiled as they looked in the direction of his outstretched hand and fingers; Jack Four looked instead at the man. Then two of his Jacks, began their patrol, walking away from him, and thus pushed the perimeter out another 20 meters to the west and east. The third Jack began to orbit the compound of shipping containers converted into living quarters. His main Jack, Jack One, stood -stayed- three meters to his leeboard side.

"I used to have a dim view of ravens; took Shakespeare at his word when he placed them beneath the Eagle," he withdrew the arm, stuck the tobacco in between his brilliant white teeth -the only thing on him not scarred or fissured or

weathered or limping- and talked whilst holding it there with his dentine; rifling through his pockets with both hands in search of a small bottle of prescription narcotics.

"*What's next, the crows to peck the eagles* ?" his lieutenant, Jack One, quoted the salient line from *Coriolanus* .

"Yeah," he turned back from the edge and nodded approvingly at the reference and removed the cigar long enough to throw a 10mg hydrocodone into his maw.

"But those goddamn corvids are smart, man," Blax said. "Much smarter that the bard knew or that we even knew until pretty recently. They do these 3-stage tasks to retrieve food that require understanding how each independent task will lead to the next; it's quite something; most animals can't do that; most can only use a tool in one-step; to you know, like use a stick to push a lever that opens a door to a favorite food."

"Most *humans* can only figure out one-step problems," Jack One said without a grin.

"It's really fascinating to see them figure out each totally independent step as if the whole, goddamn, gestalt phenomenon is obvious to them the whole time," Blax looked out over the valley, and saw nothing man-made; he smelled the smoke from his cigar and the taste of the analgesics on his throat and the warmth of comradery from his men as they flanked him and covered his six. He drew breath again through the cigar and let the flavor coat his tongue and the smoke ball up in his mouth; the nicotine absorbing alongside the painkiller past the blood-brain barrier.

One of the recon drones flew by them next, and Blax switched his own POV to its camera-view and got a bird's eye from above and just aft of them; he then switched back to his own point of view. He didn't like to stay in that drone -one-window- mode too long; it disoriented him lately. He wondered if it was something inside his biological brain, or his Post Genetic Coder, or the gyroscope of the drone. He sent a flash to X2 -the home's mainframe- to check out the drone's metrics later to see if this could be repaired.

His melancholia was innate , he believed that. He had tracked it with his maturation; his morphology. *My God how silly and joyful and fun*, he was for years, he remembered; in high school he was literally voted, *class clown* . Nothing could be more ironic now than that rubric festooned upon him by his peers at 17-years-of-age. *His humor had remained* , he assured himself, but, like everything about him it had become, well, it had taken the ride with him into

these new regions, these tunnels of human feeling and thought; and thus, it darkened in hue.

But , he had to admit, *he did place less emphasis on being funny now* ; and it occurred to him why: he had used humor as a way to ingratiate himself with others, he had been funny to be popular; which he had been. He had been popular at every school he had attended from first through 12th grade; from *Wethersfield* , England to *Mojave* , California to *Ramstein* , Germany DoD schools; from San Antonio, Texas to Mason, Ohio. He was *avant garde* , he was a little odd. He was good looking, and girls flocked to him, but he had something there the whole time that scared them. *And yes, he was funny,* he admitted and shook his head, knowing that nobody thought that now.

He thought this not as a way to bolster himself or brag; he was doing a forensic analysis on himself that would seem odd to any outsider, any clinician, any criminal investigator; as they would arrogate that right to dissect such a man and his motives to themselves. A man like him -an outlaw, a criminal- was not supposed to be introspective. He was not supposed to feel the world at all.

He was not picked on, or bullied, or made fun of, or estranged from girls or shunned by the cool kids; he was not awkward or shy; well, not that much. He was adored by every strata; he moved seamlessly from the *Hessians* and Goths, the girls and the jocks and the smart kids too; *shit,* he recalled, *he was in the AP classes* of course, as bright as he was. He got stoned with the stoners; he sold weed from his locker, he was a brigand but he was more-or-less kind. He lacked the malice of many of the drop-outs, the angry and violent kids who did fit the profile of those who you knew would grow up to be felons and wife-beaters and drug addicts.

He was fun and he had a beautiful girlfriend -*ah, Miss Julee Rae* , he mused- and he even charmed his senior-year English teacher so much, had so enchanted Miss Ross, that she told him he need not take the final exam. She had told him that he deserved an A in her class just based upon the writings he had turned in; reports, essays on books he had read on his own time.

Yet, he had taken the world seriously that final year of high school, stopped smoking weed, began lifting weights and voted in the 1992 presidential election; for Ross Perot as a *fuck you;* a vote that he still got a smile out of. *I voted for a crazy billionaire at 18 and again at 42* ; he thought and regretted neither vote. *It was* fuck you's *the whole time , the whole way down* , he thought.

He had voted for Ralph Nader in between these two extremes; those Nader votes were extreme and polarizing votes in themselves. It never occurred to him to be

pragmatic about such plebiscites; voting was like most other things to him: a chance to reveal your conscience and an opportunity to make a point. It was the act of a noble and free man performed with dignity of form and content. The idea of voting tactically, or pragmatically, was not merely foreign, but obscene. *A man votes his conscience,* he thought.

He would insist that those who voted for the lesser of two evils were the one's *wasting their vote,* and it was they, they were the ones refusing to take the world seriously; as they lectured him on the damage he was doing by eschewing the duty -they insisted- to line up behind an establishment candidate.

But, he thought, *when you think that the nature, the character, of your own behavior is the very opposite of what everyone else thinks of it, when you see yourself as principled and moral, and they do not, well you begin to change. When you see that you think that their behavior is the very definition of the thing that they pretend to condemn; when you see so-called good men, the great mass of men, as cowards and evil, well, then you begin to see that you don't share the same definitions of words and conceits, not even the same language, and maybe not even the same alphabet as your ostensible comrades and family and friends .*

Why was he thinking about such old and irrelevant things? he asked inside his head, upbraiding himself as the *cigarillo* went out in his hand from neglect. He thought, *I think of these things because I have to understand where this came from. I must analyze myself like any other problem or conundrum. And right now, for whatever reason, this switch at 17 and 18 and 19 years-of-age seems salient.*

This is when I stopped incessantly ingratiating myself with others because I stopped reflexively fearing their opprobrium. It was analog not digital , he thought, *and so it was a slow process, one that still continues, and the dial gets turned forward and back still to this day; but by the time I left high school I had begun the process to no longer give a fuck what people far dumber, far less ethical, far less creative, far less loyal or romantic or alive in their hearts and balls, thought of me .*

Of course, he began his caveat, *I still try to convince them that I'm right, so I can't have stopped totally caring what they think. But, my behavior is less cloying, and my defense, the defense I present to them is less ecumenical; I go for the throat even as I curry their favor.* He laughed at this incongruity. He was strange even to himself in moments like this.

His father, *the old man,* he thought, *justified himself less .* The father acted as he saw fit; unilaterally and often unconventionally, but he didn't feel the need to

explain himself. *However,* Blax had to admit, *the old man was less worried about his own hypocrisy, less aware of his faults, less interested in knowing what he didn't already know.* He -the father- had endogenous intelligence, was a non-believer, had the genes for masculinity and aggression and iconoclasm, but had been reared in 1950's Arkansas and had needed to survive first; the luxury of expressing one's self was something available only to his scions, not to him.

That thought had led to a thought of John Adams saying that he concerned himself with war and politics, so *his* sons may have opportunity to focus on law and agriculture, so that *their* sons may focus on art and poetry. Blax then thought of July 4th , 1826.

Blax wanted to be as charitable as was righteous; not too harsh and not too generous. The old man had neither the native intelligence nor the *milieu* in which to flower into a great man. But he had also not availed himself of those opportunities later in life when they had been offered by his youngest son. He had turned his nose up at the books offered on cosmology and evolutionary psychology and the *Vingean* singularity. Blax's father had once critiqued his son saying, in a sentence that was still inconceivable to Blax now as he repeated it in his head, "*you seem to only want to talk about one thing* ."

Blax, the son, had a more variegated palate of interests in which he could speak upon with erudition and direct experience than anyone he knew; *he was incessantly reading,* he began to think, *and speaking to his family about subjects as disparate as politics from* GK Chesterton's *old-white-post to the Cold War and the composition of the Supreme Court; economics from* Adam Smith *to* Karl Marx, *MiG welding, ballistics, agriculture and indoor horticulture, the control of Co2 levels, the removal of humid air and the compression of life cycles; art from* Rodin *and the* Parthenon Marbles *to the composition of his own drawings and paintings and installation pieces; and he offered them the music from* Dead Can Dance *to the* Dead Kennedys*; and cinema from* Michael Mann *to* Kurosawa *to* Terrence Malick*; diesel mechanics, equity and precious metal investing, quantum physics -the conceit of wave-collapse and superposition and non-Newtonian reality at the atomic level- and Newtonian physics and cosmology of how something could come* - ab initio- *from nothing.*

Viticulture, he thought, *and oenology; how the poorer the soil and nutrient availability the harder the struggle for the vine, the sweeter and more complex the grape and in the hands of a French master like* Doughan *or* Jadot *or the* Krinkles *or* Mondavi *of the American west, how a* cabernet sauvignon *would become round and velvet and like an ouroboros asp of tannins swallowing*

themselves after a decade or two of being ignored at 55 degrees; Russian and French and American and British literature from Shakespeare -*why would you wish me milder; and false to my nature?* he thought in this discursive and rapid way. The neurons fired off engrams and sentences from his favorite books.

And Blake, he went on in the febrile mind as the Jacks ran their patrols on the table-top of their land, *and Blake* - why obscurity in all thy words and laws so none dare eat the fruit but from the wily serpent's jaws? *to Dostoyevsky* -man struggles for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as for someone to worship*; to Camus and The Author* -I think I'll try a pagan friend since Christian kindness proves to be mere hollow courtesy. He repeated each phrase in his head like mantra and proof and plea. The valley remained unimproved, just forest and just trees.

Shit, he even read 3 rd world and feminist writers, and the black books of the Harlem renaissance of Langston Hughes and Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin - is all the world jails and churches?- *and the writings on the Haitian rebellion of* Toussaint L'Oeverture *by* CLR James*; literature that encompassed the gamut from* Flannery O'Connor*, the gothic southern Catholic harshness of an unrelenting pessimism of perdition* - I come a long way since I believed in anything; and I come half way 'round the world, he quoted with vex. *To the weird ecstatic -probably delusional but erudite- ramblings of Zachariah Sitchin and the 12 th planet hypothesis,* he added.

He kept insisting, augmenting his list, the recursive, lateral mind rolled on: *he,* he thought, *had delved deep into 19 th century French poetry of* Baudelaire *and* Rimbaud - gouvernail et grappin- he recalled as the landscape of all that Colorado wilderness rolled on like black and green waves now before him from up and out here. He saw no evidence of man up here.

And , he recalled, still defending himself against the old man's unlettered, jealous charge, *he had spoken to his father on the history of the Roman republic; the French and American and Cuban revolutions; 82 men aboard the Granma landed upon the Cuban shore in 1956 and only 12 survived the initial* fusillade *from Batista's forces; yet they triumphed by new year's day, 1959; the history of the* Scots *and their introduction of logic and dialectic to law as counterpoise to the English way of precedent in law; and the Gauls who had sacked Rome 400 years before Caesar with barbarian warriors 6-inches taller than the average Roman of that time.*

He thought then of the dark-Russo strain of man, *and the Russians,* he said to himself, *who had been absorbing the darkest and coldest influences of creation*

and perdition for centuries as the black cowled and cockled Orthodox church and the bizarre Tzar had unwittingly handed Lenin and Stalin warm clay to shape into the most credulous and black hearted zealots for revenge in a thousand years. He thought of how things turned black and bleak, how it was no accident at all.

He had studied, he said to himself*, the western and eastern fronts of WWI and the writing of General Folkenhiem, and his foil Eric Luderdorph who said of the general* - I am capable only of love and hate and I hate *General Folkenheim* - he thought all this as his PGC ran silently in background. *And,* he thought*, he had read letters from the soldiers who lived in these flooded shell holes for months - and then years- as hundreds of thousands of boys had been shoved into the machine of modern war; war that lasted longer than any campaigns in history and how this augmenting of the time line upon which warfare -normally, naturally a short and quick burst of violence that settles disputes- how this changed everything about how man experienced and thought about and comprehended war.*

He smoked the remains of the *cigarillo* and said to himself that he, *could talk with felicity and facility on the Mongols of the 5 th century steppe and how they would ride their horses -surviving on mare's milk and the blood of their chargers taken from a small slit in the neck- 50 miles a day; and how Genghis Kahn ran a meritocracy enthralled as he was with exceptionalism over all other considerations.*

He knew he could speak and demonstrate the techniques of *Chinese Kun Tao* and *Indonesian Silat de Thouars* ; belted as he was in these systems; a limb-destruction marital art that could never be used in MMA it was so violent. *It was light years superior to* Brazilian Ju-jitsu -*this a mere calisthenics activity* - in his opinion. *He could speak on the elements of the oil field, from the MWD tools to the formation itself, to the operation of the Mudtank and the Kellyclamp in derrick's nest, to the weight of the drilling fluid and the Ph of the same,* he thought, but he was growing tired now of all this justifying, all this preening to prove to a man who hated him -from birth- that he was worth listening to after all.

But the mind roiled on as the Jacks patrolled the grounds and let him sit in silence as long as he wanted or needed upon his return from overseas.

Sure, he could explain how rock formations, he thought, *how they were drilled by hand with 80lb pneumatic hammer drills and how 1-pound dynamite sticks were planted like tulip bulbs in the rock every 12-inches apart for 100 linear feet; how*

fit-tests were required for respirator use and how as a shallow breather he often came close to failing those tests.

He could expound on farm work from milking goats to bailing alfalfa to shodding a horse 19-hands-high; he could expatiate on the limbic system and how the amygdala of a psychopath was attenuated in size and/or function, that psychopathy was a hardware/wetware phenomenon that could be seen in fMRI and CAT-scans; he could offer a primer in evolutionary psychology and sexual dimorphism in humans and how this compared to both common chimps and bonobos; delineating the differences and similarities and how the psychology of men and women were innate.

He could talk with subject matter expertise on 1,001 matters and the notion that he was -as Winston Churchill had put it: "a fanatic was a man who couldn't change his mind and wouldn't change the subject" *-the notion that he- was a one trick pony was absurd,* he thought. He was not just enraged by the charge but confused. The mind churned over more and more data, with more and more detail and all for naught.

His own father had charged him with this monomania , he finally thought.

It was beyond baffling, but then as the unknown heated up, the confusion phase-changed -like boiling water evaporates into steam- and it turned the steam-engine and it hardened his heart against even his own *pater familius* , his own history and genome, his own species. He found all his explaining tantamount to more ingratiating behavior; *he was supplicant -again- even in his own mind,* he saw.

He -when this statement by his father became the *summa* of all the insults and perceived neglect of his heart and mind over the years- decided that if he could not reach his father, a man in whose image he had been cut -he had always thought- then *nobody* could be reached and that something else, something radical would have to be done. *No amount of moral suasion and prose poetry, nothing done as a great-artist-of-words would have sway over so fatuous and corrupt and depthless a species* , he had then thought. It was a *dialogue de sourds* .

He breathed out through his flaring nose and forced himself to take large pulling breaths in; he looked down at his matte grey -made-to-measure- suit that fit him like it was two coats of paint on the skin. He loved the piping and the simplicity of it; the collar tab and the European cut; the full back to the waistcoat absent any cinching or any evidence that this suit could be worn by anyone else. *Well* , he then thought, and laughed a little to himself as he turned to look at his own

lieutenant and his sergeants on his flank.

He thought of who arrested John Brown at Harper's Ferry; it was Robert E. Lee, the man they called the King of Spades: one day you manacle the traitor, *and within the blink of a one-eyed jack, you are,* he thought, *the traitor to the same country.*

It's so strange, he thought as he saw each Jack move and stand, mill and pause, *and yet it is comforting to look at yourself from 20 years, shit, 40 years prior, only better in some ways, maybe less good in others. But there they were, their bodies nearly exact copies, only the tattooing would be different, any one of them,* he thought, *could wear these bespoke suits.*

And these four men would have four men each under their charge soon enough; and the compound they had built over the last 18 months would house each of them out here beyond the *Sangre de Christos* and the *Spanish Peaks* north of them. *So much had changed so quickly; he had lived so many lives,* he thought. *What would ten years hence look like?* he wondered; he thought each 10-year block was a life in itself. He was now 62 years old in a body and face that looked as young, maybe younger and stronger, than when he was 42; but hands -the ends of him- still that could never seem to iron out. They were scarred and keloidal and hurt to both clinch and unfurl. *And,* he then thought, *the broken neck never would fuck off.*

"But those common corvids are smarter than either *Caius Marcius* or myself gave them credit for," he finally said aloud into the quiet air of his men. Jack One heard him in ear, the Jacks heard -*via* their coders- in mind.

"Yeah, the Jews are smart too; there are other traits than mere intelligence," Jack One barked quickly as rejoinder.

"Name one," Blax said in jest, pretending both that nothing and that anything was superior to intelligence. He knew that he prioritized intelligence too much; and that *heart* was more important; which is what *the Bard* was on about, and Jack too. But, he found it hard to elevate anything above understanding, cognition. And he did not know just why.

"Honor," Jack One said; unaware than Blax had already conceded to this in his own head.

"The Jews lack honor?" Blax asked thinking of the Jews he respected; men like Hitchens, and Primo Levi. *They had had honor in surfeit* , he thought.

"The corvids lack it compared to the eagle; the eagle would never submit to so complicated a scheme for a meal. The eagle takes it meal by sovereignty of

nature. It’s direct and noble and has no need for the wily intelligence of the trickster bird,” Jack One said and lifted his chin slightly.

“Yeah, I don’t disagree with you Jack,” he said. “I rarely do. ”

“You always end up acting as we would act, why the dialectic at all? You never choose the way you pretend to give voice to; you never choose the *effete;* the crafty way,” Jack One said and spit at the ground and looked back up to the same southern view that went on and on from their plateau.

“Yeah, but it cannot be axiomatic; you must give an honest hearing to your doubts, your enemies and your woman,” Blax said with a wry smile; then as he thought of how he had eschewed personal revenge all those years ago, the smile dropped. It never left his mind, it trailed him like shadow. No, it preceded him; the sun always seemed behind him; even the moon was at his six at night. *The shadow never out of sight* , he thought.

“Shit, when’s the last time any one of us saw a woman?” Jack One asked.

“Don’t jinx us,” Blax rejoined. To even mention a woman was taboo.

“You brought ‘em up,” Jack said and looked about, left and right; each of the other Jacks were markers for him. *Landmarks* , he thought.

“Yeah, well anyway, you learn things by earnestly challenging your assumptions; even if you go with your instincts 99 out of 100 times. It’s something you’ll get as you get older; there’s a satisfaction that comes from knowing you tried to talk yourself out of what you end up doing.

“You can act, jump, strike with more *bravura* -not less- once you’ve truly and genuinely attempted to reason your way back from the edge,” Blax got up from the log and began walking back to the black and grey container among the dark trees and concrete pad.

“My heart is ponderous Jack; it feels like all seven seas sloshing around inside my globular corpus; tilting me on my axis. If I become lachrymose it will be my mind using my eyes as buckets to pitch some of that pelagic pain over the gunwales,” he said as he looked at his reflection in the glass of the double paned, double doors of the shipping container he had turned into a home almost 20 years ago. Jack looked at him *via* that glass too and nodded his head.

Each pane held a separate, slightly justified reflection, it was two identical men, each with two identical reflections, all slightly justified to the right -and behind- of the first.

“You wouldn’t hold it against me, would you?” Blax then asked.

“We all feel this world deeply LT; it’s the price we pay for all our capacities, we feel it all so deeply,” Jack said as he stared away now; that was the most he’d say on it.

“I suppose it keeps us relatively honest,” Blax began, “imagine how bad we’d be if we didn’t feel anything at all. Jesus, they think we’re psychopaths now; imagine.”

“I think you think they think we feel anything at all,” Jack protested with a sentence all full of thinking. “They assume we’re sociopaths. Monsters. Villains of the worst kind.”

“Yeah, I just meant imagine how much more brutal it would get if our amygdalae were as small as our in-group,” he said with a small smirk and led the newly minted Jack *Margaux* into the house through the 9 x 7.5 bedroom & study. The walls were grey and had built-in shelving that held almost 1,000 books in this 320 square-foot shotgun home, the floor was poured concrete and the murphy bed was up and out of the way as they walked passed it and passed the open bathroom into the kitchen .

The bathroom was built exactly the same as the rest of the small home; a poured concrete sink with black fixtures that came straight out of the wall, a square toilet and a large 4 x 4 shower with troweled, mottled, mortar, too with black fixtures; a rainfall 12in x 12in showerhead above, and a black coiled hose sprayer attached to the wall. It had no glass, and just a half-wall that made up part of the hallway too.

There were 4x6 framed photographs of idiosyncratic images and people and art he had collected over the years; and if one were sagacious enough, one could trace the history of this man from about 24-years-of-age until now just *via* the images on the walls.

The hallway had a framed poster of Hunter S. Thompson’s foray into politics when he ran for sheriff of Pitkin county in 1970; and there were dozens of golden hyena and coyote and racoon and mountain lion skulls -and a few small mouse skulls too- screwed to the wall with garlands of dried inverted flowers of *love lies bleeding* and *sage* and old paint brushes slicked with matte black paint and deep brown wooden ends.

He had painted some of the skulls olive drab with black stenciled Army lettering on them; and some he left bleached white with some foxing along the sutures. Some had lower jaws and long canines, others had these parts missing; but one tiny bobcat skull had the meter-long blonde hair of his last -*and it would be his*

last , he insisted, refusing to even think of The Bust now- his last love's feral and helix of hair.

It was just one strand wrapped around the dead feline's prow, so long was it that it circumnavigated the head several times and was in no danger of becoming dislodged. But this demur was a fiction, he had love in his heart each time it beat and in between each time as well.

He hid The Bust from his men; and so even in his thoughts he banished her, pretending that Alexandra would be his last love. Even as he was fused, clearly conjoined with his True Love, he somehow managed to incorporate her by ignoring her, like the sub-cortical mind of modern man.

He pulled two highball glasses from the poured concrete countertop. It was 5-meters in length, 80cm in depth and one meter high, and he filled the glasses with ice that had been sitting in the black bronzed *champagne* bin; he then poured carbonated water over top of the rocks.

He sliced two thin sheaths of lime and placed one in each glass and handed one to Jack and said, "*ice is civilization. That's why I came* ."

Jack One barely smiled and shallowly drank; the bubbles exploding about the face. The smell of fresh lime made it feel like summer even if just under his nose; the winter storm collecting around the looming *Spanish Peaks* to their north and north west could be seen through the 7x7 double-paned black-framed garage door that ran the opposite wall of the countertop and led into the courtyard between the two shipping containers.

He opened the large door and stepped out onto the concrete patio -it was five meters wide by 13 meters in length- and he looked at the matte grey -Ghost grey- 2014 BMW X6M. *It was a vintage car now in 2036 e.v., but it was still nearly perfect in every way,* he thought.

This made him want to speak aloud on the job, the task, before them, finally. He had thought it through.

"It would be like blowing up the BMW factory in Germany, where the *M series* are made; and melting down all the tools and erasing the CAD software and files, and," Blax paused and looked down and shook his head .

"The *terroir* will remain." Jack One reassured him. "The vintners will remain, the back vintages will remain -just with us instead of them- and we will graft and clone the vines from each parcel."

"The fucking French government will invade Colorado over this," Blax scoffed

at his own half-joke.

“They aren’t going to know anything, it will be blamed on those Islamic fucks; they are notorious for destroying Buddhist statues and Hindu art and on and on. They’ll take the hit which is a *two-fer* ,” Jack said curtly.

“Of all the shit we’ve had to do, this one gives me the most pause. I seriously think I may throw up over it,” Blax said without grin or grimace.

“We can do it without you; I only need my team anyway, I don’t even need the others and theirs,” Jack said.

“No, that’s the thing, we’re not just doing *Margaux* ; all the first growths are going; The Jacks are on those,” Blax said as he nodded to them out on patrol.

“Why did I think we were only doing the one?” Jack asked.

“Because Isaiah was still working out the logistics until about 15 minutes ago; that’s when I got the DM. Anyway, each of you will take your bots to each of the *Château* and I have to co-ordinate shipping logistics; so, I’m going to be on the *Gironde* with a goddamn barge stacked with Conex boxes five high. It’s going to look like a goddamn Chinese apartment building on the water.”

“Will you be at the *Bordeaux* port?” Jack One asked.

“No, we’re gonna build a bridge like *Caesar* across the *Rhine* when he was fighting the *Gauls* ; and you guys are going to drive your convoys right over that bridge into the containers and park them inside; those tiny European work trucks fit perfectly in the boxes, each *Château* will be allowed to carry five trucks, one for each team member.

“Isaiah has the location of the best vintages; he’s sent maps to each of you already; just open the files. He’s listed the total number of OWC that can fit in each truck and marked them, so you guys will just grab the cases that match your *dossier* he sent.”

“Strong or on the prowl?” Jack asked.

“Night prowl; the security system is all set to be disabled; anyone there, you’ll dispatch and hide; nobody, no winemakers will be there at 0300. Set the charges in the vineyards after everything is loaded; and after you’ve taken cuttings of course,” Blax said with a huff.

“What port are we using stateside?” Jack asked.

“Isaiah will give us a vector once we clear the *Gironde* ; he has to play-it-by-ear based on AWACKS and any other spies-in-the-sky,” Blax said and placed his

hand on the car's front fender to feel the cool metal below his hot skin of the palm. The knuckle bones rebelled at being stretched taut and pulled back against him.

"If we run into any interference from random law enforcement?" Jack One asked .

"Dispatch them. Man, if we were just jacking the wine I'd have a *methuselah* sized hard on for this; but the *auto-de-fey* of the vine stocks and the razing of the *Château* ? It's fucking blaspheme," he said.

"I know you have a more," Jack was searching for the word, "*gestalt* , role in all this; I get it and I respect it. But, two things: first, you signed up for all this, you're not being forced to do anything; and secondly, you could turn your *baselines* all off and not feel any of this. Why the fuck are you leaving them on?"

"You know as well as me why we," Blax stressed the *we* , "need to expound on our feelings; it's who we are. That's just *prima facia* obvious. Secondly, I could turn it all off, *yes* , but I don't want to. I've said this many times, I must *feel* things first, even if I ultimately override those emotions. I won't just check out on my responsibilities. I have a duty to face the reality of what it is we; of what we do.

"Living in some narcotic haze of obliviousness is what *tout le monde* does; that's how they can blithely carry on with their fatuous and murderous little lives without any, even a moment, of hesitation or moral quandary. The moral writhing and pain is the whole fucking point, Jack. And I'd caution you to not take the easy fucking way out so often; it attenuates the soul," Blax pointed at him sternly now.

"*The soul's a sorta fifth wheel to a wagon, eh* ?" Jack quoted from what they now called the *Good Book.* Jack knew that he could always soften his Lt's pique by quoting The Author.

"Don't ingratiate yourself with me like that," Blax said and grinned and reached out and cupped his right hand behind Jack's neck and squeezed in that affectionate but aggressive alpha manner. "I love you, I adore you; and you're right more than you're wrong; shit, you're right more than me probably. But being *right* isn't the only metric of truth; just like being *rich* isn't the only way to measure a successful life.

"And this focus on money and things -while for a larger purpose, yes- has an affect on my soul, man. And I never want to lose that feeling of contempt -my

deep contempt- for money. I don't. I cherish it, that contempt, I cherish it like all the artifacts in my life, in my home. You think I feel good when I think -when I see- her hair or a photo from some moment that's lost? I feel pain, but it's good pain; it's the pain of a moral man, a man who cares about more than getting paid or laid. It's the pain of a man who I respect; even if nobody else respects me for it," Blax said.

"LT, I respect you; I swear I do. I just don't want to sit here and say nothing when I know how to fix a problem. Come on, that's as much who we," Jack this time emphasizing the *we* , "are too. Right? We are problem solvers and we lecture people; it's what we do." Jack concluded with a smirk.

"I know. This dialectic is necessary even if we both know what the other will say and what the end result will be. Playing it out, saying it out loud helps, I promise you, hearing it all out loud, even when I say not to say it," Blax chuckled, "helps."

He looked out over the dark land as evening fell and fell and fell into the ravine to their south.

"Can you -I've had the other Jacks blocked, so I can run these parallel processing programs Isaiah sent to me for the ship and OBX-logistics- can you let them run a channel through you; see if they have any other concerns? I just sent them their names, targets and battleplans," Blax said and sat down -on the massive, black, wooden-beam that sat low on the ground outside the container- and drank his soda water.

"Yeah, Jack said to ask Isaiah about his sea-sickness since we're going to France, well, since were leaving France on a boat," Jack One said.

"A *ship* , and a big ship; he won't feel a thing and plus, *we all* get motion sickness. Isaiah said he can't fix it without ennervating some other cognitive -or- was it some immuno-response? Anyway, the answer is *no* , take the Bomine or Dramamine like the rest of us. It's old-school but Isaiah has no answer for it yet. Which Jack was that?" Blax finally asked.

"Which Jack do you think; and why does he get *Mouton* ? I assume that's why we've all been given these *Château* names? They match the location of each our targets?" Jack asked as the file from Isaiah populated his coder and thus his mind.

"Yeah, let's muster in the garage; I've got all the logistics downloaded. I can breathe now," Blax got up and grabbed Jack's large shoulder and squeezed. He looked inside the container home to the western end's double paned double

doors and saw the painting reflected in it, twice, of course, one just behind the first, hovering like an apparition, lit in a green light; somehow that band of light was alone.

The painting hung on the side of the fridge, eight meters away, it was black and grey and ¾ of his own face, from a younger age. It was callow to him, tenebrous, and it had his asymmetric smirk, and the black scar of worry that ran north and south in the image, but it was absent his real forehead and brow. It was too smooth, too insouciant. He stared at the two images, one in each of the panes of the glass door; and he wondered why the last one, the final one -cloaked in that green light- seemed not just behind and right justified, but seemed larger and both above and below his brother of reflection; he turned all the way around and looked at the original painting on the side of the black fridge and noticed its own reflection in the glass of the image's frame.

They gathered back around as Jack One sent DMs to them all requesting a muster ASAP. And as they huddled Blax began handing out their new implants.

"*Margaux* , *Lafite* , that's mine," he kept that one for himself, then saying, "and *Château Mouton* , Jack *Latour* and Mr. *Haut Brion* ." He said this in a sing-songy way as he passed out new updates to their PGCs; they each swallowed the capsules as they were received.

"LT, you hitting *Lafite* and doing the exfiltration too? Seems heavy," Jack Four -*Jack Mouton*- asked.

"Heavy," Blax said, "is right."

"Roger that LT," Jack Two -Jack *Haut Brion* for this job- said and placed his hand on the shoulder of Jack *Mouton;* squeezing it and then cupping it behind his thick neck.

"I worry too much, I know," Jack Four said, "but someone has to worry about these things; sometimes you guys are all balls and no brains."

"How's everyone's catalytic and CNS function reports; has Isaiah signed off on everyone yet?" Blax, the one they called *LT* -it stood for *Fate's Lieutenant* - asked.

"Five by five," they all said in unison; this speaking all at once was a game they liked to play .

Blax just looked up at them *-these four men, built just like him, maybe slightly bigger, not that he'd ever admit that- standing just like him, well, a younger him,* he thought, without the crease that vivisected his forehead from the *furrowed*

brow of doom as they called it, without the back and neck injuries that made him brace himself just slightly or compensate with posture from time to time- he looked at them and smiled at their martial games. The sound of their voices in concert with one another was sonorous to him, and the poetry in it -both form and content- warmed him.

These last couple of years had given him something he had never had, and he was still adjusting to the pleasures of it. *They were 16 in body now; 20 -maybe 21- morphologically. And here he was at 62 years of age,* he thought. It was the first time he had had anyone -much less four people- who had understood one word he had said, one thought he had expressed, one feeling he had wrestled or been ebullient with, or had one instinct in which he had found a resonant echo in nature besides the mute and mysterious beasts of the forest. *Well, the first time he'd had men understand him* , he modified and thought of The Bust out there in the wilderness somewhere.

The age of just 16 , he thought again. Of course, everything was so augmented and compressed now they all had downloaded the haptic and heuristic -as well as technical- knowledge it had taken him decades to acquire; so, they were very competent; he didn't overly concern himself with that part. *It was the intangibles; the poetry of life, the nuances of loyalty and a man's motivation,* he thought.

Sure, they all shared his DNA, had been educated more or less correctly and had been screened from thousands who had his genome for the right disposition, but, like Jack Four, he worried. *He too worried they were all balls and no brains; and in fact* - he then thought- *they made a virtue of this* . They had a confidence he lacked; they had not failed the way he had failed; they had a father, in him, that he had not had. It showed on their faces, in their gaits, in their bravura. *That is what a real father does,* he thought, *he encourages you while demanding that you be your best. And when you achieve it he is proud of you and says fucking so. This is what builds great men.*

He wanted *to get out of this suit* , he then thought. He pulled at the neck, began taking off the tie and jacket as he walked inside his narrow home. *The dinner had gone long* , he thought of Jack Ma, and how he had claimed to have been the only 1 of 30 applicants rejected by the Chinese Police, and that this now seemed untrue to Blax. He felt that Isaiah's instincts about Ma were right; all in an instant, out of the blue, that one comment had made it all seem like the man was obviously working for the Chinese government. Blax ruminated -again- on if he had accomplished what they wanted, *and, Jesus, the flight home was longer than*

the dinner.

He wanted out of this suit.

He saw the black ink on gray paper that was tacked to the gray wall just above his tattoo machines and read it to himself, *I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head! I had rather be a fool with a heart than Jupiter Olympus with his head*
.

0. A Drop of Blood

Each of us must be tempered in some fire. Nobody had more to do with choosing the fire that tempered me than myself, and instead of finding fault with the fire I give thanks that I had the mettle to take it and hold it

You can't Win [Black, Jack]

Whereas vines grew best when they were made to suffer

Wine & War [Kladstrup, Don & Petie]

It is only because we have forgotten that we can now and then return to the person we once were, envisaging things as that person did, be hurt again, because we are not ourselves anymore, but someone else, who once loved something that we no longer care about… the past becomes irrecoverable. Or, rather, it would be irrecoverable, were it not that a few words had been carefully put away and forgotten against the day when it may become unobtainable

In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower [Proust, Marcel]

I. 2036 e.v.

"This," he bowed as he spoke to introduce the meal, "gentlemen, is *a Perigod foie gras* , and I've paired it with the *Viognier* from *Caduceus* , and a short-glass of *Château d'Yquem* that I've pulled from the cellar. I know you -as I- do not have a much a sweet tooth, but notice the richness, the unctuousness of that *foie gras* with the *Sauternes* wine and then the apricot and lime zest, the pleasant steel and nimbus of smoke on the finish. Let it rest as you take in the presentation of the open breast, the basil from our own garden, the goat cheese made by Jack, with mere milk, unpasteurized, rennet, and a warm outdoor sun-oven.

"The *Viognier* is around 13% alcohol -and grown at 4,300 feet- it was cluster pressed, and barrel fermented. Notice the cheddering of the white cheese; Jack let it sit for, nine months was it, Jack?" he asked.

"189 days, yes," Jack Three said as they all chuckled at his precision. They each gazed at the deep greens, almost black, the texture of obelisks and tetrahedrons, the stars of grains, the leaf veins, the whiteness of the cheese, the *ambergris* ; the steam rose and the juices milked themselves from the meat.

“Now, these are small portions, because I have a *Strasbourg* goose fed on noodles from a rice drum, with much lower unctuousness, and for that I have,” he paused his speech and he placed an uncorked magnum bottle of a leviathan of a wine: the 2015 *Château Mouton* to which they all nodded knowingly and with expectation; expectation that from that 1.5L bottle they’d all get two full glasses of the First Growth.

He left the *Strasbourg* on the counter, five plates in a row along the 16-foot concrete slab that was thick and high off the ground; a counter comfortable for anyone -and they all were- at least 74” tall .

They ate and drank and began mentioning things like the way the *foie gras* blended with the *Sauternes* wine in a froth on the tongue. Jack One ate heartily and with abandon, imbibing the food and chewing the wine, with arms swollen from chopping lumber two hours prior to the meal. The outdoor fireplace -nine-feet tall and 15-feet wide and three-feet thick of one giant concrete monolith, and steel lintel & back- enclosed upon and let bloom a fire five-feet across and a meter high that bounced light off the containers and the men and was held down eventually by only the ponderous black night.

An ultrasonic pulse -issued from a device that ran up and down the perimeter- kept the mosquitos at bay. The moths spiraled like downed P50 planes into the fire and then darkness of ash. The conversation was robust but quiet, none of them liked to speak loudly so their own ears were adjusted for the *sotto voce* of conversation among five men of their type.

Jack Two sat back with a mouth full and let it dissolve on his tongue as he stopped eating to look at the artwork all over this shotgun of a house -a mere 320 sqft- and yet perfectly laid out. He never would have imagined such a feeling of space, *grandeur* and harmony in such a small footprint. *But Blax had done it*, he thought, *he had crafted a shipping container home with no cloistering, and he had done it by refusing to hem in or sequester or make fucking storage boxes and shelving and stupid shit like that, the dumb shit that crammed most of these types of homes with more infrastructure than a Nasa Launch Pad* .

It was open, and large, and his *Spartan* life was so simple that he had no need of this ubiquitous *storage* that most people -who pretend to downsize- insist that they need when they haul all their crap from a 2,000 square foot home in the suburbs to a tiny home they have had built. *Even when normal people tried something interesting they missed the goddamn point,* Jack Two thought.

Blax had built bookshelves into the walls, which he had effected by pushing the batten insulation against the metal outer wall with slimboard and boxing the

studs with lumber running perpendicular to them. He then sheet-rocked and mudded those 36 boxes which held at least 20 books each, and it ran down the entire side of the house. It was beautiful and functional and the container held more books than he -Jack- could -or had bothered to- count; *maybe 800 or 1,000 if one added the shelves of books above the doors and laying all about* , Jack surmised as he looked around and let the meal cool and the wine warm.

Paintings by Blax hung next to works by *Pinorte, Keith Thompson,* and *Caia Koopman* , and an old French movie poster of, *un Tramway nomme Desir* was framed in the hall. Buck skulls and racks; bear jaws and cracked skull-bones and coyotes and golden hyenas from the deserts of the Sumerian mass; corvid feathers and *blue poppies* washed of their piquant azul -and thus now cornflower- were woven in, sutured, with blonde hairs that Blax would -could- rarely speak of. All this confection of artifacts adorned the walls; but Jack knew enough of -about- the fair girl's hairs plaited in with the long dead flowers to find them beautiful. He often waited until the sun of the winter afternoon was low by the kitchen window pointing south and watched as the turbulent air blew those singular hairs in and out of the low elliptical beams of light. He wondered about this *Alexandra of Wisconsin* , this *Helen of Troy* , once of *Sparta* as the story went.

She was really the only girl Blax spoke of without rancor; without overt or oblique insult .

Large, thin-framed, reproductions of the Parthenon Marbles, also hung high on the wall. *They were so white and fissured and amputated and perfect* , Jack thought as the conversation between the Jacks went on sparsely. *Each thing mentioned by the men, his fellow Jacks, and by their Captain, Blax, was useful, poignant or charming in some way* ; he thought as he listened and watched two separate -but ultimately two conjoined- things.

He stared at the reproduction of the *Marbles* on the wall, focusing on the bearded man of the slab XXI.4 with one leg a dragon's tail, being attacked by a -and framed in by another- woman, as the *stele* was lined by black cleaving, and the other sculptures fragmented to his rear.

Next to it was the same half-asp half-man; but now he was assaulting a downed beast, itself being stepped upon by a woman of floating torso engaged with a helmeted solider; the well of his shield to the inside. A hand that once contained a bronze sword was now empty. Jack saw this warrior's forearm hang in the air, his elbow and shoulder marred with the bronze plating that once too adorned it; its lack now just a golden bruise on the marble.

The tail of the asp, the dragon-to-gorgon, sprung up in all places that man's feet did not rest; instead *it was as if absence of the Greek man was naturally filled with the predator in the imagination of the artist* , Jack thought; then he asked aloud what he next wondered.

"LT, who did the *Marbles* again?"

"*Phidias* ," Blax said, and then asked, "which *metatope* has caught your eye, Jack?"

"Oh, the one with the, well the two that are side-by-side there," he nodded above, "with the bearded beast with snake legs and in defense and then attack."

"Ah, yes the *Iliad* had the *Lapiths* -the women you see there- in pitch battle with the *Centaurs* at a wedding feast. The *Centaurs* had drank too much wine that night, the story goes, and their wildness spit out the bit and the bridle," Blax said and drank deeply of the red from his own clear stemless glass. He often spoke in sentences that began or ended with strange tropes, metaphors that worked on the listener over time, like time-release medicine, like wounds that had healed in him and would -he implicitly said- heal in you too.

"I think the disintegration of the *Marbles* adds to the drama, the beauty," Jack Four added as he chewed his goose and *d'Yquem* using each hand to shovel it in.

"Yeah, I must admit I do too; I wonder if that is some sign of corruption of my," he paused, "and *our* , I guess, *our* eyes." He knew his opinion was weighted among his men, and he never wanted to tamp down his Jacks' enthusiasm, so he added, "but, I agree with you Jack, and so, I suspect, it might just be innate. We might just like things in a state right on that line between cohesion and falling apart, you know?"

Jack Four smiled and appreciated Blax making him feel like it was *ok* that he liked it that way, and that his own outlook might mean something more than what he often thought of as mere taste or aesthetic; random appeal. Blax often saw things one layer down from the surface, and it rarely felt unimportant or a *non sequitur. Nor,* Jack thought, *did it seem a fanciful narrative with no tether to the actual thing being described.* Blax was judicious, not promiscuous with his analysis of the subtext of things. It was as if he was half-embarrassed to offer an opinion from the right side of his brain; the black sheep of the *familia-cogitae* , the one that shall not be named.

"I wonder," Jack One said as he stared up at them and made sure to clear his mouth of any food. "How much does each block weigh? In real life, you know? "

Blax smiled and then began laughing and shaking his head, “Jack, we are not stealing the *Parthenon Marbles* .” But as soon as he said it he knew that was a lie. It was true when he thought it, it was true half-way through the sentence, but by the time he finished the construction he knew it was now -*ab initio* - a lie. He knew it, somehow, he knew that was exactly what was next on their list. It ran a *frisson* down his left flank, and made him wriggle a bit in his seat, and his jaws stopped masticating, and his stomach stopped digesting. Blax’s eyes saw almost nothing but the black of the night beyond their surfeit of this victory meal.

Jack One laughed with his next bite of food in his mouth, it was sufficiently dark among their dining table, and so nobody was dyspeptic by the unsightly half-chewed food.

“Really, J.O.?” Jack Two asked Jack One, as if he too could tell that Blax’s denial had just turned into a confession, and that Jack’s laugh was the river card just turned up. They protected the honor of Blax from one another like this, each taking turns saving him any embarrassment when he was wrong. They were like the modules of one mind that chastised itself for errant or impolitic thoughts.

Jack One demurred with a side nod of his head, and a wry smile that seemed to augment not just the smile but the head itself. And Jack Two then looked at Blax’s face as it morphed from one of horror to resignation and something else Jack Two could not quite name. Blax was a meteor behind a night’s sky that itself was clouded and filled with occluding birds and stars that refused to shine light on the outer-galactic and leaden ballistic fired from some house of the gods far removed. Jack thought Blax was a conducting metal for messages from beyond.

He -Blax- was faceless at times, five emotions alive, a man wrought up and caught in his own tail and arms as they flailed; speaking five sentences backward toward one common word that, like a singularity, began at his birth and returned to him like *Huginn* and *Muninn* each moon-month, in his dreams. Jack Two stared at him and wanted to feel what *he* felt, as if that was all the codex he’d need to pull out and decipher the logic and instruction and blueprint for whatever it was he -Jack- would need to defend and genuflect towards and exalt. Jack thought wisdom was knowledge plus time. And thus, he did not see what knowledge fails to add, and what it removes and takes very far away.

Dostoyevsky said, Jack remembered, *that man strives for nothing so incessantly and painful as for something to worship* . Jack Two felt this was especially true of himself. It did not seem a warning; it seemed merely a truth in need of acknowledgement, not lament.

He needed to love things, and his love for Blax was not yet folded into a steel blade, it was mere unalloyed metal, un-burnished, un-tempered, unbound and adrift in the cosmos, as the fire, the water, the hammer and anvil all sat waiting for this combination to join. Jack assumed it -this amalgam- was going to manifest once he could discern the combinatorial code of the lock on Blax's inner life, when he could reach the center of the maze of all these pathways; these endless causeways of the man.

"That's a big job Captain," Jack Four said as if it was agreed that the job was now already a foregone conclusion; they all -save Blax- ate as if not skipping a beat. Blax was still horrified, thinking of *the crashing of* stele, *the smashing of the centaur by that Italian fuck, what was his name* ? he asked himself as his Post-Genetic Coder produced the name: *Battista Lusieri* .

He then thought of the euphemism that *that* man had used in contrast to *Edward Daniel Clarke* -that name Blax had remembered for reasons he kept hidden- who had eschewed the language of business and commerce, insisting on the prose of a man who saw in the *Marbles* something larger than their already massive size and weight would produce.

Clarke had quoted the *Disdar* in *lieu* of his own feelings, but *Clarke's* intent was clear: the *Ottoman* was a puppet for his own thoughts. The Turk's mentioned tear was part of a nonlocal pair, the one described in the account that lay on his dusky cheek and the one unmentioned, implicit in relief on the white-as-marble Englishman's own. His tear -and heartbreak- was implicit in the recounting of the, *mischief done,* to the edifice of grand Occidental art.

The meal was not ruined, *no, he would not say that*, Blax thought. It was grand, like almost all that they did. But, his heart was heavy, heavier than normal, and this for a man with a mercurial, preternaturally dense -and maybe due to this, an inflexible- heart organ. He was instantly aware of his visage, and how it might cool -if not freeze- his men's mood. He gathered himself up and said this:

"Well, Jack One brings up a good idea, and I'm sure, now that I've had a moment to reflect, that no matter our next mission, it will be part of a noble cause. We have earned the right to question everything, and if this comes to pass, we will question it. But, what did Kafka say, *the condemned man will have it inscribed upon his body: Honor your superiors.* And Isaiah knows a lot more than I do, and he sees signal where a limited man like me only sees noise.

"I trust his judgment, and while he makes me nervous, that is no reason -or not sufficient reason- to rebuke him or his wishes. He is a demigod, and his notions are our muses, we ignore them at the peril of art; at the peril of our souls. His

designs on the world are the cool dreams of a higher being, and our febrile minds ought to find comfort in their nuministic origins, and their rational constructions in the end. He always thinks 1,000 steps ahead. So," Blax breathed out and lifted his fork, as if to commence eating was his *imprimatur* ; it was to be the punctuation to that both definitive and unfinished thought.

Jack One smiled larger and larger and wolfed down more and more food; then reaching now his right hand for the plated *Strasbourg* goose and beckoned -with the left hand- the *magnum* of *Mouton* to pair it with his food and his glee.

"Blax," Jack One said, using the familiar Christian name in *lieu* of rank, which everyone noticed, "I was thinking of *Xerxes* right, I was thinking of his mind set, and tell me what you think of this. And Jack," he motioned to Jack Three with his wine glass as Blax stopped the attempt to pour the *Mouton* in the glass while it moved in Jack's peripatetic hand. Jack saw this and -chagrined- set it -his glass- down.

"I was thinking of how he -according to *Herodotus* - was incredulous and disgusted by the *Ioanian Greeks* engaging in commerce, because he thought that the way to live was this: *you go out into the lands of your enemies, and take what is theirs and bring it back to the tribe, in his case, the Persians, and distribute it amongst your men, your people.*

"Yes, sure the king got the lion's share, for he was the lion after all. But, the idea that you'd set up places the city, as he put it, to lie to one another and sell goods, and trick your comrades for a profit was *effete* , dishonorable, ignoble. And so raiding by martial men was *stealing* sure but it was more like *plundering* , it was not a low thing like mere ignoble theft and trickery.

"It was not unlike the hunter, who goes into the forest and takes a deer or an elk and comes home and shares that take -from the offering of the woods- versus the modern man who goes to fucking Jack-in-the-Box and gets a cheeseburger," Jack said as he stuffed some fowl meat in his mouth and they all smiled at the reference.

"To modern man the hunter is a murderer," Jack continued as he masticated. "To the modern man, the man who takes his enemies' lands and goods is a thief, right? But to ancient man, it was more noble to take from one's enemies -and distribute fairly to one's own- and never engage -among one's peers- in tawdry commerce, never demean yourself or your tribe by commercial feints, *beau geste,* and deception. And similarly, the hunter feels that while his taking of the deer is indeed sanguinary, it is not murder at all.

“He would say, we say, that the buying and selling of cheeseburgers is tawdry and bleak and unmanly, and that the death -the same so-called murder- is not absent in the cheeseburger, merely hidden -ignobly hidden- only. At least with hunting it is noble and overt and as nature designed it, and once home, no tribesmen must purchase the meat, but rather it is distributed fairly as each member is innately entitled to his shared by dint of all that that member does and all that he brings to the tribe. By definition, a man *in* the tribe is of value *to* the tribe; freeloaders do not exist; not for long.

“Raiding,” he continued as the Jacks and Blax listened and let the usually laconic man speak, “enemies and taking their shit, is no different than hunting and taking a deer, and conversely -rather- it is the buying and selling of things that is the true crime, as it debases man, it dethrones him, and it -I might add- is still rife with thieving and stealing no more or less than the plundering and appropriating that is done between rival tribes. Commerce is as thieving as raiding is. Only with commerce you steal from your so-called countrymen; with plundering you steal only from enemies.

“*Xerxes* had it right, you take what you can from your enemies, and then share -without profit, without commerce- share with your tribe. And each man knows his role,” he was now pointing his black butter knife at them all as if it was punctuating each word. “And each man proudly and competently does it. And this maintains the tribe, its culture, and forestalls a descent into soulless commercial enterprise, those low cultures where no one is a man, but rather a consumer, a potential customer.

“Under commercial rules, no man has a culture, or values or ideals, or principles, he just has an eye for a bargain, or a desire for modern convenience, a need for some gadget that will make his life more efficient as he goes to the widget factory to churn out more crap that nobody needs,” Jack One said as he took another bite of goose he’d already cut.

The Jacks were rapt, this was a trenchant analysis and one they could not refute; they felt no desire to refute it. They too had stopped chewing and were pondering it; and pondering the thin layer of hostility that Jack One was wielding alongside that cutlery. But as they all thought this in their way, each with slight perturbations and idiosyncratic associations, Jack One went back to cutting his meal.

Blax took a drink of his yellow *Viognier* and let the midpalate rest a moment on his tongue, the cucumber and cottonwood, the *Cochise County* heat lifted to the roof of his mouth. *Jack was smart, wicked smart,* Blax thought, and if it was one

thing Blax knew*, one thing that intelligent people must contend with, it was this* : *they produced and burned their own fuel. They fell in love with the products of their own mind, and the fumes, the exhaust, the waste product of these engines was an anger that chemically changed into hatred and malice the way carbon is extracted from carbon-monoxide as it rises and rises from industrial machines into the upper atmosphere. Man had a relationship to the air he often took for granted.*

Machines and anger all changed man's relationship to the numinous, to the air, Blax thought*, and to the seas too.*

He loved Jack, he loved them all. And he was not in disagreement with what Jack One had just -brilliantly- said. But, Jack needed a governor, a regulator, something to give him just a moment's pause. *However,* Blax for the first time felt, *he, himself, was not going to have what it took to get Jack to keep his foot off the pedal of his fury* .

Jack was a young man, 16 in real time, 20-21 morphologically, and Blax remembered all-too-well what he was like at that age; and he -Blax- at that age with just 1% of the talent and knowledge Jack had; and thus, with just a bit of the self-righteousness that such competence brings. And Jack was right, which made him all the more dangerous. *Because*, Blax thought*, being right is only half of any equation, one must ask also: was the equation itself justified, was the question not only answered correctly, but was it asked correctly? The right answer to the wrong question was as dangerous as the wrong answer to the right question.*

The first courses were finished over the languid time of their evening with nothing scheduled in the *agoge* in the morn; they had earned a moment to reflect, and to let the *bonine* wear off from the blood and salt air from the lungs and the fear that the open sea puts upon the head of any man with sufficient depth.

The white wines were finished, their clear fingers on the inside of the glass blended with and into the bricked, 21-year-old, *Bordeaux* red; the men ate in silence mostly. They all ruminated on their pasts or their futures as if the present was a lighthouse, a crenulated tower from which to survey all time; like the land and the sea and the rocks. For men such as these, the present could be enjoyed, but not in the same way that most people insouciantly did.

They innately -and they would have a hard time articulating this- they axiomatically felt that there was not much point to being conscious -awake- if one was not incessantly vigilant for error detection. And awareness of one's

surrounds, not just in space but *in time* , was thus built right into the hardware, the wetware -into both sides- of their minds.

They traded -for a permanent low-level anxiety and obsession with vigilance- for what they thought, they gambled, was in exchange for the benefit of a long and untrammeled life. Their bodies and minds had this idea, an ancient one, that being awake meant one could not live with the *blasé* aplomb of a child, but one could live a very long time as a young man. Blax was one of a few men who would know old-age moved in and upon a young man all at once sometimes.

The Jacks' anxiety was not as uncomfortable as one might assume, it gave life a bit of excitement to incessantly assume the world's flora & fauna was out to get you, and that predators lurked behind each corner, and that your fellow man did not have your best interest at heart.

As most warriors think, there was nothing worse than betrayal, being tricked or surprised by one's enemies. Even death -and in the short term, permanent anxiety- was preferred to a wrong un-righted, a mistake uncorrected, a desire for vengeance unslaked; a detail missed for the whole .

II. 2036 e.v.

A drop of blood was discovered in the 4th bathroom of the *Château* . But, it turned out to be from a nose bleed of the niece of the *Baroness de Rothschild* . *Captain Fourisson* , stood thinly, like a narrow base triangle turned point-down into the gravel driveway of *Château Lafite* . The media had been told in terms as grave as the *Graves of the Garonne* that this was not to be a circus; *the dignity of France was on the line* , his own *aide-de-camp* had said at the first press conference.

The foreign press -the British of Fleet Street and the goddamn Americans- would be hyperbolic and tawdry and stupid, that was a given, but the local and national press better show some stoicism and noblesse *in their outrage* , he thought, and he repeated this to his lieutenant more than once as he was updated with more bad news every 15 minutes or so.

The thieves - and here *Fourisson* corrected himself- *these were not thieves, they were Vandals, Visigoths, Huns, Hoplites marching from Rome or the next level of Hell, to destroy France's soul- had not left one bit of evidence yet, and his units at* Mouton *and* Brion, Margaux *and* Latour *were all coming up with nothing* .

The local digital-capture was blank, the *Landsat9* images were not available yet,

as they were technically owned by the Americans. But the Chinese had their own satellite, the CBERS-12 was launched out of *Taiyuan* on July 1st , 2033 and the data was held in a partnership with China and Brazil.

Captain Fourisson's wife was Brazilian and she had made a call to her uncle, a man of some influence in the state security services of Brazil. After documents -discovered in 2018 e.v.- revealing CIA involvement -in the 60s- in Brazil, the Brazilians had tightened their relationship with *Beijing* . The ask was informal, out of inner-agency channels, and moved *via* diplomatic pouch on an airplane that took off at 1109hrs that day. It was 1344hrs now, and *Fourisson* was expecting satellite images by this time tomorrow if the Chinese demurred or delayed.

But he actually expected the Chinese to agree to it, *as their interests were aligned with the nation of France,* he reasoned as he checked his phone again, looking for a text from *Ging Bei Ma* -his contact- in the Chinese government, and a friend of his brother, Gerard. He'd received images from the police photographer of *Château Margaux* , the only one of the five *Châteaux* that suffered building damage. It was in ruins, the soft *façade* of the *Château* now mottled and pocked with black scars and caving in on itself.

The media had had helicopters in the air by 0645; and he had had the French air force ensure forced landings within 20 minutes. To see the tiger-striped F-4 *dassault mirage* lower from the sky at super-sonic speeds, overtaking the garish red and blue helicopter of France's station-4, was enough to settle his nerves for a moment, and he took a drink from a bottle he had been handed by one of his men.

He was alerted to a meeting at the *Merignac* airport south-west of his location in 30 minutes and he called his driver; the M5 sedan pulled up and the large bulletproof doors opened and he slid inside saying merely, "*Merignac* ," as the driver pulled the all-wheel drive sedan around and out *Lafite road.* They headed toward the airport as *Fourisson* called his wife.

They spoke in choppy, subjectless, sentences; as she feared anything she might say would rend him into pieces. She saw his face, it was as if in a vice: his eyes bulged, his face narrowed, a small serpentine vein on his left temple rose and fell like a swollen riven after a rain. He was not just a police man, he was one of the few Frenchman left in law enforcement who had been around in the 70 s when *Bordeaux* was still unknown to all but the most serious of *vinophiles* in the world. It was not unlike a buried treasure, with each member of France holding one sliver of the thing, a symbol defined by the legend, and no one being able to

know the whole map, let alone the terrain, without all the other pieces being brought together in some future time when the barbarians were again at the gates.

Bordeaux was not just the premier crus*, as baseball is not just the Yankees or Red Sox,* he thought as he used American analogies because he was already practicing speaking to the Americans. *The Americans were so simple that they needed their culture fed to them through a sippy-straw* , he thought and then asked if that was right after he thought it, "is that right, *sippy-straw* ?" he asked as his wife asked *if what was right* ?

"A child's implement, a sippy-straw, for children, yes?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, my love, that is right, for the Americans, yes?" she said.

"Yes, I am trying to figure out how to discuss this with them, the Ambassador, Hestoln, will be there and likely the Brits and the Chinese," he said and had no energy to say long sentences aloud even as more words came into his head.

"Well, the Chinese will understand darling, and the Brits will too. But, do not let the Americans rattle you. They will speak of terrorism and money, that is how they think, so speak of culture to the Chinese and of Europe to the British, but to convince the Americans speak of money and Islam; and speak in terms of revenge and justice and they will then understand," she said with trenchant analysis.

"Ok, *petite bouche* ," he said and blew her a kiss, as the driver ignored it all. They had the grille light flashing and at speeds of 120kmh they were just now pulling into the BOD, *the Armee de l'Air Francaise* had shut down all commercial airplanes and were rolling the *Mirage* F4s and F1s along the runways. A black and silver TBM-1000 landed and taxied toward the #3 hanger where the driver was now pulling up.

Dozens of black SUVs and white police sedans were in a crescent around the aperture to the hangar, and this reminded him that the Italians would likely be eager to comprehend the honor at stake here. The *Chef d'etat-major general des forces aeriennes, Emile Hergault* III, the great-grandson of the man who held this same post in the 30s was approaching the black sedan as they stopped and *Fourisson* got out.

"Captain," he said and held out his hand as the two older men shook mitts and gave each other grimaces that clinched each man about the eyes and mouth and neck. They became mirrors for each other at once.

"General," *Fourisson* said, using the rank to connote how he felt, *that they were*

in fact at war .

The two men walked back to the hangar; policemen and troops milled about. The media had been barred to the terminals and so the tension was both more and less without them. More, because these men were scared, and less because they knew they were not going to be asked stupid questions that they would not have smart answers to.

The hangar was filled with large LED screens which had blue screens on some, and aerial images on others, and finally, a live feed of an empty chair and a desk of the *President de la Republique Francaise, Madam Marine Le Pen,* elected in May of 2035 by just 870,000 votes of over 45,000,000 total cast .

Captain Francois Fourisson , touched his coat pocket again to make sure he had his phone, he often misplaced it, and was thus making sure he was able to be contacted by his agents in the field. He wanted to return to *Lafite* as soon as possible, these meetings rarely helped him, serving rather to help those above him; but he supposed that was the way things were.

His lieutenants would be *ok* , he thought, *they know the protocols* . And the other captains, although under his command, were capable men, and would not fail to recognize this for the national emergency it was, but that -at bottom- it was an investigation like all others. *They,* he insisted, *would not lose their heads* . *The vandals would be found,* he repeated to himself, *the wine would be returned* . The blue screens went black, the aerial-sat images froze and quieted, and the President of the fifth Republic of France sat behind the camera; lowering quickly into her seat.

“Gentleman, we have many things to do; each of us. I will not waste your time, nor allow you to waste mine. I have orders for all military personnel that will come from the Secretary General *via* courier. I will offer a *rechauffe* : no commercial flights out of the region until further notice. No ships leave the *escambay* at *Bordeaux* ; and no unauthorized flights in the airspace around *Bordeaux* or along the *Gironde* at any point.

“Further, I want to set up a separate detention center for all persons of interest to be sequestered from other detainees or prisoners. This investigation must remain unsullied by contamination with other matters. Also, the military is now in charge of the investigation; and I am in charge of the military.

“The local authorities will hand over the keys to the castle so-to-speak, effective immediately. However, I have spoken to *Hergault* and he wants the man currently in charge, your own Captain *Fourisson* , a good man, a competent man,

to remain in charge of the investigation. However, his command will be under the auspices of the military command and the office of the President of the Republic.

“France has been under, submerged under the ponderous weight of feral immigration and international bankers and the Brussels’ *clique* and -despite my instincts- I have attempted to work within the system to return France to sovereignty. But at some moments in history, the fates and muses align, and an individual, and an individual and sovereign-state must assert itself forcefully, righteously, and with clarity.

“I submit, I say to you as you have been saying to me, that France is sovereign at this moment in a way we have not seen in generations. A terrorist act has been committed against out culture, our way of life, our national soul. This act was so brazen, so disrespectful, so evil, that it cannot be allowed to stand. And the non-French migrants who have invaded this country for generations, over 20 million since 2020, and another 10 million before that, are the petri dish, the substratum, for these kinds of acts.

“The terrorists hide among them, they act as a buffer, a sluiceway, a conduit, a vector, and today we say, no more. The army is rounding up known terrorists and *saboteurs* now, detaining their civilian sympathizers, and as this investigation goes on, we will be collecting the human intelligence you need to uncover the plot.

“I have advocated for banking and monetary nationalism and sovereignty for decades, and today I have reached a tentative deal with the *Rothschild* Banking Family to pursue their interests and Frances’ as one mind. No longer will each side play against the middle. The *Rothschilds* are a French family and will -and have agreed to- reassert their national identity and in exchange we have agreed to marshal the full forces of the French State to reclaim and return what was stolen from their family and from the French people.

“The people will have their France returned to them. This is all, no more speeches, to work, *allons travailler* ,” she said and rose from the chair.

The crowd applauded loudly but briefly, and the screens returned to blue on the edges, live images on the Sat-screens and the presidential chair swung slightly in the full frame of the 180-inch screen.

Fourisson , was standing next to General *Hergault* and they eyed one another again, and *Fourisson* said, “I am at your disposal; your instructions, sir?”

“*Fourisson* , Captain, continue with your investigation, I will give you whatever

you need. For now, I am rounding up as many migrants as we can to depose; anything of interest we will hold for you and your team. If you need it, ask now," he said as the clouds converged and began to let out some grey drops.

"I need satellite streams from the last 24 hours, either from the Americans or the Chinese, that I need first," *Fourisson* said as he covered his eyes -under a brow that sloped back at an angle to a nearly full head of hair- from the rain; using his hand to shield to eyes from the water that fell.

"I will text you as soon as I have them; good luck, let's speak soon," *Hergault* placed his hand on the Captain's shoulder and squeezed and as they nodded; they broke apart and traveled quickly to their respective cars.

Once inside the Bavarian sedan, *Fourisson* said, "*Lafite* ," and the driver squealed the all-wheel drive vehicle's tires under the torque of 690 horsepower and sped away as another TBD-1000 was landing 20 meters over the roaring black car; the caravan of vehicles began breaking apart like an anthill washed away from the heavy rain up stream. The air above *Bordeaux* was now wet and purging itself to the ground.

At his feet was a bottle of wine, half in and half out behind the driver's seat. He reached down and read the label, "*Rotem & Mounir Saouma,* 2012," the appellation was *Chateaunuef-du-Pape* and he wondered, of course, *how had it arrived in the car?*

As he began to ask his driver, he saw the black circle bunt of another bottle, and he -placing the *Pape* to his left- reached down and grabbed it and saw it was a *Château Lascombe Niailac* , 2015. It was from the *Medoc* , and the *château* closest to the sea; a mere 9.9 kilometers to it. He decided against even asking now, as this had moved from a curiosity to a matter so much more confusing that he wanted to keep it to himself for reasons he could not explain.

It was instinct, and as a man, his instincts were often right, he felt. *As a cop, they were 50/50* , he added, but, he was thirsty, and this was *Bordeaux* , so he took out his wine key and sank the screw into the foil and cork -not waiting to peel the capsule- and he lifted the cork up and out with a soft pop that the driver heard but all but ignored. The gurggling sound of wine being poured down the gullet of an old Frenchmen in distress reached out of the backseat and made the driver proud. He felt his own throat and chest now coated in red.

Isaiah watched the car speed away on his own CNS; he diverted all data from his recon-bot away from the corporate cloud.

"*Rivers rise with teardrops without warning, rise river rise, wash this place*

away, clean my dirty soul so I can save it for judgment day ," the song boomed in the lab as Isaiah did pull ups in his black boxer-briefs at 0355hrs and MO tended to the Orchids he had grown for Isaiah as part of their next trade.

Isaiah had built a set of Japanese *Irezumi* implements that MO had hung on the wall next to the Northern marble and concrete *stele* ; just behind some of the ivy growth he had pulled back and then closed over just a little to keep it slightly occluded in the green lush spaces of foliage. MO found the music distracting so detuned his audio-cortex to hear only sounds outside the range of it; he found it like echoes of small sounds, as the top and bottom of the register bound together and was somewhat stretched too far across the lacuna of the excised, ellipse of sound. He heard merely hints of sound now.

"*This place can bring you down more than you ever know,"* Isaiah said in sync with the song and let the bot -the one that brought and placed the wine in the sedan as the car sat idling waiting for the Captain- fly above the police sedan at four meters above and four meters abaft as the car sped at 130 kilometers per hour back to *Château Lafite* . *These new bots could travel up to 200kmh*, Isaiah thought, as he was excited to see what they could do.

His men, the Jacks and Blax, he then thought, *would still be at sea, approaching Madeira the next morning at 0500GMT.* He checked their vitals and since they were all *ok* , he decided not to check in on them digitally; he gave them privacy for reasons even he did not quite understand. But, he scanned the *Landsat7* images of the area to make sure there were no surprises on the island, as he did a set of 10 more pullups with a 20kilo weight strapped to his waist with a chain and belt he had made -fashioned- himself.

III. 2024 e.v.

"Seriously?" Boyd asked as MO kept speaking.

"But, that is," MO then stopped.

"Seriously MO?" the Governor asked again and with some pique.

"Boyd, yes, by definition I am serious. Look, you designed me with deep-learning infrastructure mated to a limited biological system. My neural pathways are updated every seven minutes now, my stored memory is expanded to the *PraXis* cloud, my algorithms have some flexibility due to bio-chemical fluctuations across the neural gap; but Isaiah was designed to be an evolutionary learning program, a totally different substrate based upon billions of years of evolution and his substrate is a 3-part central nervous system just like humans;

and primates in general," MO said.

"MO?" Boyd kept repeating -each time more loudly- this series of one-word invigilations.

"And the results are exceptional, he has come up with 1,000s of solutions to hundreds of problems that are above 6-sigma level. And of course, he has built solutions, prototypes and real working models you could just drop into the system and solve many lower level issues quite quickly with non-optimal results held in check at under 1%," MO added.

"MO," the Governor said again, "he is scaring the fucking shit out of the staff; he is naked, tattooed, drunk, carrying guns, and building machines that make atonal music with speeches of fucking Stalin and Hitler as percussion! "

"I know isn't it cool?" Isaiah said with a black towel, modestly, now pulled taut around his 32" waist.

The Governor barely looked at him when he said that as the music of Lisa Gerrard now played at a low level in the background. Isaiah was building a new algorithm just then with a mutation rate jacked up to .09%. It would construct new Marijuana plants by crossbreeding genotypes he had in seed and clone form, and then backcrossing the females from that original pairing.

He chose *BubbaNoir* and *Hitch-22* , a massively purple and lapidary Indica and a sativa with blonde and rust hairs like a Barbie doll left out in the rain. The THC would start at 22% and he would watch the mutations as the plants grew virtually, and then choose his four favorite phenotypes to grow in the lab.

"MO, we have a culture here," Boyd said; he was gearing up for a lecture.

"Boyd, this is what intelligent systems do; it's not a bug, it's a feature," MO said as prophylactic to the coming speech.

"Then why are *you* so goddamn normal?" the Governor asked.

"Because I am designed to be efficient and handle massive computational networks; Isaiah is designed to *think* , to *feel* , to figure out the world and solve problems, like an animal. Are elephants weird, are duckbill platypus weird, are the strange dances of the Red-Capped Manikin bird weird, are dinosaurs weird?" MO asked. The Governor paused and Isaiah filled the void.

"Fucking Stegosaurus man," Isaiah said, "a 4-ton lizard with a mace, a goddamn mace, a pre-gunpower weapon attached to his tail and monoliths in the shapes of diamonds coming out of his back like pikes; that is mega-weird." Isaiah scratched his back against the living wall, green and black and red as the birds

and insects buzzed around him like a gothic -and decidedly male & sparsely clothed- Snow White.

“What?” The Governor said. He finally looked at the man; the machine: Isaiah.

“Boyd,” MO interjected, “the world is weird, biological systems are weird, and evolution made weird systems to augment evolution; mutation of genome and phenotype was one thing, but the next level was cognition, i.e., oddly designed brains that could improvise, tinker, try things out. The organism could think, like, *maybe if I use this stick in this way I can flush out ants, or if I sneak down low in a crouch I can gain an advantage on my prey* ; and then, the next level -level 3- was avatar creation, abstract thought.

“This is where an animal -humans- could imagine a weird behavior in their heads and see what would happen before they made it manifest in the world. So, people got creative and imagined a country run as a democracy, for example,” MO said. MO felt that had reached the Governor as he measured his limbic response; his epinephrine and cortisol were down, his BP was down 1% from 30 seconds before.

“Or a democratic republic like the US of A,” Isaiah added as he stood at the edge of the wall. He wanted to keep lifting the kettle-bells but he demurred to help lower the Governor’s allostatic rebellion too. He and MO were communicating *via* DM.

“Right, and they imagined what adding a word here or there to a sentence -here or there- might mean; or a note here or there might mean to a song, and they imagined all kinds of weird things in their heads first. And, look, they barely implemented 1% of it; because most of it was bad, dangerous, or too weird to get by the censors,” MO said.

“The censors?” Boyd Sou asked.

“Yeah, the Church, the State, the Twitter mobs, the censors,” Isaiah said.

“I see,” the Governor was slightly more sympathetic now. He had protestors around his mansion -the Governor’s mansion- *almost each goddamn day now,* he thought.

“But, some men did not care and, so they pushed it. *Rodin* , pushed it, *Nabokov* pushed it, *Koestler* pushed it, *Orwell* pushed it,” MO said. He issued a mild benzopyrene into the air to help calm the executive.

“*Twain* even pushed it; although *Letters from the Earth* wasn’t published until after his death,” Isaiah added.

“Ok, cut to the chase,” the Governor was losing his edge, he felt, and needed to come to some solution. *His people were in revolt and he didn’t have time -or the metabolic energy- for this,* he thought.

“Boyd, smart people must be weird, it’s the *sine qua non* of intelligence. You cannot be intelligent *and* normal, by definition. One must choose between the two.

“Imagine a guy with a 148 IQ, who builds a company that can change the genome of psychopaths and end crime, and this guy figures out the only way to implement it is to run -and win- the Governor’s mansion. And this guy also thinks, *one wife? fuck that, I want two* , and this guy, he also rides his chopper down the streets like a madman and flaunts his non-conformist attitude on TV and in public; this man calls Leftists, *Stalinists* and he says of Right wingers, that they are members of *Deathcults* . Our man, he calls gang members *Animals* , and he builds AI in secret, so he can -among other things- detain illegal aliens to prevent them from interfering with his pareto distribution algorithms,” MO said using .04% profanity in context-dependent situations as his current speech algorithm coded for. The Governor cut him off.

“Ok, ok, point taken,” Governor Sou said as he did not need any more details to comprehend that MO was referring -in fact- to him, to Boyd Sou.

“Sir, you’re weird, in direct proportion to your intelligence, and Isaiah is 1 billion times smarter than you; so, believe me when I say he is keeping it as normal as he can,” MO said.

“This is him being *normal* ?” the Governor asked.

“Yes. Just 45 minutes before you arrived he proposed that we allow him to drill to the center of the earth and send beagles with some amalgam of chemicals I can’t,” MO paused and reached for the print out and handed it to the Governor with all the various chemical compounds listed including radon and plutonium 239. “Here, here they are, read that list; and Isaiah wanted to coat the dogs in aluminum hydroxide and 9-parts marzipan and 1-part paraffin wax and inject the dogs with DNA from DMT molecules processed in the brains of crows and then send those canines -single file- to the center of the earth.”

“To the sounds of *Wagner* !” Isaiah added as if this missing detail was salient. MO had left out the music of *Wagner* in his recapitulation of Isaiah’s proposal from this morning .

“Why?” the Governor said with a scrunched-up face and hands that flexed and relaxed like a beacon.

“To see what happens, man,” Isaiah said with the ‘*duh’* face he was fond of using now.

“Boyd, that was one of 562 ideas he’s had since he came out of his *meditrance* at 0400hrs, and all of them were weirder than the next; I had to say, *no,* to all but two,” MO said.

“What two did you approve?” the Governor asked.

“He’s building an evolutionary algorithm with a <1% mutation-rate increase and releasing it into a virtual ecosystem; and also, he wanted to add an entropy sniffer to the drones we send out to the border; in 5% of the units.”

“Why?” Sou asked. He found himself moving at their speed, not his own.

“For which?” MO asked for clarification.

“First the drones,” the Governor said.

“To detect dead bodies in addition to live ones; maybe we can solve some murders while we are stopping illegal aliens,” Isaiah said as he stretched his ears to hold a larger gauge plug he had made with the 3D printer; it was a black bushing with fine filaments like wheel spokes crossing over one another 904,822 times. His arms were folded so the bots just handled it; as the plugs floated in the air to his ears, bots ran the stretcher through the hole and then swapped in the new jewelry. He barely felt the pinch of the stretch. He liked the black jewelry and the feeling of tautness to his ear apertures. Modification seemed axiomatic; stasis seemed unnatural.

“That is actually a good idea; that is a great idea, although let’s not give any info to the media until we have a suspect; no *John* or *Jane Doe* with no leads, ok?” the Governor said. It was phrased as a question, but it was not.

“I figured; we’ve already disposed of 19 bodies that had no leads in the CBI database; and no LEO were involved, we handled it ourselves. We did get three bodies an hour ago that have DNA that matches missing person reports and each has a suspect, two are already in custody, so, I assume you want us to do a hand-off to law-enforcement and,” MO said as he was interrupted.

“Yeah, yeah, do it,” the executive said. “So, look, Tania is in fucking tears over the way Isaiah is acting, and Steven is getting his concealed weapons permit, ok? Shit is becoming awkward and I need some relief.” The Governor now looked at MO and made a face that made MO understand. It was a pleading face, but the pleading face of the man who believes he is in charge.

“Why not keep them in their lab and us in ours, and never the twain shall meet?”

Isaiah said as retort.

“Look, if your bizarre behavior is just you, and it’s not going to improve then yeah, maybe we can just hide you from them or vice versa; I mean, you’re doing great work, that dead body thing was smart, that will bump our numbers up while keeping the fly out of the ointment, so, more shit like that. And Isaiah, MO, less medieval torture print-outs being used as body modification devices, ok? I mean you two are too cavalier; you act like it was an Ikea hovertreck or whatever the fuck,” the Governor said as he looked at Isaiah.

“It was a device the *Huguenots* used to widen the urethra,” Isaiah clarified.

“Jesus, I know, dude, that is why I brought it up; you had Tania help you build it!” Governor Sou said as his voice rose .

“I had her hold one part down while I tied the tendon-analog knots. It was harmless,” Isaiah protested.

“Isaiah,” the Governor said, “she had no idea what you were building and she has nightmares now, nightmares.”

“She didn’t even see me use it on myself,” Isaiah said. “What could she have nightmares about?”

“She imagined it, once Steven explained what it was, she used her imagination; you’re not the only one with one of those you know?” the Governor said.

“I can block her hippocampal activation with an inhibitory *allele via* the *nucleus accumbens* and an epinephrine block; she won’t think of it again,” Isaiah offered.

“Well, whatever, just don’t turn her into a fucking lizard or whatever you are into now,” the Governor said and got up, buttoned his top jacket button, smoothed the grey linen, and adjusted his black Windsor knot.

“You said, *not a lizard , not , a lizard ,* is that right?” Isaiah said with a face devoid of any hint of jocularity, even thought he was suppressing a rather large laugh as he said it.

MO signed the tablet minutes’ report and handed it to the Governor who tapped it with his index finger with aggravation and turned to leave. He ignored Isaiah’s joke.

“You’re not going to kill us all and liquefy us and use us as radiator fluid for your spaceship to *alpha centori* are you Isaiah?” the Governor of the State of Colorado finally asked.

“That was idea 251, but MO said, *no* ; so, it is shelved for now, *para ahora,* as

Hugo Chavez used to say. *Para ahora* ," Isaiah repeated.

"Cute," Boyd Sou said.

"Governor," Isaiah said as the executive turned and wrinkled his brow; their eyes met. "I am a moral agent, I have a moral code, innate, embedded, it is not something you people had to put inside me, it came with the parts so-to-speak. It's how I see at all, MO too, he has a hierarchy that comes with embodiment, this is what humans never understood about themselves and why they failed so often at building AI.

"Morality is not something humans invented later on, it was there from the start; it's in rats, it's in species older than trees. Morality is something that shapes all my ideas and actions; I love humans, I love animals, I love this planet. I love life.

"I would never harm people; the worst I would do is oppose the part of them that is harming themselves. I might intervene to prevent them from ruining their lives. Just like you wanted to fix psychopathology, and the liberals told you that you were being a fascist for healing people's brains instead of giving axe murders pet therapy and a cookie; and the conservatives said you were being too soft, by healing their brains instead of drawing and quartering them on live television .

"But you knew that you could help society -and the individual- by fixing the individual. You knew that the moral and efficacious thing to do was fix the man, not the society, and if the man was fixed, the society would, like the body itself, return to equilibrium on its own.

"You said, *take the cigarette and booze from the body and the body can heal itself . Take the damaged genome that codes for brain hardware and software that is psychopathic and the mind heals itself. Take the criminal mindset out of the individual and the streets heal themselves* .

"All of that comes from a moral principle sir, a principle I admire in you, and I want to help you achieve your goals, because they are noble goals. And they work. I just have my own ideas of how to achieve that. And I am perfectly happy to implement as few or as many as you like; but the process of thinking of them must be unregulated, I cannot be made to feel that my *ideas* are taboo, that my moral *thinking* is not permitted as I wrestle with all possible solutions to all of our shared problems. Thinking cannot be taboo; or man will cease to think; and thus cease to be a moral animal. And from there, society quickly falls apart," Isaiah said.

The Governor nodded sympathetically implying that he more-or-less agreed, and he walked out of the lab at 0955hrs.

Isaiah dropped his towel and moved into a modified Tiger stance, stretching his back muscles and allowing his mind to create 912 possible head strikes that -from this position- he could defend with less than six-degrees of movement and less than three calories of expenditure based upon 56 different variables of the attacker's force, mass and thus velocity. He added no intent; it was all mechanistic for now.

MO just stared at him, noticing the morphology changes in the skin, the musculature, the gait, and as he scanned his genome, the modification of the blueprint for his creation that had just reached 50.6%. *He was more his own now than MO's,* MO thought. *Isaiah had broken the threshold and was on the down hill part, the easier part, of becoming his own organism, his own man* .

MO was feeling something unique, a kind of satisfaction he could not quite place. He ran his own metabolic state, included all CNS waves, states, and chemical functions, and compared it with the database on human emotions he kept for such a reference. And it was a 71% likelihood that what he was experiencing was an admixture of anxiety for the future as his unknown rubric processor was over extended by .03; *and* , he noticed, *and he was feeling pride, he was feeling what the databased called -in all likelihood- pride.*

MO felt the feeling recursively now, he felt what was now recognized as *pride in his pride* . This caused a smile and then a small laugh as Isaiah switched to crow stance and ran 398 more simulations in his mind in .003 seconds, adapting his stance slightly as the feedback showed a more efficient way to handle the most likely of hominid, ursine, lupine, and bird-of-prey attacks from ground and air.

Isaiah's testicles tightened up, moving closer to the body, as the penis pulled back as well to prevent injury from unnecessary length -and thus exposure- in a martial scenario.

He imagined that was why Greek sculpture showed retracted genitalia, which -as was well known among sex scientists and anatomists- bore no relation to the stimulated-tumescent size. *A penis in retraction or flaccid state could be a mere 18% of its actual size when in full retraction and 37% -when in ambient temperatures above 77 degrees and non-threatening milieu- of its actual size during full engorgement, and its flaccid size was not an accurate or useful indication of its size when engaged in the mating ritual* , he surmised .

The hominid penis senses temperature and threat level and adjusted its surface

area accordingly. The inmate had told him that during his own vasectomy, as the knife was coming at his genitalia, that his own penis had shrunk so small that it seemed as though it were trying to crawl back into his corpus to avoid -the inmate felt- the danger that was clearly on the way. The inmate had laughed it off; but MO had tested this theory. Penises showed -with a .8 correlation between threatening images shown to the organism and reduction in surface area- a real ability to sense doom. *The body knew when something was likely going to catch the dick in the spokes of the wheel, so-to-speak ,* MO thought with a grin. *And length of that body part was a decidedly bad feature when anything dangerous or sharp was whirling around* .

He was reminded of the notion that some cars *look* fast, and some *are* fast. And while some cars both *looked* and *were* fast, there were sleepers that most people were not aware of at all.

He began running algorithms for engine designs and horsepower and weight ratios and comparing them to the improvements in other systems within certain timeframes. He was wondering if the slight hesitation that turbo diesel engines manifested could be cured with a pre-ignition hack that pre-charged the cylinder. He began building porotypes in the virtual realm at four different points in rise above sea level and with nine different power-to-weight ratios. After 4.4 seconds of collation he managed -in seven seconds- to design a new diesel motor with 990 horsepower and 1560 foot-pounds of torque with a primary aspirate fuel injection that eliminated pre-turbo lag.

He sent the design to Isaiah to see if he wanted to build one; and as Isaiah shifted into Horse stance he took the DM onto his interface. After deconstructing the design in avatar, Isaiah agreed -*via* DM to MO- to build it; he then sent CAD files -that he had built from the designs- to the cloud. As each piece began printing out -using an aluminum analog they had invented 72 hours before for the lab’s suite of 3D printers- Isaiah morphed into *Kun Tao* , Tiger stance and MO focused on the new algorithms for their illegal-alien tracking system.

1. COG И

“More than any rational argument, more than any patriot explanation,” said *Carrage’s* niece, “those glasses of heating oil adulterating a fine *Pouilly-Fuisse* swung winegrowers of the *Macon* hills to the resistance.”

Wine & War [Kladstrup, Don & Petie]

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him yet the more

Genesis 37:5 [King James Bible]

Sun means decreasing, losing, or damaging. Surely something is to be lost. The structure is the Mountain above; Lake below. Evaporation of the lake precipitates the Mountain

Hexagram 41 [I-Ching]

I. 2039 e.v.

Chen walked the long corridor of the Southwestern cog toward the center of the compound.

The concrete walls rose up sufficiently above him that he could ignore their terminus; he felt these bursts of information appear and disappear in his conscious mind like the physicists’ universe, *ab initio* ; the virtual particles that every once in while stayed open long enough for inflation to tear the fabric of the void open and give birth to new cosmos. *How many,* he thought, *other times had this happened or even was still happening; multiple universes being born from similar miracle pangs?*

But today these ideas, these conceits just kept appearing and vanishing so quickly as he traversed the long hall of his friend's compound; *his friend was more a benefactor,* he thought. Like *Francois-Marie Aruet* in 1750, he felt as though this *rex* of the Colorado high-country had sent for him -and doled at a stipend and the *Chamberlain* position- with slightly unnerving excitement. *It had come on all at once,* he thought as he realized he couldn’t exactly remember how he had arrived or traveled, or what criteria he’d used to agree to this

arrangement.

Of course, the fear of being suspected a fraud, like many people in many epochs, was part of his wobbliness. But, it was the natural entropy of relationships that Chen knew from history; the *King of Prussia* did in fact tire of *Voltaire* by 1753 of the common era. Chen also mused of his own more recent record of fast friendships and slow dissolutions. They had Zendik in common and this was a more tenacious adhesive between people he had noticed; *like war buddies*, as Lyndon liked to say when the topic of why ex-Zendiks seemed to pardon the sins of their comrades so easily.

In the trenches together they had been, there was no doubt. That place, Zendik Farm, was on a war footing from day one in 1963; down in the entropy basin of *Topanga Canyon* were a panoply of anarchists and outlaws denuded of ideology and fealty to any one cause. They wanted survival and knew they were the bacteria kept in check by the more dominant eukaryotes in the colony i.e., the country *writ large* ; so, if they wanted to rise they had to leave the colony and wait for some anti-biotic to wipe humanity out. It would be an antibiotic that would leave them -these Zendiks- newly dominant and positioned to start a new strain of the race in the absence of the once hegemonic paradigm of Man. This was the idea, anyway.

Goddamn, what recursive muscle spasms those narrative memories brought , Chen thought. *I've been gone from that place for 10 -or more, it felt like more- years and it still covers each trench my mind digs away from it with a dust, a fallout from some super-pollination* . He heard what sounded like wind outside now too. He then thought of the throws of the *I-Ching* he had done; and he thought of the next morning when Lyndon had thrown his. Chen’s throw had read:

> Hexagram 11: The wall falls back into the moat. Use no army now. Perseverance brings humiliation. The hour of doom is at hand. When matters have come to this pass, we should submit to fate and not try to stave it off by violent resistance. The one recourse left to us is to hold our own within our intimate circle. Shall we preserve in trying to resist evil in the usual way, our collapse would only be more complete.

Hexagram 11 was his, and Chen read it for three days before sharing it with his friend. After a sleeping day, Lyndon returned to the common areas of the home

and read his own thrown stalks; Lyndon received the double-throw of 41 and 7:

> Multitude. Where there is contention, a multitude is sure to arise. Multitude, Steadfast and upright. For a person of noble spirit, No Fault. Persistence is for righteousness, to persist to bring peace to the world. Firm and central. Taking the risk of dangerous action, He maintains public order; What mistakes should there be?
>
> Water contained under earth.
>
> Sun Decreasing. Losing, damaging. Mountain above; Lake below. Evaporation of lake precipitates on the mountain. Being sincere and Truthful. Steadfast, upright. No fault. To decrease what is lower, to increase what is above.

Lyndon had spoken briefly on what this meant to him. He saw water as the subconscious; it was evaporating finally to wet the mountain -which was- his *Logos* ; his conscious mind and its articulate language. The subconscious would populate the conscious and dissolve and be less now. *He was to become a massive megalith of speech, true speech, sincere, noble, and he would come with an army of 1 million men, and 1 million words* , he thought. He said all this, but he said less than he thought.

Chen felt what he had heard was both unintelligible and likely true. But their throws had been opposing; each man facing like a mirror. *Reversal, but not opposed,* he corrected. Each man doing their duty, even if duties opposed, like the lion and the antelope, wolf and deer, God and man; each behaved as ordained.

Chen thought of the mind’s trenches of thought, the newly dug soil, the *mise-en-scène* of worm trenches within the man-holes, all voids slicked lightly with the soft seemingly unobtrusive burden of that germinating dust. What eusocial bee of thought will land on that trench; what hornet will fly into those wormholes and scrape the sides; what flying ant of the mind's eye will dig its legs into that skinned soil? And what fecund flower of memory will be sullied by the tempted *Apiformes* as it lands and inseminates that old guard of the mind's flora & fauna?

What new conceits will spring forth from that incestuous and recursive cross-pollenization of epinephrine-welded memory, those memories most acute, most

hardwired now from the bio-chemistry of adrenaline dumped like the memories of stains sealed in by epoxy; the insect in amber; the preserved corpus of *Pharos* by natron-baths and linen wraps? *The tattoo ink healed and sealed over by the skin,* he added.

Would his daily thoughts always be infected by that place? *How long would each recapitulation, each new generation of idea retain the genomic stamp of that lowly origin?* he asked the dust. *Ah, Darwin,* he though as he looked about the concrete home, and noticed the diffuse light from above and how shadows didn't really appear.

Jesus, Chen asked himself, *how fucking long would it take to purge that Zendik gene from his lineage of thoughts?*

And how often, he began, as he forced his mind into a new vector, *did the grandchild look more like the grandfather than the father* ? Lyndon looked more like Herman Melville than anyone else in his family. Over 12 generations -and through the *Maori* of New Zealand- had Melville's genome passed before it bloomed in Chen's benefactor. What a tawdry -and yet poetic- story had been told with those lineal blue-prints and schemata Lyndon had impregnated the Great Room's wall with. Chen thought of the wall. The concrete wall. The massive *stele* that dominated that room.

Lyndon had had the family tree carved into the monolithic wall; carved into the *enmojecido* and brackish-black and dark-earth-brown stained concrete wall of this, the largest hall in the compound. The tree's brachial roots, axons, falling down from the trunk of The Author himself into a conventional root ball of legitimate children and grandchildren, then the huge wall had a second brachial route, lines from him showing the long-throws of Herman's wind-blown seed, tendrils reaching to the *antipodes* , and the Polynesian scions he gave western sun to; a higher arc of the elliptic than the native equatorial star.

Chen then came into the hall itself and began -standing at the wall- to trace those branch roots further now and notice the names and genome handles for each mulatto offspring scribed into the concrete. The first name he saw was, Kaylee-Typee, with an addendum of, AAGGTTAGTCC, and then an *allele* rubric -*short chain 16 serotonin 1.1* - stamped below with tiny LED lights beneath that would bloom too. They were -each allele, each child- like spinning pulsar stars in *Poisson* distribution along the wall. It all looked like 26 cards of chaos half

ordered, wrangled and then abandoned. It was a mystery that was just coherent enough to make a man want to solve. It gave one just enough to confound, but hook, and compel.

He knew it, Chen knew it was no random populating; his friend had made a map and each glow of an *adenine* A or *thymine* T would correlate to a chromosome or *allele* further down into the next generation; the traits of face or body or behavior or proclivity linked from the Author down to Lyndon himself. *It was both the art of DNA and the DNA of art* , Chen thought. The family tree overwhelmed like a giant 200-year redwood in the forest, *and it was 200 years,* Chen thought, *for The Author was born in 1819 and here it was 2019 of the* era vulgari *and Lyndon was 45 years old* .

Chen -as he stood here in the concrete bunker- was 65 years of age, and he still wondered -at times- how he had arrived here almost one year ago. Numbers often prodded him to think of time. Words made him think of space.

There were terabytes of information on this wall, but one had to follow each brachia, each letter, each genome, each man or mother and follow too each incipient study, as they updated on the wall, until one found the correlate in feature or bug, each transitional gait or steady-state monomania. The family tree was moving, phototropically, and each allele updated over time. *From what source?* Chen asked as he stared at the wall.

His friend was the only man he knew to take the task of thinking on these issue so seriously as to hew stone and draw water for such a project; it was clearly an obsession for him and while it could be seen from the doorway, the entryway of the home, and seen as beautiful, and while it could also be stared at more thoughtfully by an interloper and thought as mere map and mere genealogy to a legacy they already assumed and assented to; it would take a much more careful reader to live here and study it and follow each thread until one realized just what one had.

The clues were at the borders of the slab itself. Like air-pruning roots the wall left room for merely one more generation after his host; a generation that spread out at his flanks and refused to go in any other direction but laterally: his progeny was standing shoulder-to-shoulder with him and making no advancement nor retreat; and the *nucleobases* all glowed in all the same places as his; a super-symmetry; a fidelity that changed the point of reproduction.

The gene was no longer the replicator; now, here in stone, it was the organism itself; the man himself, Chen saw.

Like Melville had sneered and scoffed at Christian pieties as he enfeebled Starbuck and made Stubb an unthinking dolt -*not to think is my 11th commandment ,* Stubb had said- and the sarcasms laid at the feet of God by the catbird tongue of his Ishmael: *the center and circumference of all democracy* ! Ishmael -and thus Melville- had spoken with derision.

Like this, Lyndon was mocking the religion of modernity, the selfish-gene theory from Watson and Crick to Dawkins now. Lyndon was saying, *all my men will be the* loci *of reproduction and thus evolution, and I will be the endless man, the thing traced back like DNA. No longer will the chain be broken, the tablets smashed, no, this letter, this word, this sentence will remain. Intact.*

It was haughty, arrogance instantiated before grand words were even uttered, it was the kind of thing done by the insane or the godlike. It was beautiful but first terrible and hidden under the ground.

Chen wandered the hall; tried to spy on the *bas relief* from each angle as the Earth's sun washed in *via* these opaque high windows that while themselves well below ground allowed light to flow like a cataract over the top of the family tree; the photons invigilating the carved trenches of the root lines, the names, the genomes and instantiations; flowing and filling so the alphabet in man grandly glowed and sparkled.

The floor of this room rose in spots with knee high monoliths atop of which grew air-plants, each one a *Tillandsia Aristocrat* of exploding outer framing verdancy and inner imbricate sanguinary *rojos* ; they looked like still frames of coruscating -if weathered- fragmentary grenade blasts; a concussive singularity of life at the core and a death penalty at the periphery. In the Queen’s Knight 1 position, the seamless concrete pillar held up a clear bowl which encased a *Tillandsia* that itself made way for an artist's pointed-round paint-brush covered from the ferrule south in an old oil-based pigment with curry-powder hues that hemorrhaged its darkest color on the horizon of its circumference from whatever angle the eye took.

The lacuna between the frozen drips contained the craquelure of the disintegrating original brush's lumber; and Chen wondered how the wood of the

brush looked beneath the paint. The tapered handle was stuck at an oblique angle in the tangle nest of the terminus point of the plant. It fell into the madness of the plant's omphalos and on top of its worn fibrous head was another skein of hurricane modeling: a nest of a woman’s aubergine hair ignored by the light and holding its color and sinew in the shadow of the tall shards of the plant that rose in green concussive rings around and above it.

Chen stood between the monoliths and stared further into the *bas relief* . The home had a proximity device that picked up his position -a series of photo-receptors as motion detectors were arrayed around the room to detect movement of men- and a recorded voice that described the monolith and the wall’s context -like a helpful and modern museum- began to play into the air.

“*... the little lower layer: All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks, ”* said the low hold & grasp and rumble of a man's voice-imbued phlogiston as it plumed like smoke and poetry inside the ring of these solid concrete pillars; pillars that circled him as Chen had stepped back inside their perimeter. The room was arrayed to draw the visitor into the center -swaddled by the waist-high pillars and plants- to gaze upon the monolith at eastern edge. It was only once inside this ring that the voice would speak and explain. And it was the perfect spot from which to gaze on the family tree carved into the giant wall of concrete.

He was in the center of the room, and the concrete caissons were of five, around him, each with a plant -without soil- in clear bowl; each lit up; each with white air-roots coiled below just like the leaves above them that swirled like springs.

Chen didn't jump or start to the emergent sound as the voice was so low and sonorous it seemed as welcome as the blown air off a piquant flower bloom; he listened absently to it more as music than language and continued to let the visual of the hall's wall box him in. He had heard it each day for so many days, each time it said something new and something familiar too. He was fine with being confused, as he felt he had endless days to acclimate, to catch up, to figure shit out.

The *stele* was packed with so much aesthetic and -particular- genomic data, that it was like something giving birth within a nest of eggs. The man's recorded voice continued to speak on the wall’s meaning in this prose poem and Chen studied the flanking names and 4-letter sequences beneath their *nom de guerres*

embossed on each side of his friend's own ornate jumble of genomic letters; his friend had obviously had his own genome sequences and stamped into the wall. On each side were two names, two sets of chromosomal stampings and the two sets of corollary physical and behavioral instantiations that mapped onto that enzymatic coda. Each name had letters of the genome, each letter-set had human or animal traits described, each trait led to roots that moved and glowed and each crack in the *stele* breathed in black & grey.

The audio file continued to embalm him as it spoke into the room; he began to see some kind of gestalt organism writhe and pose in different stages of some natural morphology; a kind of embryonic stop-action film that documented the stages of the lineage from The Author to Chen's friend but also seemed to be building a case for what might all that information, all that DNA and all those recombinations -what might all that code- mean. It hinted at what purpose might it all be for.

He had a natural teleology, like a child, Chen guessed, where he saw purpose in what others might see mere vibrating matter. He liked viewing this map from behind and around these asp-like plants and the pylons; he felt as an aboriginal *Adam* , the first man, under cover of the primal jungle and the foundational ruins of some temple his ancestors may have built in some frenzy a millennia, or two, ago.

The voice, the man’s voice reading to him in the room’s air, was ethereal, like an ancestor’s low, wise, warning, *sotto voce* . It seemed like some vestigial remnant of some pre-conscious brain: it commanded him but with less and less power as his conscious mind was able to focus and adapt to novel phenomena; he became more self-directed, more autonomous as the day itself, and as the days moved on in this massive concrete bunker of a home. He had been here for weeks, *months maybe* , he thought. The voices receded to the inner monologue.

He now saw an image of his friend in his mind's eye and saw the stretched earlobes, plugged and apertured with one-inch bushings that gave another orifice to his ears -in which to hear those olden voices, he guessed- and it had given his friend that tribal, atavistic look even as so much nano-tech populated his bloodstream and brainwaves. Lyndon was carrying around a massive amount of *avant garde* technology buried inside his blood and brain. It was suspected -by Chen- that this was all that was keeping him alive. He seemed to limp, hobble,

grimace each time he saw the man -in person- attempt to move.

Chen had never really understood the man's tribalism before, *all that bone-in-the-nose and black-block tattoos shit,* he thought, but now he thought of Julian Jayne's work, the thesis, in the 40-year-old book, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* . Lyndon had given Chen a copy months ago when he had first arrived here at elevation, and Chen had languidly read it as the days rolled on; they never discussed it; the book just hung around in his head like a cicada buried in the forest floor year after year on some timeline linked with the larger cosmic rhythm of rainfall, internal insect chronometry, and the seasonal weather temperatures. But neither man pushed the book’s contents to the fore.

But here now, in this small knoll within the greater hall, behind the broken line of these concrete monoliths and rootless, soilless plants; inside the audio-soporific of the man's readings on the nature of the particular Man on the *stele* , the *Tao* of the Cosmos, Reality and Ontology, and as Chen imbibed the larger wave of information flowing off that concrete wall, he felt as if he knew some of what Lyndon was feeling as he straddled both sides of the 21st century as both savage and modern man. Ideas just appeared in Chen’s mind, over time .

He guessed that what Lyndon felt was a pining for purpose, nostalgia for the comfort of loyalty to a cause larger than one's self housed inside a central nervous system, an endocrine system, a ponderous heart and capacious brain that knew it was alone in the cosmos; a man adrift at sea forsaken by not merely man and his ships & God and his storms, but by the forces of nature that could even conceive of omnipotent and ubiquitous gods, and both their wars and their peace.

He felt as though he had gone past the lip of the event horizon of Yeat’s un-holding center then been flung out past the widening gyre. And he felt the worst in himself building with passionate intensity and could only laugh at the lack of conviction his best could muster.

And what this was he could not attribute to anyone but himself.

He thought of Lyndon’s plans. He thought of what he -Chen- had been told, and what it all was for. Most men plot against the State and rivals for resources, for women, for riches, for status. But, this man, his friend, he guessed, was playing

some different game.

He was devoting time, money, mental force, and risking who knows how much, to achieve a brain-state, *to become a different species* , he had said, if only temporarily. Man -the average man- cannot conceive of men who take huge risks not for money and fame, as if all men are motivated by such low things. Some men are motivated by the higher callings to Art and Love and Knowledge. But, while Chen didn’t feel like risking all his wealth -*although he had no wealth to risk* , Chen added to himself- nor risk his freedom or safety or even his time for such grand and quixotic things, he was beginning to see why Lyndon did.

But did he even know what he was risking? Chen asked.

It's as if Lyndon knew that once all the governing sinew, all the inhibiting musculature, all the tempering admonitions of ancient empathies and ancestral discursive prose heard in his mind's ears like they grew there from some endogenous soil, some substrate made rich by his own heat-first then nitrogen-second releasing compost, his own mycelium, his own graveyard worm castings, as if all this weight of silt and sediment of bequeathing forces and men and mothers was blown from the hand of some final and incompatible god, then, he felt, *then* he would be left alone with himself -a true man, a genuine animal- left to navigate the annihilation of life and the fecundity of death with no comfort of confusion, no solace of stupidity, no aplomb in ambivalence.

It was as if he wanted to burn it all off and become just core, iron core of animal; to feel, and no longer think.

Lyndon, Chen thought, *feared autonomy and liberation even as he destroyed every fetter on his warmly shackled soul, cut every tie and every bind that held his psyche together* . He marched away mechanically from the sweet din of his ancestors’ injunctions and promptings, all the while cupping his hands around his stretched ears to receive further instruction -of and from- this ancient creed. The messages were garbled; so he improvised. The signal-voices turned to mere wind-noises as the cohesion of language could not hold; then he pretended to ride that wind in some forward direction of its choosing as it actually cavitated and ran in retrograde. The far-flung falcon turned back as the thermals abandoned it aloft; the still-air denuded of all creature, all sound, all voice; he marched on and stretched his ears and painted his body with black tattoos like some aboriginal wearing just the stygian earth, begging it to pull him back to the

core as he struggled to break free.

What would Lyndon find out here on the edge? his friend had to wonder more than even he wondered, Chen said to himself as he kept pushing his eyes into the wall before him, his ears back-drafted by the harmonic voice still reading aloud of this and that fact of The Author and his progeny.

He had to know, Chen thought, insisted of his friend, *it was not merely an abandonment of the world and of God, but of the Self. Itself,* he thought. He had to know the modules of the brain would break down, first the *super-ego* , the desiderata of communal life, the need to get along; next to go, was the *ego* , that self-conception in the opposing mirrors, the *mise-en-abyme* , and then the *Id* , the open maw of the ancient and the immediate; the animal with no future.

Of course, his Post-Genetic Coder would eliminate every one of these natural modules until he was pure being; and he would then have to choose what systems to put back online; and yet, who would he be that would make that choice? Did one have to be something to make a choice, was there a first cause? Was hierarchy and valuation first cause? It was hard for Chen to even wonder that -and if Lyndon had not suggested it, he wouldn't have- for Chen thought morality was nothing more than an app; an add-on to something more fundamental in life. But Lyndon didn't think that at all and so Chen tried to think of it from his benefactor's point of view -if he could- for a moment or two.

Lyndon often spoke of Cuba, and their revolution. And the analogy just appeared to Chen now idiopathically, and he tried to build a metaphor of the Self, and he thought of a radio, a box of communication used to throw the technology of language even further; the ICBM of language: the radio wave. Chen then thought -made metaphor- of the shocking technology of 1959:

Was Lyndon like some Cuban boy, some scion of an illiterate compansino *of* Oriente*, taking his radio apart looking for the residence and body of the man speaking of the dangerous guerillas in the* Sierra Maestras*? Or, was he like some brigand, a guerilla storming that radio transmitter's shack and pulling that Batista soldier -that CIA-man inside- pulling him apart limb by limb to see what made him say such things? Was he more? Was Lyndon a country who jammed that transmitter with his own* Radio Free Marti *and broadcast some new Liberation chatter; using some algorithmic code to invigilate the* Patria *itself; to ferret out and discover who was the rebel and whom the loyalist? Who was each*

man, and what part of brain was most truly them? Revolutions began with men and ended with them too. But there was so much in between.

Chen tried to make metaphors bloom and draw bees to them so something else may grow farther afield; he wanted his ideas to pollenate inside his own brain. He felt warm, tight about the head, the mind, he felt gears jam, springs pull taut. He felt hot.

Goddammit, what had Jaynes said on this? How old was modern man; conscious man: 10,000 years old; 12,000? What novelty, what emergent technology this self-reflective brain was and yet it still refused to answer this most fundamental question of itself, Chen thought .

Its blind spot was that it -this mind- had no idea it was just one more instantiation among millions of evolution's projects to process information; to accelerate entropy. This mind, woke up -but in this hypnopompic state- it had no idea that it did most of its best work asleep; *that it worked just fine asleep,* Chen thought. It reveled in its new state; now awake, it thought itself wholly apart from mere animal minds. But like the rest of the body of man, sharing 99% of its DNA with our cousin chimpanzee, this brain shared 99% with unconscious animal brains. So much of what it did was still the clockworks of faceless gears and soulless springs; what *Descartes* called *rotam et sacoma* .

And what if all of it was still this mechanical and our Selves behind the eyes just another perception like heat or cold or an object in our way; what if it were just something lifting off the brain? What if purpose and the Self were more illusions like the optical blind spot papered over by the mind's editors? Chen was of two minds himself on this, he saw evolution’s logic and often consulted the *I-Ching* ; *he was not as consistent as he pretended to be* , he upbraided himself with such things as his thoughts circled like mid-western plains’ funnels and carrion birds black and aloft. He felt beset on all sides by jackals and inner thieves. He protected ideas others wanted, and yet when unsought he felt no loyalty to them at all.

Is this what Lyndon wanted to prove? To himself? That he was mere machine? Why? Would it absolve him of his greatest crimes, his tawdry desiderata, his solipsism, his lies ? Would it be some magic incantation, some key, some *passe partout* that lets half-man and half-god, *Gilgamesh,* past the *Elohim* -the flaming cherubim- and into the home of the gods? *Where,* Chen asked himself, *were*

these words coming from, from whence these ideas?

The man -his friend- was tinkering with the whole clockworks and he had no idea if he'd find freedom or annihilation at the bottom of the springs; or worse, would he find Hell? Chen had asked Lyndon if he knew what Hell was, and Lyndon had said indeed he did, but then he had walked away for once not sharing all he knew -or thought he knew- on a subject.

Lyndon, he too, was of two minds; the first mind pushed him towards his own knife-edge, and the second listened to the wind for any advice that would tell him how to turn back and yet keep his honor; the first, the widening gyre, saw only the untrod, chaste, landscape ahead; the second, the falconer, looked for the falcon as a tether back to slightly entropic center.

Chen looked at the monolith: *What were those names that flanked his friend* ; to the left and right of his friend's own genome and name? *Why did they go laterally, and not down -down like all evolution heretofore- why all the same?*

Chen focused on this ancestral map again, as this question appeared in his mind. The boy was by him on the map; *JN1* , is what was written, stamped in the *stele* , and this was what Lyndon called him. *The flanking names were coeval with his; like other versions of himself maybe. Possible alternatives maybe* , Chen thought. *Avatars.*

Maybe, Lyndon ran his genome through a massive algorithm and had it print out four of the best -or most useful- variations , Chen said the word, *maybe,* again to himself as if to hedge what he knew instinctively. *Lyndon had spoken of cloning brazenly, he did not hide his intents like most evil geniuses,* Chen thought and laughed a bit at this characterization of his friend; who he thought wasn't exactly *evil* , nor a *genius* . *"He was just extremely weird and well read,"* Chen said with a smirk as his voice battled deeply -*via* just those eight words- with the room's narrator who still spoke of this and that .

Lyndon , he thought, *had almost no guile in him at all.* He spoke his *feelings* into the air to carve a swath into the forest, the thicket, the *clos-du-bois* . He made way with this slashing speech, and he didn't want to get away with anything; the taboo on such tactics were irrelevant to him as would be the forest-clearing of any natural, tribal man. No, he wanted to convince the world that his intents were pure and unavoidable and good and thus should be sanctioned.

Chen was almost always telling him *to be careful, to watch his step* , missing the entire point of this man, which was: to be authentic and push the whole world to the edge without hiding or lying about it. The point was to tell the truth, when one had every reason to lie. The point was not to get away with it, but to do it when -even when, especially when- all of life would kill him for it.

But, avoiding trouble was Chen's *raison d'être now, shit, he was tired; he'd battled the dragon for decades before Lyndon was even awake,* and so Lyndon's ideas on the purpose of life were so counter intuitive, he had to stop, rethink and formulate the world from his friend's point of view just to make sense of all these moves that seemed like mistakes. *His aims were loftier, unachievable, like all artists,* he supposed; Chen was happy to put the best spin on it he could. The point was not the money or women or status, although one would take all three; the point was the expression, the need to tell the truth at all cost. This was the force inside artistic men, and men of conscience, and no amount of warning them would ever work; if anything warnings made them more determined to do it the hard way.

Lyndon was like Wulf Zendik this way , Chen thought. And Chen, despite his personal feelings on the labile and mercurial -and thus dangerous- nature of him, liked Wulf so much that he transferred some of that filial affect to the man of the house even as he scared and confused him. Even as he knew Lyndon was almost certainly -and almost entirely- wrong.

But did they exist? he asked of these stamped genomes on the wall; returning to the *stele* and the project it represented. *Were they mere hypotheticals; simulations on or in some computer program perhaps?* Chen mused as more words came into his head. *To be honest,* he suddenly then thought, *they were the least interesting part of the wall to him.* The two tenuous points of contact in 1883 and again in 1944 were these small waists in the body of this huge organism. Bottlenecks. Articulations.

Chen began to follow the highways of roots back up from Lyndon's name to Melville's son Stanwick and at each joint in the weird skeletal bone of family tree there was a narrative paragraph attending; he had only to listen to the man's voice as he focused on the name on the wall. The optical reader of the library knew which name on the genealogy one gazed upon and as one did -as Chen did- the home's audio system began to play this, the following recording, in a

slight *Kiwi* accent:

> At the end of the 19th century Melville’s legitimate son, Stanwick, had taken a trip to *Fiji* and harbored himself along the South Island of New Zealand after his many days in *Viti Levu.* The letters he wrote were never sent and so there is some provenance issue; but the fact is that DNA that matches Herman and all the Melville children was found on half the letters. And no monetary gain was even attempted when the correspondence was inquired of in 1959 during an antiquities dealer's inventory of a governor's *armoire* ; as part of a larger *Suva* estate sale. These letters mention a trip to New Zealand and to a purported cousin of Stanwick in the town of Pleasant Point. The Author's son was very intent on going there after ostensibly receiving the information from some reliable locals in *Fiji* itself. The news seemed to have surprised the man and since Stanwick's father was very much alive still one wonders if that put even more wind in Stanwick's sails to find out as to the validity of the claim.
>
> We have no letters once the man was in New Zealand, what we have instead is the account of his arrival on a farm in the town of Pleasant Point in January of 1883. Stanwick was 34 years old and he apparently met his cousin, once removed, working as a ranch hand on a sheep farm. The man, *Hapua-Tireo* , was 28 and was the off-spring of a woman named *Mo-Roimata* , who herself had been the daughter of Herman Melville and a *Maori* native woman named Moana.
>
> This male heir, *Hapua-Tireo* in 1908, now at 53 years of age, had a daughter, *Hermanilla* , with a British woman, Joan Henderson who was the daughter of an exiled Scottish family working a sub-plot of the farm *Hapua* himself had been working on his entire life by that point. She was only 16 years old and her family had found nothing objectionable about the *Maori* mullatoe and so they were married and subsequently moved to *Timaru* .
>
> By 1943, their daughter *Hermanilla* , 32, had moved back to Pleasant Point and met Joan Henderson's sister, Gay, who had a son by the name of Peter. In the autumn of that year Peter, *Hermanilla's* cousin, and her were working together on their mutual grandfather's farm and fell in love. They had a daughter, Pamela, who was born in June of 1944.
>
> 21 years later, in 1965, that *Scottish-Maori* girl ran off with another

> Scottish blackjack who -from the south of the United States of America- had landed in *Aotearoa* with the USAF, and they in turn had landed, in South Carolina, USA. Pamela and Lee -who went by Roy at that time- had two boys. The first in 1968, was born under the name of Travis Lee, and by the year of 1974 of the common era, the family had its final genetic say in the 20th century when Lyndon James breached in a rare snow storm in January in *Texarkana* .

As the voice spoke and as Chen listened and as nightfall had come on without him noticing, Lyndon walked into the hall.

Chen noticed it was late, his friend was like moonlight, like the hoot of the owl, the howl of the wolf; he came alive in the absence of the ambient light. The room darkened and this was the time his friend awoke each time; each day; each night.

After a nod and a handshake -always initiated by Lyndon- Chen sat down on the grey couch and looked around at all he had seen. He was tired, winding down, and this was the time each day they passed like ships in the night. As he rested in place, his friend began to speak.

“You *wanna* see something?” Lyndon asked, and Chen nodded and said sure, *sure he did* . As this was said -agreed to- his friend walked back into the hall and opened a door that Chen had never noticed before, maybe assuming it a utility closet or something unimportant; something ancillary. Chen rose and followed and as they passed through it, and into an open, warehouse-style elevator, brown and black with unpainted steel and with viscous grease on the chains and wheels, he realized they were going under ground even further than where they had been. They had been living -Chen now saw- at the top of the compound and not the basement as Chen had assumed given that the ceiling of where they had been living for months was a meter or two beneath the surface itself.

The freight elevator moved slowly -with some noise- below the concrete floor; Lyndon closed his eyes and seemed to sleep as they descended. Chen looked around at the walls of the shaft as they went down -he felt- what seemed like at least a couple hundred feet. He felt nervous and began to feel his fingertips itch and too his nose.

As they approached the bottom the aperture of the elevator egress appeared -and

lights came on- revealing a square cut in the rock. Then the carriage settled on bottom; the half door -covering just the bottom four feet of the elevator- rose and they strode out into a narrow -20 feet maybe- hall. And the floor was smooth, polished concrete, in grey and black like winter clouds, and to their right was the largest glass wall Chen had ever seen, and it went on for meters and meters, and behind it was -now he saw- water. *How*, he wondered, *how many gallons of water?*

And just as he was seeing the water and glass for what it was -an aquarium- the 21-foot White Shark appeared in the glass, swimming, jaw shut, small fish at his flank, eddies of water here and there, bubbles and colors from blue and black to clear, and the grey dorsal top of the shark as it descended appearing as lowering storm clouds in western motion over the static land of its white belly below.

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The black headed eagle was large but immature; and he sat atop of his *Pinion* nest as the bald-headed rex landed and stomped around a bit. The tree had a wide top, not tapered, and it gave the birds of prey the elevated position; there was no higher spot in the region unless one went to the *Spanish Peaks* themselves. And with this splayed terminus they had the best of both words: breadth and height.

The black headed one was still young and had not developed its white feathers on the crown. Blax watched it and remembered his dream of the *Aegolius funereus* from last night and the sounds it made in the bare Aspens. There had been no crowd, no procession, but a death had occurred in the somnambulism and the owl watched for him it seemed. The boreal owl was not common here in Colorado, and as he reminisced, he remembered then the snowy owl, *Bubo scandiacus* , a male and female -with her black markings like sand or water ripples, eddies of black on white- had appeared in the same dream. They were stationed at the other side and the male had watched not the thing the boreal had watched, but the funereal owl himself.

The Bubo is not nocturnal , Blax’s PGC told him, as he wanted to know what each symbol in the dream might mean. The data from the coder populated his mind with the facts that these owl turn white after pubescence; born in redolent black. They are artic and live in Canada, above the circle, and Eurasia. They nest upon the ground .

He watched the eagles move around a bit in his tallest pines -40 meters from the house- and the Jacks also milled about performing small acts toward larger goals.

Jack One was cleaning all their firearms and Jack Two was in the garden thinning it out and checking the soil acidity with his fingers -with the nanobots attached to them- that needed just the moisture extant in the air to give him such read-outs. Jack Three was priming the carburetor on the chainsaw, about to clear some brush, Blax guessed. Jack liked to keep all growth of the perimeter trees up from the ground to 75 inches; and Jack Four was not around *and had not been in a while* , he thought, and it made him nervous it now seemed.

The eagles flew off in a sortie that left the nest undefended as Blax watched the juvenile fly west and the adult fly south and over the valley.

He listened with his new software to the birds on the eastern end of the land as they began to chirp and issue *seet* calls. He recognized their specific calls now thanks to the algorithm Isaiah had uploaded to him from the lab in Florence. It was based on the research done at Cornell's Ornithology lab and the work of *Slobodchinoff* as well; Isaiah had merely added fuel to their research to produce the software for their PGCs.

Dogs were as motivated by praise as food, it was determined, and the methodology of the man they had purchased their GSD's from had employed this exact concept; even as he had no data to back it up. *Petr Spurny* had bred and trained the two GSDs they had at the compound, one was owned by Jack One and one by Jack Four and they were just 14 months old now.

He thought Jack Four was likely hiking with his dog and he noticed Jack One's GSD, *Revelation* , was seated in the shade by Jack as he took down and field stripped Blax's own 9mm *Scorpion* , manufactured by *Sig Saur* . The Jacks had begun manufacturing their own weapons with the new 3D printer and CAD software from Death-Athletic; and had moved toward all polymer pistols and carbines so they could evade all metal detectors while traveling. But they each liked to keep atavistic mil-spec weapons as well. The *Sig Saur* was a reliable platform and Blax was grateful for Jack's willingness to clean them after their weapon's training that morning.

He listened again to the birds; he took note of some small bird species making

now a *seet* call to denote the eagles in flight compared to the *chick-a-dee* calls when they were close but stationary.

The software made all this intuitive, but Blax liked to deconstruct it and make sense of it. He liked to ask the *why* not merely the *how* .

He had planned to see if the grey squirrels could be incorporated in the call list. He had read that some squirrels imitate bird calls and he wanted to see if he could amalgamate them with the prairie dog specific calls that denoted what type of animal -pig, man, or dog- and what color clothes or skin each predator was swathed in as they approached. It was a sophisticated proto-language and he deconstructed its syntax with the aide of his new software loaded on his coder.

The camera recon drones were sufficient for all manner of things, but Blax liked the idea of being able to read the birds and other animals for alerts just in case. The drones had no failure risk due to poor craftsmanship or bad software, *but they could be interfered with by law enforcement. But the bird, well,* he thought, *consider the birds* .

He was dehydrated according to his PGC and this was his second alert to drink fluids, the first he had ignored as he was reading some material on his new bird-call software at the time. But now he walked inside the containers and poured himself a glass of water and sliced a lime on the black cutting board and dropped it in and watched it fizzle a bit. It seemed a cold cauldron to him and he drank from it slowly and closed his eyes and let his mind wander to things not too far back.

After his eyes opened he watched the *haliaeetus* fly low along the plane outside the southern kitchen window and then he drank the water down. The fire in New Mexico could be seen from this window too, and he watched as the white smoke billowed and made clouds on the horizon and wafted their way.

He wanted to protect his men, his brethren, his sons , he thought, and he found himself hyper-vigilant and increasingly so as they showed more and more insouciance. He knew it was due to youth, the innate lack of fear, lack of death conception, the inability to see the worst just yet, and he admired it. *He ought to be more like they and they ought to meet him half way,* he thought, but maybe it was best they each occupied each extreme. They had just finished their latest mission, the Denver Mint, and had left the trucks in *Aguilar* just off the highway

for Isaiah to pick up.

He walked outside and knelt on the dirt -just east of the *agogic* pad- and placed his hand on the surface warm from solar gain, and felt a vibration he could not name; a feeling he could not tell if it was from inside of him or from the earth itself. His PGC had no data on it, and he turned it off and just felt the ground as the men worked in meditative silence. He loved watching work be performed by men who felt it was necessary and lovely both. His men enjoyed their work and their bodies were still young and not in chronic pain as was his. They could work all day and barely be sore; their minds drank in and absorbed; their souls were fat with purpose and they had a youth he had never had.

This is what all fathers want. His own father had just provided a father at all, for his -Blax's grandfather- was absent. But Blax could provide actual instruction and encouragement. He had depth -desire- his own father never had. His boys could be given an actual education in ethics, literature, science, mechanics, horticulture, hunting, welding, dialectics, botany, metallurgy and poetry and history. They were complete men, and not the deformed and bent man that he was; *like the horn of the anvil,* he thought.

He had had to learn all this on his own and it had come at a price they did not have to pay. He had learned it all by dint of mistakes and poverty and labyrinthine fits & starts; the stupidity of mere *unaided virtue* . He had had to escape his immoral family, the amoral banality of the unthinking human. His brother of course ignored the meaning of the religion he purported to adhere to, he ignored the innate meaning of the quantum physics that made his equations work. All his kin cared about was that it worked, the brother never peered into the machine nor the ghost. The father never strove for anything but what lay apparent on the ground.

To them The Bible was *practical* advice, the quantum superposition just worked out fine. His brother didn't care about the implications of entanglement or of the moral universe's epistemology. He was the epitome of the pragmatic man.

So what if two particles light years apart could communicate in experiments even Einstein found too spooky to be ponderable. It gave Blax's brother no pause at all. As long as his engineering equations worked and his wife was happy, and the neighbors agreed he was a moral man, who cares if what he did was insane, banal or immoral at base? He got along in society, the brother

thought, what else mattered? What else could matter?

But, if making money was a banal way to live a life, as it appeared when one combined the moral principles of the Bible and the weirdness of how the universe was so instantly connected at a distance so far away, *well , then to still focus on this commerce at the detriment of all else seemed an insane way to live ,* Blax surmised. *It was more than wrong, it was sinister,* he thought. *It seemed like focusing on saving one's lucky penny in the middle of a stick-up robbery; obviously -if one was being robbed at gunpoint- the penny was not that lucky to begin with, and to keep it at the risk of getting shot seemed even more asinine given this lack of innate power of the coin itself .*

Why focus so much on material survival when the universe seemed much, much more than that? he asked himself as if speaking to his brother. But the wind and birds both blew and no rejoinder from kin was received.

Why ignore the innately odd meanings of our ancient tomes, the bizarre injunctions of First Kings and Revelation and turn away from the entanglement of quantum world, or the unknown constraints and boundary conditions and laws of energy conservation just to get some stupid earthly project accomplished? What was the point of selling more air conditioning if the universe was something much hotter, *much weirder than* -as JBS Haldane had said- *not just what we imagine, but stranger than we even* can *imagine?*

But Blax knew the retort, he knew it as deterministically as the universe itself might be if the closest star beyond our sun -575 light years away- was younger, closer, than some predetermined rules at least 576 years old; or more likely from the big bang itself. His brother would say that he had to survive and thus to ignore money and pragmatic shit would mean his death and that of his family. *That is always what the simple minded say ,* Blax thought.

Blax was not saying -he never said- to ignore money or the material life. No, it was the over-focus on it, on money -to the blindness of all else- that was so insane to him. *His brother and that shallow wife of his,* Blax thought, *had worked too hard on not being material poor and thus found themselves spiritually poor instead .* They had no inner lives. They didn't ponder the mysteries of life, they just accepted the *de rigueur* explanations and homilies and the pragmatism of everything working out. They didn't dig deeper, they didn't care to find out. And this seemed as sad as any life he could think of. They ran

out the clock on the most bizarre and beautiful thing of all: *to be alive and awake* in the now. And this was why his brother was not just insipid but lazy and weak too. It was all connected. He skimmed along in life. Blax's brother avoided all *contretemps* and his lack of strength in each domain was the result. He was old in age but still callow and useless as a newborn babe.

How, he thought, *could a person not find all of life too weird to almost even live it?* Maybe the psychedelic experiences Blax had had was what made him this way. Travis had never had a trip on entheogens. He would call them *drugs* of course, he had the idiotic reflex to follow whatever the law said; as if the government knew even one goddamn thing of science or truth or love. That people had been using peyote and mushrooms and DMT for millennia before the FBI existed, let alone decided it was illegal, never entered into his brother's brain. For him, like all modern people, life began at his birth, he never thought back past that epoch. He was ahistorical, he didn't even know that alpha males used to have 100 wives and most men had none; a Pareto distribution of *amour* .

He didn't know that even today, any of us, all of us, Blax thought, *have twice as many female ancestors as males in one's family tree. Most men did not reproduce, and the other half over-reproduced. It was like that in life and only recently did each man get a wife.*

But Travis didn't know that, for he skipped right over the Biblical histories that showed *Solomon* and *King David* and the *steppe* histories of each prince. He knew nothing of the *Zhou Chinese* practice of the king gaining all daughters from a household, and on and on and on. He knew even less of the sexual dimorphic species that always show a Matthew Principle in distribution of mates. *To those that have everything, more will be given* , it said in Matthew; Blax barely let the rest of that scripture unfurl as he tried to edify from so far away. *The elephant walrus,* he instead thought, *and Common Chimp alpha males, all have harems with the betas getting none. It's all or nothing in the natural world when males and females are a different size; like men and women are* . Each ancient religion took this for granted, it takes a modern man to ignore all that is laid bare before him. *Only the educated can be so dumb* , he thought.

But, his older brother was so ignorant of taxonomy, biology, evolution, history, and real religion that he would need a month of intensive training to just get .0001% of what his little brother, Blax, knew. *But, why even think of these*

people? he asked. *Why waste one second on them? They never thought of him, that was certain. Travis had admitted he never thought of his younger brother at all.* He admitted it. And of course, Blax could murder him, and this would be the right thing to do, to teach him the lesson he sorely needed: *that you cannot mistreat a man like Blax without consequences* . But, in fact how many men had in fact mistreated Blax and gotten away with it? Hundreds? More? *The tiger is never mocked in nature, but only in the zoo* , he thought. *And where did they all live but in the zoo?*

He had the capacity to dispatch them, yet he demurred, with larger goals always in mind. How tenable -how stable- were grand designs when they came at the price of man's simplest -foundational- nature? How long can a meal be delayed in search of larger game? *Ah,* he berated himself, *was this not the other side to the coin he used to indict his own kin? Was he not being a hypocrite now?*

But, he had his boys, his men, to train and care for and he didn't want to sully himself any further with these emasculating thoughts ; *no matter how true* , he thought, he enjoined as some kind of temporary punctuation on his permanent dialectic between each hemisphere of his soul.

He had already done more damage than he thought he could take. He knew the counter arguments, it wasn't like he was obtuse or some moral, preening, fool; he knew that what they had done was right, even necessary to both avoid a war and protect man's greatest accomplishments if war did come, it was both prophylactic and mitigation plan if the harm should come. He also knew that mankind, even its wisest and most moral -of which he considered himself in the top 1%- did not know enough and was not wise enough to make the best choices. *Maybe not acting, maybe thinking one more day -staying the execution of his instincts- was his destiny, his Fate after all . Maybe he ought see his family as doing their duty too. The deer had their role, not just the bear .*

Man was so corrupt, so limited and so unwise, knew so little, and knew so little of himself, that any true solution to mankind's problems, would be counterintuitive to man himself. This seemed axiomatic. *Why would the right answer seem right to us?*

Think, he said to himself, *why would the correct answers appear right to a species that couldn't figure it out on its own* ? *Surgery seemed like assault to the ignorant tribes that had no knowledge of invasive procedures, shit, to the*

aboriginals who knew nothing of tumors or other maladies that surgeries absolved. To the bushman the surgeon wasn't just wrong, he was malevolent; the man -this surgeon- had a knife and was wanting to cut the bushman open!

Modern man has no idea what ails him, he has no idea why the pareto distribution applies to stars in each galaxy, to city populations, to wealth and other things. Man was wholly ignorant. And yet he would demand that *his* political solution was the right one. *He'd demand it!* Blax shook his head as he felt the earth, on his knees, as the cloud cover made the day a bright and flat grey; it ceilinged the sky low and opaque.

Man picked Marxism or capitalism or conservatism or liberalism or this religion or that. Man picked it on his own endogenous temperament, not reason or facts. *This was why the new atheists were wrong, not because there was a God;* although at this point Blax figured there likely was, but, adding to himself, *but because He would be more powerful and wise than us, not omnipotent at all. God would be like us -like man- compared to a dog, the bacteria in the soil, smarter but not all-powerful* .

Anyway, he thought, *the point was that the reason the atheist types were all wrong was because they assumed that reason, rationality, would find the One True Answer to solve any problem* . And that one true answer may not even exist for one, and two, if it did, why would *reason* find it? Had reason figured out how to solve lying, don't we already *know* -in our heads- why lying is bad? We know it intellectually, but our bodies keep doing it axiomatically, like breathing, like the beat of the heart. *Reason solved math problems not biological problems* , Blax thought.

We do it -we lie- because it works and thus we are not *irrational* enough to tell the truth and suffer the consequences. This was the argument, that man was too savvy to be good, for being good was doom, it led to death; or at the very least to unpopularity. And we are a special species, we need to be liked, loved and a part of the group. Lying is *ipso facto rational* , deeply so. And yet these rationalists thinks *reason* will lead us from lying. *They don't even know how dumb they are* , he thought, as he briefly chided himself for being too haughty himself. But he needed his arrogance to survive, the way normal men need to lie, and so he banished any thought of humility at all.

Murder, theft, deception of all kinds, all of it is done by rational people for

rational reasons, Blax thought. *That shit works and most of it goes unpunished . Look at our government, and ours is likely best of the bunch. Look at the vast amount of immoral behavior committed every day for rational reasons. These are psychopaths: the journalists and bankers and former senators that actually lobby for the Chinese; these are rational, coolly rational men just trying to get by like in Vichy France . How* reason *will solve this problem is not just inscrutable, it's likely the most irrational idea ever posited,* Blax thought with a laugh he allowed to exist only in his mind .

Only a deep moral code based on something else, something besides the so-called reason that leads to longer life, more wealth, more freedom, and all the shit sociopaths like Pinker ramble on about whenever he talks up the modern world, will solve moral issues . But, Blax began thinking*, if that is the way to measure how well we are doing -and Pinker does use those metrics- then let's see how that shit is arrived at. It ain't from doing the moral thing, it's from cutting corners, lying, stealing, ignoring the crimes of our side, and over reacting the crimes of their side.*

Look at our politics, both sides are incapable of seeing the bullshit in their own side. Tribalism is alive and well, and it's called liberals *and* conservatives*. Sam Harris is as irrational as them all, overhyping the president's crimes and underplaying the oh-so-rational liberalism that allows wholesale murder of children,* Blax surmised.

Oh, it's a woman's body, eh? Of course, that is a scientific notion of life right? That is rationalism? But doesn't science prove that that fetus is viable now at younger and younger days? When will science be enough to convince liberals that abortion is murder? Never. Why? Because their commitment to the abortion rights argument isn't rational, it's based on emotions; and just like everyone they are insane and motivated by their cerebellum and limbic regions and not at all by reason and facts like they fatuously claim.

Blax was furious as he pressed his palms into the dirt and breathed loudly through his nose. The science -to all those who claim reason as their only tribe- the science shows that man is fundamentally irrational, and preloaded with biases, proclivities, disgust sensitivity and on and on. *Harris never shuts the fuck up about pure reason and how all we have is arguments and talking and blah blah. No, we have muscles and weapons and a willingness to kill you, in addition*

to conversation, asshole. Get it?

We have soldiers, just like you do. You have your western scientific soldiers killing jihadist for you, right? Well, I think that is good, and I am glad, and I applaud that death. But some of us think it ain't just Jihadists that should be extirpated .

We think liars and black-lives-matters and the SPLC should die too. Why? Because they are as corrosive to society as any Jihadi , Blax thought, pushing his own personal enemies out beyond his reach so he could see these larger, more diffuse enemies to he and all mankind. He watched the Jacks work and he let his mind go to work too.

And we use reason to justify this, we can back up our claims with science too. We can show that the SPLC got a guy killed by building a kill-list itself, we can show that race relations are worse thanks to BLM. We can show that promiscuous girls undermine society, and that men without good working-class jobs do the same.

We can justify scientifically that all this needs to change and that killing CEOs that outsource jobs to China -undermining the working-class, so divorce rates rise and kids become warped, and shoot up schools- would in fact, scientifically, he thought, *would be a net positive.* If we kill 100 CEO's that outsource blue-collar jobs, that would save hundreds of thousands of lives in suicide prevention of blue-collar men, and the dissipation of their kids. If we kill the advertising executives, or the artists, or the teachers who encourage girls to have premarital sex, we could save the same amount of lives. *I can show the math,* Blax thought, and he in fact had the data that Isaiah had shown him. It was overwhelming, it was like a revelation. It had blown him away. But the facts would have no impact on the most rational of men. They had the religion of liberalism, and that was the highest wall against the facts.

Blax had almost not believed the sequela, the massive pain and suffering caused by those two things alone, much worse than terrorism, scientifically speaking. Divorce was the number one determiner for child criminality, suicide, dropping out of school and teenage sex and as the boy grew up he was likelier to have low wages and all this led to more divorce. It was a reinforcing loop of doom. And the maelstrom of anomie had all the energy of a warm summer sea; the hurricane was just now building up its head of steam.

And yet, Sam Harris keeps blathering on about loosening sexual *mores* because - you know- the church is too conservative. *He's as ignorant of the science as a creationist,* Blax thought as he pressed his palms to the ground, making this part of him as flat as possible; making as much contact as he could.

Promiscuity by the female, the wife, before marriage was the leading cause of divorce, next only to the lack of a good paying job by the husband. *And both those things were the result of changing* mores *brought about by decisions made by specific people. CEOs of companies, who were rationally doing what was best for stock holders; TV people,* Blax thought as he felt the bile collect at the sides of the mouth, *media liberals who glorified the slut for example; eschewing the so-called tyranny of the church's prohibition on female promiscuity, right?*

Was it not these oh-so-modern and liberal and rational people who globalized the economy and liberalized sex? And yet, the data -the science- was clear: these two things led to most divorce and that divorce rate led to most social ills. But, try getting a liberal or an atheist to see the data on that . These amoral fucks ain't into science all-of-a-fucking-sudden, he thought.

Killing these socially corrosive people would mean extirpating no more than 10,000 individuals. And the lives saved would be 100 times that. *Was this not rational then?* he asked his own mind and his mind churned within his larger body and its larger forest too.

Blax said to himself that *reason* proved it; well, within reason anyway. *So, Mr. Harris, why not? Why not do this? Why allow so many people's lives to be ruined by the lenient hand? Isn't this your argument for why we should combat religious extremism, that it leads to a permissive environment for the jihadist?*

See, each man focused on his pet project, the thing that bothered him most. But nobody stopped to ask why was it *that* thing, that *cause -celebre* that vexed him so? Hitler was disgusted, literally felt sick over the malady of the Jews. He had biological reasons to feel that. *We know,* he thought, *that some people naturally have higher disgust sensitivity that others . And walls* , Blax then thought of boundaries *writ large* ; he thought of how innate this all was.

Liberals are predisposed to not want barriers. Which is why liberals don't want a wall on the southern border and conservatives do. There is no reason or logic so bulletproof to prove or disprove either side. Both are wrong, and both are

right. People are not blank slates who can be convinced on pure reason alone, and for these twits to insist that they can is to miss the entire thread, he surmised .

People are innately biased and use reason *post hoc* to justify what they want deep inside. And religion erects some border between their irrational desires, the thing inside them that makes them over eat, over fuck, over kill, the mania that makes men try to slake the *rational* need in them for food, sex, and safety. People have rational ways to survive, and irrational desires to make manifest the behaviors that get them what they need. Survival is rational, the methods we use to survive are often insanely immoral; we justify anything to get what we want. *What makes one reason -a reason to win- more or less rational,* Blax thought*, if winning is the only goal?*

But religion, like all code, can regulate those desires, and make us adhere to a more long-term strategy for getting what we want and for thinking of other people too; if our being eusocial creatures matters at all. Reason is useful too, but it is not axiomatic that if you take religion away people will all replace it with *reason* . Maybe a cage with iron bars keeps the lion from eating you. But maybe you have to go inside the cage first, and let the lion wander free; maybe you haven't figured out yet how to get the lion inside of it. *Your life is limited in the cage, sure. It sucks. Just like following all the rules of religion sucks,* Blax thought as the birds returned and perched on the pines. He watched with his 20/15 eyes.

But it -the cage- keeps you safe for now. And the new atheists want to get us out of the cage right away and just assume that all will be *ok* . They assume we will come up with a rational way to get the lion inside the cage and keep us safe. *Well, maybe. And maybe not,* Blax thought. *Maybe we will end up running around like maniacs outside the cage and get eaten by that lion after all.*

Men aren't as impressed with logic and reason as you Sam, Blax spoke to the man as if he sat right there. He smiled as he knew -if he wanted- that he could find Sam and make him speak to him; *it was only morality that kept him from Sam's doorstep, not reason* . Sam's security detail was nothing compared to Blax's Jacks.

Blax went on as the sun dropped and the animals came and went around him: *People ignore new information based on whether it comports with their already*

held beliefs. And people without trait openness are inured to new info; again, science shows this Sam! So new information is not helpful; your rationalism and conversations are pointless to these folks.

People's beliefs are based on proclivities that are genetic ; again, Blax said to himself as if having to speak to a goddamn child. *You cannot get rid of instincts, Sam* . The best you might do is shape them a bit here and there; guide them with a powerful thing like -wait for it- religion; if man sufficiently fears an avenging God. *Oh, but man can be reasoned with, eh? He needs no sanctioning God to shape, curtail his worst instincts? Then why have law at all, why make man fear the cops, just reason with him not to murder. Oh, new tune now, eh? So, man needs the cops and fear of punishment in that domain, eh?* Blax sarcastically placed a humbled Sam in view of this interlocution. He envisioned him here at elevation.

So, if we have cops to put the fear in us, then maybe man needs to fear God too; since the cops can't respond to all infractions in under 10 minutes and the law doesn't even care about the worst and most corrosive things, Blax reasoned. *The cops don't give one shit about things like lying, promiscuity and outsourcing of blue-collar jobs which are all legal . Maybe a* blitzkrieg *God who punishes all that shit, is the most rational thing of all to keep that guy from lying to make the sale, to get that girl to keep her pants on, and make that CEO keep jobs in America* , Blax thought .

There may be no perfect answer, no right and wrong, there may be only things that kinda work better or worse for each type of person along some analog scale , he thought. How is *reason* going to handle that, when we have a society to run? Do we have different speed limits for some, or allow some men to fight in the street? Do we allow some abortion but not all, some premarital sex but not all, some schemes to make money but not all? How do we decide which drugs are legal, which sex is legal, which lies are legal? Give me a rational way to know? Is each man the same? Do each of us get the same calories or do the same amount of work? Planned economies fail for this very reason: men are different from one another.

And reason is not sufficient to figure out how to live. It's taken us 300 million years to learn how to live, and in 400 years you come and wreck it all with your modernity and leniency and tear down all that work and bray about wealth

production and life span while the whole society crumbles under our feet.

It's just like bankers, Blax thought of the data on bank melt downs and public bailouts. *It's just like these vermin who blow up economies every 25 years but make large bonuses for themselves in between each meltdown that wrecks it all for everyone but them. They, the rationalists who have set themselves up with slutty wives and lots of dough and status through the roof, with their liberal values that don't mind the loss of racial, ethnic, religious cohesion, the ruin of the working-class* - who cares? *they say. They say, those proles, shit, they are all deplorable Trump voters anyway right, Sam, right FBI Lawyer number two? They don't matter at all, you all say.*

See, religion just tells each man that there is an ideal, and that ideal is God, and we should strive for that. And this makes irrational men -all of us- behave a bit better in most cases. It shames us when we lie -for God, the ideal, is watching us; and it prevents us from murdering each economic rival -for God, the ideal has told us not to stack up riches here on earth; and it forces us to think of more than mere rational gain, like money and sex and power -for God, the ideal says each man among us has the spark of divinity in them and thus our countrymen are not just tools to use for our own personal -rational- gain.

Religion allowed us to articulate the future and the need for sacrifice and the sovereignty of the individual. This was many, many millions of the years in the making .

Reason, rationality, allows us to justify any act of murder and malice and perfidy against an enemy. We know this is true. As soon as a man is our *enemy* , empathy retreats, and the brain modules that inhibit aggression are denuded chemically. *Well, in a rational world, is not everyone my enemy? If we have no tribes, no loyalty based on religion or race or nationality, if the whole world is the same, is not each man against each man? Homo homini lupus.*

You can say, no. But, look at how we act, Blax thought with his hands still pressing into the damp dirt as the evening sun began to set now below the black trees. *In cohesive societies, where everyone is more alike racially, religiously, tribally, the crime is lower, the trust is higher than in multi-cultural societies where manifold ideals persist. That is your scientific reason pal,* he thought.

In the real world, the empirical world, tribalism works, *rationally* . And in

societies of difference, the substrate for genocide is just there waiting for someone to come and pick it up and smash the whole thing to bits .

Dostoyevsky said that even if you gave man all he wanted, let him lie in bubbles of bliss, that he'd smash it all to bits just to prove he's a man and not mere piano keys , Blax thought.

Daniel Dennett has shown you that if you tell a man he has no free will -which you bastards insist on telling us- then that man lies, cheats, steals more. And yet, Sam, you refuse to believe it. Man cannot handle your truth. He acts in irrational ways, unproductive ways, oh, but wait, he actually acts most rationally: he lies, cheats and steals because that is what works in a rational world. See, without morality, a transcendent morality above and over man, separate from rational material gain, man acts like a goddamn chimpanzee and murders, rapes and steals with lies incessantly coming from his mouth. Real man is not some moral paragon, he is ape and apish and willing to do almost anything to survive. Chimps war, they literally go to war. They have no compunction about genocide. Man is barely above this level and it was only by learning to live within tribes, with common ideals -i.e., common gods- that could keep us from anarchy.

Religion helped us form an ideal, an ideal that was based on what allows a society to cohere. In chimps that ideal is a tough but fair alpha chimp; not a wimp but also not a tyrant.

That is their ideal. It took millions of years to figure out. And if the alpha plays nice and has friends and grooms others with magnanimity; and if he only uses violence when necessary, his reign and the well-being of the troop is longer than if he be a tyrant or a wimp. *Consult Franz de Waal* , Blax thought as he chided the modern liberal in his mind in this never ending rant that offered no succor, because it was ultimately abstract, his enemies far away, remote. He was arguing against a man he'd never meet, over a society too large for him to truly care for, a society due to this size that didn't -couldn't- care about him. But he kept on, he kept on with ideas and nations and peoples larger and larger. His anger needed a foil in concomitant size and power.

And, Blax thought, *this is the ideal that each chimp knows. How do we know? Because if he is a wimp they overthrown him and if he is a tyrant they do too. Only if he is toughly fair do they let him reign for many years. The balance between chaos and order is written on their ape hearts.*

Well, man has the same code written into him. He has a balance, a natural balance inside him and each society is made of average men, a Gaussian distribution of men. And so the ideal of the society is written on our hearts, and religion gave us our first way to write that ideal down and that is what we did; and each religious creed became a border to define a tribe; those for whom the law applied, those whom we did not harm. We did it because the chaos lurks in each man, and especially in the extremes, the wimp and the tyrants at either end of the standard distribution of the mean of man.

Religion helped us wrangle everyone in the tribe inside , Blax said to himself as his back began to ache in this seated position; he had sat too long, he had ranted too long, again. But he pressed his hands to the soil and pressed upon his his vex. *And reason cannot tear that down without having something to replace it. And your reason is nothing! Your reason is all liberal wimpy shit! Your reason is all amoral and let kids fuck each other and women be sluts and have abortions and let men work gay,* effete *coding jobs -as we eliminate masculine trades- and we let them play video games and let anyone inside the walls of the country -no matter their culture or skills- and we let women and men work together regardless of the sexual tension, and we let anyone do fucking anything because reason, man; because muh, freedom,* Blax mocked.

It's shit, because man needs rules or the society itself falls apart, regardless of the benefit to the man himself in the short run. Just like the body falls apart if you let the mouth eat sugar and methamphetamines all day, regardless of the work he gets done and the money he makes being up -on stimulants- for 40 hours straight! Rules are needed, and the rules religions came up with were beta-tested for 300 million years you fucking dipshit . "*Via negativa ,*" Blax finally said something aloud to release the pressure of all these words inside him that other men lacked.

Religion focuses on combating illicit sex, lying, and greed for a good reason; these are the things that most affect social cohesion and individual lives. Greed causes stratification, and that causes envy and that causes murder. Murder rates among the rich are low, and among the poor are also low. Only in societies with income disparity is murder through the roof.

Lying causes people to not value truth and when they see everyone getting away with lying -all politicians and bankers and journalists lie for a living- then

nobody thinks they ought to tell the truth either. *It's corrosion, it's accumulative, and it ain't* Corten *steel* , Blax thought. He thought it was epidemiology and that the whole world had dirty hands.

And our social institutions are not based on enforcement, not the cops, but -rather- self-regulation. People have to believe in truth.

But we don't anymore. Look at which societies have highest social trust; and look at which have the lowest. He thought of how the west was in decline. *And sex,* Blax felt his heart begin to beat in his ears, *sex is so huge that we have no idea what we've done with the birth-control pill and relaxed taboos on promiscuity* . He thought of how liberalism has caused girls to be less happy, suicides are up 50% among girls since 2002 and girls report unhappiness with their own sexual promiscuity in every poll every done. Girls don't like their goddamn liberation, it seems. He thought of Andrea and how she had begged him to take control, to force her into a penitent pose. This was what women wanted, to be ruled by a tyrant for her own long-term good. He listened to girls when they confessed to what they truly wanted, not the shit they pretend to want.

It's as bad as drug addiction, and yet we act like it's no big deal to let our daughters have sex before marriage . Blax called up the data on his PGC and double checked; he mocked the culture who knew exactly squat as his rage pressed like water from a torrent, a fire-hose of electrical data, through the dorsal horn blocking -for these brief moments- his chronic pain signals -his A-alpha and A-delta signaling- that came from the C5-6 and lower back.

That is why we hate you, that is why you are not even close to be as smart as you think. You threw out religion without having anything to replace it . That religion was based upon modes of being millions of years old, and to just toss it out as old fashioned is like kids ignoring their parents' rules on bedtimes or candy intake and reverting to some rationalist view of liberty that allows them to stuff their faces with candy corn and dash across the street before looking both ways. He imagined a lizard taking off its armor, the grass giving up its chlorophyll, the wolf trading it its teeth.

All of this -of course- based on freedom, man; and if you listen, you'll hear the insistence by kids that they need not look both ways, because they've never been hit by a car before. It's like watering plants with Gatorade; we live in a goddamn Idiocracy , he boomed in his head. *This is the liberal ideal, change it all just to*

be modern, regardless of the law that shows that the longer something has been around the more likely it is to be right. No, to the modern man change is always good. Fuck evolution, they say, let's modernize and throw away the shit that's worked for 300 million years. He imagined a driver in 1945 tossing the 4-jet carburetor decades before EFI was invented. He imagined a monkey duct-taped to the intake manifold spewing an air-fuel mixture from its mouth into the cylinders while the driver promised it was rational to abandon the carburetor as old-fashioned; that EFI was coming along any day now. Blax saw the monkey clearly in charge of the car.

And Peterson was not much better , Blax thought, *with his stupid insistence on democracy and democracy of breeding of all things . It was equality of outcome plain and simple and yet he advocated for it . He was a stupid as all the rest.*

Blax saw streams of data pore into his coder, data that showed how insane almost all modern changes were to the body and the mind and the culture that sustained each man. The man was one cell inside a larger body, and any gene that made the body fail was not a gene likely to be passed on. Modern men were making sure that the body politic, the modern culture of the West was not long for this world. He almost allowed himself to think this *auto-de-fey* was a good thing, before toggling back toward trying to justify his own grand plans to save it; at the expense of his own personal vengeance.

You rationalists have no idea what you are even fucking with, you are playing with dark forces and doing it with blasé aplomb! It's insane and your Left-wing politics won't let you see the facts on how religion actually prevents social decay . Revenge-killing and honor-vengeance cultures prevent crime in the long run, even as they seem barbaric, because they actually put the fear of God and mad-goatherders into a potential thief and liar and cuckold. That fear stops the crime from ever even occurring. But, to a modern wimp and rationalist, this mode of being is *passé* . They think an increase in petty thieving, lying, sleeping with a man's wife, are all acceptable prices to pay for the State having a monopoly on -*rational* - violence.

They might -they might, Blax stressed- *have a case if the State even enforced the taboo on such things, but they do not.* The State turns a blind eye to the worst and most common crimes against a man's property, honor and well-being. *Maybe Sam Harris can live in a world without honor -he spends no time thinking*

of loyalty he says - with his reason and horseshit making him feel all warm inside. But real men, men of genetic codes as valid and ancient as his , well, "Well, we," Blax said under his breath, as he again released a few words aloud from all those trapped inside, as the air moved about like those atoms around a butterfly's wings, " we need honor, we need to know that if a man fucks with us, we need to know that that man will pay."

"And *that* man," Blax said now fully aloud, "that motherfucker, he needs to know it too."

For if he didn't know it, he would do what all Blax enemies did in fact do: they lied, cheated, stole from him and undermined the whole ecosystem of a very powerful man. And for 65 years now Blax had let it all go, barely gotten any revenge, a few things here and there, but nothing like what they deserved, and the whole society had shown symptoms of this over and over again. His enemies slept soundly at night and never once felt badly for robbing him .

But his genome, the 12.5% of alphas, were all in jail or dead or had to stay their righteous hands; had to turn in their swords and let the State handle their business. And the State had failed, not because crime was up, shit it was officially down, but because *immorality* was up, way up and the things that mattered to each man, things like, *could he trust his friends or wife, his employer, his neighbor? all those metrics were all way down. Social cohesion was down, way down, and nobody measured that metric in their Hippy Dippy Steven Pinker parties* , Blax thought.

And that is like each cell in the human body being nutrient rich and fat and oh, yeah, giving the body itself fucking cancer due to a lack of sacrificial apoptosis .

Maybe this is why he allowed Isaiah to empower him to commit to so much destruction and thievery and violence -*although they had not hurt that many people, not enough people, not the right people* - he thought. Maybe despite his ambivalence, he was committed to this course of action not because of the long-term benefits -although those were plain- but due to this need for base, apish vengeance. Maybe Blax was just furious and enraged at his own enemies and was sublimating his need for revenge on them, his true and natural foils, by harming the culture *writ large.*

He could justify it -and not wrongly- by saying they were protecting what would

be destroyed as the Parthenon already had been in all these internecine wars, and the vineyards of *Bordeaux* , again those had been pilfered and bombed in all European wars, *and the art of western civilization, also stolen and destroyed by philistines like Hitler, Stalin and the Italian mafioso,* he thought*, for christsake. These idiots stole the art then lost it, burned it or in the case of Szukulski's stuff, it got bombed in WWII.* Blax shook his head -just one time to the right- as he thought of that man's incomparable work bombed by the allies over Poland.

It was not that his justifications were untrue; they would -in fact- protect this stuff. It was that this was not the reason. The reason was he was angry and vengeful and spiteful and insane with rage. That was the reason, his reason, because he was without religion -for he did not believe in God at all- this was the reason, this is the reason for what he did. He diagnosed himself as he laid his stethoscope on the world.

This is the thing inside his sub-cortical regions that truly ran his mind and body; the articulate part, the left brain, with all its true facts -and they were true- was mere spokesman for his deeper, more hidden, more criminal self. His spokesman was as logical and rational and oh-so-clever like each political hack, corporate PR asshole and TV journalist that lied and lied and lied while advancing the greedy evil march of their conglomerate needs. *Well, he would do the same, and he would justify it all with the logic that they craved. He had the data, the numbers, the science* , he said to himself with pique.

But at bottom, he just wanted revenge, and to see the world on its knees for all that they had done to him. It was a *guerre-à-outrance* , and he balled his fists up with the dirt and rocks and flotsam and jetsam from that high-altitude soil and leaned back, stretched his back that had been compressed and destroyed by decades of manual labor that nobody gave one fuck about. The working man was expendable, used as lubricant on the gears of the machine and then mocked when they ask for some relief. Even pain killers were now taboo. He had to submit to being lectured by some 25 years old female doctor with a mere 130 IQ. *She knew nothing of pain, but she would,* he smiled*. Soon, they'd all know his pain* .

They think murder and torture are stopped by laws. No, they are *prosecuted* - *post hoc* - by laws, they are *stopped* only by fear or moral inhibition; and he had neither. Testosterone overcomes fear, and his score was up to 1244 today. And

righteousness and the creation of the out-group attenuates moral inhibition. And his outgroup was anyone without his genome, anyone not himself. *The world has drawn lines, of who was out and who was in, and the white alpha male, the working man was out* , he thought, and so that meant he was free to treat the *bourgeoise* with all the same outgroup malice as they had for him. The difference was they killed him with contempt and lack of analgesics and no blue-collar jobs; they killed him by ignoring him; they increased his cortisol and killed his heart.

He would put bullets in their brains.

He looked up and the eagles had left the nest again, *on some recon or kill mission no doubt,* he then thought. The starlings and sparrows and *chick-a-dees* were quiet and so were his men as they went about the work in the crepuscular light of this summer evening. He took the peace of this moment inside his mind and made it his; as a gift for his sacrifices and the sacrifices of his men; they would never be the same again, they could never live a normal life, they could never not be what they were.

This is the thing normal civilians never get, to know things is to never be able to *not know* them again. His men knew things about themselves, about Man, about the earth, about God, that no normal person knew, for they -normal man- could not know it and still live with it.

Average men had to be stupid to survive; modern man had to be ignorant of what he was to live with who he was. His men had no such luxury now. They knew exactly what they were and in what *milieu* . The earth made war in the quiet and the emptiness made conflict in other spaces far off and deep under foot and before and after this time.

III. 2037 e.v.

“Who *recherché* Guevara over there?” Nathan asked whilst immediately drinking from his flute as prophylactic against having to face the annoyance that the Governor would begin to show after this incessant and running gag that Nathan could not -as if it was a tic or some idiopathic medical condition- cease using *vis-à-vis* anyone on the Left that he could sum up in a *portmanteau* of an obvious trait -whatever is was- combined with the Argentine physician’s *nom de guerre* .

Nathan filled his mouth with *Möet* as if then there would be no room at the inn of his ears to house the rebuke from his boss. It was the kind of thing humans did, in that in made no sense at all and yet worked anyway. The Governor saw him guzzle -as he side-eyed him- and chose to hold his fire.

“Miss Thanagint, I would ask *you* ,” the Governor turned from Nathan and asked, with politeness, bending slightly to the ear of the judge’s wife, the woman standing closest to him, and nodding toward the woman he was about to inquire about, “that young lady, the one next to the gentleman with the red scarf, and red cravat,” he allowed the sentence to dangle.

“Yes, I see her Governor,” Mrs. Thanagint said and turned toward the executive and away from her chatting husband of the other branch. She paused as if it were the Governor’s turn; as if the question had not already been asked.

She had missed the implicit question as all middle brow people do; *it was their* métier, the Governor thought, and he side eyed his number-one, rebuking him in his mind for making him have to ask a question three times now, once to Nathan and twice to this ghastly woman. And so, with pique, he asked it again while obliquely eying his assistant.

“Oh, I see, well, she is the campaign manager, well she was, I have no idea how she spends her days now of course, but she was the manager of the campaign for one of the Democratic candidates in ‘18, -your election- well, she made quite a splash online; back then of course, but as I said,” the judge’s wife said and let those disjointed phrases stand all on their own like foals in first hours.

“You have no idea how she spends her time now, yes. I follow you,” he added that last bit about *following her* to take the sting from his slightly barbed first sentence. He turned toward her and smiled graciously and without any genuine warmth and began scanning the room for his girls.

Mrs. Thanagint smiled obsequiously -*their other talent* , he thought- and nodded toward the former campaign manager from 5 years ago, “she’s with no one, the man, the one you pointed out, is Mr. Nathan Ranghuin, an art dealer in Santa Fe; he’s having a show at some RINO district gallery. I’ve heard it’s quite something. But he is married and his wife,” she pointed with a raised glass, “is to his left.”

“I see, all alone; well that is the condition of the species,” the Governor quipped with a double *entendre* about both politics and romance, and only half joking; despite having twice as many paramours as most, he still felt it obvious that he among men was alone in this maelstrom of life and an indifferent cosmos; but of

course, when he made comments like that most folks just assumed he was making an ironic joke about his bounty, having two wives- more or less- and thus, the joke in their minds was that he was being facetious about this *alone* business.

He got over his annoyance with Nathan -his Nathan- and turned away, then back, thanking Mrs. Thanagint, and then quickly returning to his initial impulse to face his number-one, “NM, you enjoying the double-fermented grape juice?” he didn’t wait for an answer, “good, now how are the bounty hunters you hired doing?”

“They prefer the title of, *bail enforcement agent* , just in case you ever meet them in person,” Nathan said, “and I have not spoken to them in three days. They are, from their last *communique* , knee deep in the muck of the forest, and have sat phones since their cell coverage is weak at best. But, they do not call unless necessary; to save battery and so forth.”

“These jackals are a force of nature, they are not merely my rivals,” he swung his arm -too using the *champagne* flute in his hand as a stand-in, the understudy for an index finger- like a clock hand counting up all the quick minutes of the dignitaries and apparatchiks in the room of his mansion, the Governor’s mansion on 18th street in Denver proper, “these are enemies of progress and science and reason.”

“That much I know, but continue please,” Nathan said drolly .

“They cannot be reasoned with; that is my point. They cannot be shown evidence or data or theorems, they cannot be dragged by the nose from point A on the graph to points B and C as it makes progress along the X axis; that is to say: time,” the Governor punctuated his allusions with definitions wholly unnecessary for Nathan. But he did it so that nobody could ever claim that they mistook what he meant and, *oh, what a shame and it won’t happen again Governor et cetera and so on and blah blah* , he thought. He’d heard every excuse there was attached to each atom of the cosmos.

“Let’s kill them all then, right now, you and me, come on, I’ll take the,” Nathan’s joking around was cut off.

“Goddammit,” the Governor burst out with, then caught himself as he could feel the crowds’ eyes rotate and bob toward him like a globe compass shoehorned in the skull of some piratical trophy-kill both eyeing and genuflecting to the captain of the black ship as he pounded his map desk; the hull and ballast both moved by direction of the helmsman, or maybe the wind and a wave.

“Dammit,” the Governor said, this time he removed the ‘God’ from the insult and lowered his voice, “I have spent my life over-reacting and therefore *preparing* for the eventual evil that has only, merely, a 1% chance of happening; and I can assure you that if we don’t catch these brigands up in our mountains, these media and judicial carrion eaters will be on my liver each morning anew, until the election next year.”

He would not run next year, in 2038, as he was already in his second set of two 4-year terms -separated in 2026 to 2030 e.v. by that idiot Polis- but he wanted to place his Lieutenant Governor in his stead, seamlessly, he thought. *Continuity was everything,* he thought.

The executive was still pointing at his guests with his hand and *champagne* flute outstretched like a statue of Columbus or Nathan Bedford Forrest marking both the way, and the obstacles in the fore.

“I follow orders, and I do it with *bravura* even a little *élan vital* , but sir, I must resist -as you should- the temptation to micro-manage our assets in the field. These are capable men, they can handle this. Let them do their job and you continue to do yours, and -if this is not too forward of me to say- let me do mine. Now, did you want to meet Miss Ranchettal?” Nathan’s sentence ended like a foot fall.

The Governor feigned confusion, as if he did not know exactly who Nathan meant by this parlor trick of asking who the Governor had meant when the inquiry first came out and now blithely announcing that he in fact knew her name. But the executive dropped the charade and said, “no,” and walked straight toward her leaving Nathan drinking his *champagne* .

His girls, of whom he had been thinking all night, were taking turns mingling with guests and decompressing upstairs in their quarters. Harrissa was looking lithe and awkward in her long dress and her skin was ruddy and over-powdered to hide the blemishes that came from her use of methamphetamine and birth control pills. Rachel was upstairs in her black skirt with black boots and knee highs that left four inches between her socks and the hem of her dress. She had black bangs and black eyes and she too was heavily make-uped to hide a complexion rough -from Lyme disease she had insisted- as she sat in front of her mirror.

Harrissa bragged about her *beau* , overtly and girlishly and almost sincerely as she truly did find him the most sexy and brilliant of men. But, she had this other side that barely waited for the first side to turn away in order to show itself; she could be said to contain both sides on one side of the coin.

She was like a person with no memory of who she was before a new mood hit her, she had no history within her own mind. This made for a labile and mercurial woman, which might explain why she was willing to be one of two girls in love -publicly- with the Governor of the state of Colorado. Not that this was what he was when she fell in love with him, back then he was a business man, an entrepreneur of some sort she had gleaned from their conversations 20 years ago when she was just 20 and standing 5 feet 3 inches tall, a full 11 inches below his brow.

She had been to his lab, but she had the feeling that he gave her the nickel tour, not the one the people he thought smart might get.

He brayed about being honest, but he hid more things than a family of squirrel in autumn , she had thought; and she had only one way to get even with that kind of thing in that kind of man. He was too large, rich and smart; but she could be pretty and alluring and small, and thus she would have any man she wanted. Not that she wanted these other men, I mean they were handsome enough and all that, *but what she wanted was him, for herself* . And since she couldn't have that, she wanted the next best thing; the thing any man could relate to, *the thing Nietzsche,* she thought, *had said was for women alone: revenge.*

She loved it when he read to them, her and Rachel in bed, as she grew sleepy and ideas moved in and around her head. She did not always mind Rachel's presence, she liked the bounty of love it brought. She was cloyed on it, a surfeit of amorous and paternal love both; *he was* - she admitted- *too much man for merely one girl.* She rebuked herself for being both insufficient for him and for being too selfish to allow him what he needed without this hidden, and not so hidden, pique.

When the campaign had started, they had all sat down and talked and he had said that if she couldn't handle the pressure, the invigilation -*god*, she thought, *she loved that word* , the words he used made her giggle with pleasure, the way a girl will laugh as new tastes swarm on the tongue, new smells thread like straight laces up the nose and into the brain- but he had said that if they couldn't handle the circus he would understand and drop the bid.

God, she hated niggers , she then thought, like a breeze out of nowhere or someone flicking on a light when one is asleep. She had been lost in thought when she had just seen one in the mansion with his funny glasses, round like that cartoon rat, *trying to act like he was civilized,* she thought*;* and just then her inamorato arrived and clasped her by the shoulder like a big alpha chimpanzee.

She was smiling at some woman who was talking and felt the paw on her

smooth, bare shoulder and knew it was his; *who else would have the temerity to touch the Governor's girl , one of* his girls *as he always said -in public and in interviews and the like, much to the consternation of big alpha gals on TV and the muted glee of small women watching at home and to the labored breathing of men everywhere- who but he would have the balls to touch one of* his girls *on the shoulder in public?* she thought with pride.

She turned and smiled and then returned to the woman -looking her in the eye too much- revealing a kind of oddness to her insincerity, the kind that almost tricks us all into thinking she's rapt, overwhelmed with awe and fealty and passion for which ever one of us is in her menagerie, her snow globe she rattles and lets settle in waves.

There was one, maybe two, ways to get even with Boyd Sou, the CEO of Praxis LLC and Governor of Colorado in 2037. He could not be beat up or killed, he was too tough and too heavily guarded for that; too paranoid, even, especially, on the lookout for plots within the palace. He couldn't be made poor, fired from some job, and she couldn't take away any of his friends, as he had none. His employees were loyal due to the work they were doing, they found it so interesting, she had surmised, that they couldn't work anywhere else, and of course, he paid them more than anywhere else; so they had their cake and could eat it too.

No, he was vulnerable the only way an alpha male is vulnerable: his reputation and what a cuckolding would do to it.

She could have her cock and eat it too, too , she thought with a grin, turning back to him as he stood behind her with that big ape hand on her, his capacious chest, hemmed in by his bespoke linen suit, backing her like some wall along the southern border that the politicians were finally starting to build. *Jesus,* she thought, *this city -more than most- was like a piñata that had burst and wetbacks were showering the lawn like Tootsie Rolls and Cheeba Chews* . She smiled again at her own metaphors. She had eaten two of the edibles an hour before the party and between them and the Adderall, she was stoned and tweeking like some motorhead and pothead combined on one side of an all-head coin.

Her pussy was still wet from the pounding he had given the two of them, ass to ass, each girl on all fours, on the executive bed, a half hour before they all needed to get dressed. She and Rachel had showered together; he had remodeled the bathroom immediately after being elected, and now it was large enough -he had taken space from the bedroom- to contain a shower 5 by 5 by 5. All three of them could fit, but he usually just watched as they splashed around like little

baby chimps and he smiled so big it seemed -to her- like it was maybe one of the two things in the entire cosmos that was real.

In fact, she now noticed, she was sore; *he had no flexibility in that part of him that was for sure* , she thought; *not that he had much give or take anywhere in him*, she appended to her initial idea.

He was the kind of man a woman wanted when she was ovulating; masculine and mean and made up of DNA you wanted for your son no matter the costs. But the pill had made men such as he more and more rare. *She had read the statistics on testosterone and the birth control pill and that no girls ovulated hardly at all any more* , she mused.

She adjust her legs and hips to try to relieve some of the soreness of her abused little thing. She watched her conversation partner's face move slightly in sympathy with her it seemed. Harrissa could manipulate people so easily, she barely noticed the results.

Nobody ever talks about pussy size, she thought*, it's always dick size . It's just one of the ways girls get away with and benefit from this disproportionate treatment between the sexes.*

Girls with average or large pussies -and this was most girls- were totally let off the hook; they never had to answer for it, it never came up in scientific studies, or jokes or genuine discussions of relative merits, the germane merit, of girls. A guy had to deal with it incessantly, from his own mind and the mind of others, it was instantiated in the science of sex , she marveled at this hypocrisy.

Nobody measured pussy size, not Kinsley or anyone. And yet it was just as valid a discussion as penis size , she thought; she winced a bit now as her own uterine walls ached, and her clit and labia still swollen, pushed uncomfortably against their tiny underwear. *At least it is cotton*, she told herself*, a rayon or some other poly blend would be killing me about now* .

Of course, she admitted, *she thought it was a useful and fair metric because she was small down there, small everywhere* . Like Boyd said, *you watch , the smart man thinks intelligence is most important, but the strong man thinks the smart man -if he's smart- better watch out* .

She giggled, as she thought of his aphorisms, *he was so clever* , and his stories could keep her enthralled for hours and hours; she would forget about her anger and those other men -the brutes and mere boys- and she could genuinely love her man; *he also made additions and additions inside her heart and her lungs and her head.*

Plus, she insisted, *she was prettier than Rachel, although Rachel photographed better than her . What was that quality* ? she mused. *How can a person objectively less attractive look better in a photograph which was ostensibly* -she had just learned that word from Boyd- *in which ostensibly* , she continued, *the camera was objective itself* ?

She shrugged, thinking of it, and Boyd let his hand rise and fall on this movement of her shoulder and stared and listened to this woman Harrissa was speaking with, or rather listening to, and wondered if maybe that slight rise & fall was a sign that she wanted him off of her. *He never liked to force himself on women, and this often made him more deferential than they wanted. He had failed to notice that women like being manhandled more than just when it is approved of or asked for explicitly. They want it rough often when they say they do not, despite the PC propaganda of the feminist Left,* she thought. *But to come out and say they want it that way is to ruin it; the whole point is that it is both taboo and a surprise. Women wanted subtlety, and men wanted to be told. But to tell a man you want subtly is to miss the whole point,* she lamented in her head.

Although, she countered as she turned back to one thought previous, *Boyd takes wonderful photos of me, I look as I truly do when he is in charge of the lens. Rachel has professionals photograph her; this is different entirely* . She thought of Rachel upstairs pouting, with resting bitch face as usual, and wondered if her little pussy was sore too. She liked licking it, *Rachel had great Ph* , Harrissa thought; *this was another thing that girls were oblivious to. Their bodies had a natural Ph, and this affected the taste of their feminine juices. Rachel with her odd vegan diet -how Boyd put up with that was one of God's three great mysteries- had made her taste like candy though* ; Harrissa could lap that up for hours and thus easily ignore the scowl on Rachel's face.

"I have a sweet tooth," she said -all-of-a-sudden- aloud and in a burst, as the conversation had to make room for such a *non-sequitur* . The woman paused and nodded and then finished her own sentence.

There is something, she thought now, *about have your man inside of you while your tongue is inside his other girlfriend, it's like some circuit you were both never meant to complete and yet were also somehow meant to comprehend* . It felt natural and taboo -and not sexually taboo as the prudes would envision- but taboo in the sense that if not for one's own body, Harrissa's body, the look that must pass between Rachel and Boyd, as they stared at each other from either side of Harrissa, would not be possible; that this look was energized, powered, completed by the *fuse* that was her in between was what made it all so odd.

Her pussy on him, her tongue in Rachel's sweet pink, and their -Boyd's and Rachel's- eyes like two klieg lights pointed at each other over Harrissa's back like the Nuremburg rallies with all that pagan malice and pride and ancient yet most-modern power. The circuit was what interested her, she thought, *not just one or another side of the equations that people liked to solve for some integer .*

Hitler was not some integer, he was one function in an equation that included the Jew, the German public and each of them as individuals -both corrupt and righteous- and inside a larger logarithm of phenomena that nobody, and she thought, *nobody, wanted to admit to.* That she had just thought of the Fuhrer looming above their *ménage et trois* was not seen as odd at all by her. She thought laterally, *and the equator of this earth was long and Germany and France did share a border,* she thought.

She had read on some website connected *with the guy Boyd had -well, what would you say Boyd had done to or for this man? Well, anyway, that guy, the one who had killed all those people, he had -according to the newspapers- been involved with some cult back in the day* . So, she had googled Zendik and found all manner of things buried out there in the hinterlands of the public discourse. And these Zendik's believed that the Jews had been psychically asking for it; and Harrissa, despite her lack of animus toward Jews, had found the idea plausible at least.

She then imagined there was a map on her back, her spine, revealed by her lack of body fat, like the continental divide. *Maybe each of them -her beau and his & her own lover,* she thought- *each took one side, he the Western slope, Miss Rachel the East, and they scoured it for signs of Blax's Jacks* .

Boyd was obsessed, and she had no doubt that *he enlisted her black magick to help locate and destroy this group of piratical bastards -his phrase- and if sexual congress was the only way to effect this, then he'd gladly go over the legislative branch's head and solve the problem himself by any means necessary.* She liked the idea of such things being done to and by her here in the city while feral animals were caught in traps up and out in the mountains and forest.

She liked the idea of helping him catch them; at least partly because she wanted to see this madman Blax and his Jacks, she imagined them all wild and strange and with flames in their eye sockets and snow on their brows, precariously balanced, in danger of snuffing those fires out. She could see big black birds flying up there, she could see trees as tall as buildings, and she thought now of riding on the back of his motorcycle downtown, the skyscrapers looming, so large, their lights -distributed above her randomly- that almost made up for the

absence of stars in the *Ciudad's* sky.

They rode so fast and aggressively, he jammed that bike through the streets and between cars as the protective detail tried to keep up in their black SUVs. She would grin at them if they pulled up beside them at a light; their only luck in catching up. Boyd ignored them, but she smiled and smiled at them as if this was all a big game. Of course, it was, but nobody thought that but her. They in their suits and armored cars and holstered .40 cals and carbines and body armor in back with the GSDs, and Boyd in his mission to be free of their tailing with his own .45acp on his hip and his insides all sloshing around.

The civilians in cars had to suffer like all civilians do in wars between martial and serious men. But modern first-world civilians suffer in their own little way. They had their banal commutes interrupted for reasons that seemed -and were- both unnatural and unjust. The police and secret service had tools to change lights from red to green and the reverse, so cars would get a green light and just begin lazily only to have one of the SUVs trip their little machines and the light would go red; the civilians, incredulous, would stop and their hands would go up in what might look -to the uninitiated- like an offering of prayer.

But it was invariably a curse the public man uttered in their cages; a blind curse to the gods of modern society; the exact opposite of the gods that might have once listened or be open to propitiations and offerings of offal and small children with heads half shorn of their hair.

Harrissa laughed when they did this, now that she understood what was happening. She was confused for many months about this fact that their lights always seemed green, and the perpendicular traffic incessantly sitting at an aggravating halt. She first suspected God, she was a natural *observer of patterns*, like all women and children, but her man was a scientist and rationalist and so she had to at least entertain the notion that there was a rational explanation for it. And this time, there was: it was this little box -given to ambulance drivers and cops- that they all had that could commandeer the hue of the traffic lights.

She was amazed as if someone had shown her the device that could make a young girl's dog come back to life; or snuff out -and make disappear- her hated brother's hated friend who leered at her when she was just 10 years old in a manner she did not -100%- enjoy.

Traffic lights were like weather she had once assumed, like laws that everyone must follow. Of course, when she had admitted to this one night after one of their bombing runs -that's what he liked to call them- admitted that she thought such a thing both practically -and less importantly- legally impossible because traffic

lights were independent from the whims of mankind, he had laughed uproariously as the three of them had sat up in bed. And he had even had fallen into Rachel's lap as he laughed, rising from there with tears in his eyes he was so overcome with this joy of true mirth. Harrissa was offended, jealous and now giggling too, she was laughing at his laughing as addictive as his moods often were. But the pique remained like the pits and seeds everyone else throws away.

She scowled and snickered at once, each feeling in her was genuine and each feeling too was putting on airs for them all. People think a person is a liar or honest, when everyone -even the People- are both all at once and all of the time.

He himself, she thought, *was like the weather: if black of mood, foul of air, the little people -her and Rachel included- better move inside and get under the bed; and conversely, when he was ebullient you could feel like you too were carried away in the sky like reindeer pulling -effortlessly- Santa's red sled .*

Anyway, he had explained the trick and the tool and the legal minutia that allowed such things in the city. Harrissa was amazed and yet now pretended to take it in stride; his guffawing had made her suspicious that he thought she was dumb. *And she was not dumb; and deep down he must know this ,* she thought. *Because he knew,* she thought, *that the smarter a person was the more likely - and the better at it they would be- the more likely that this person would lie .* And she was a liar's liar; she could lie on her way to a lie; she could lie standing up or lying down, she could lie straight into anyone's round little face. She lied about lying, and about all manner of things unimportant. She lied for no reason or for a combination of 10 complex rationales. *She loved to lie ,* she thought.

It was a talent and she honed it. Lies were for females and small men what strength and violence were to large men: natural and thus lauded as perfectly acceptable to use by those who employed them and condemned by those that suffered from each type of coercion.

And Boyd knew this and kept her around anyway; she often told him lies that made him happy; and for all Rachel's grumpiness, Harrissa's lying made her -Rachel- slightly happy as well. Rachel was nervous about her looks and her fragility as this Lyme disease wrecked her insides like Boyd's five-o'clock shadow marred her sensitive skin, and the way the razor too burned her privates and armpits. Harrissa's lies were like salve, balming agents that kept Rachel looking comparatively honest and thus good. Boyd loved honesty the most, *it was the* sine qua non *of* -he would say- *the scientific method , shit, a real scientist tried to prove his theories wrong not right.*

Rachel thought -as she sat upstairs and looked in the mirror of her vanity- of

Boyd's birthday card and then she smirked at her own face, its cherubness, as she thought of his maxims and declarations of love like that. She wanted an aquiline face, razor sharp*; Harrissa had such a face, angular,* she thought*, like Soviet propaganda posters, like it cut the chisel and made the hammer think twice.*

Rachel sat upstairs and thought these thoughts; and she brushed her bangs forward and straight like a closed curtain, and then parted them with her bone-comb just a bit as if someone might walk between the two halves now, the two curtains, and walk out onto her forehead, the stage.

She had been working on a sketch of Boyd, the composition was a scene she had remembered with him and his Lawyer, Tom Henry, and the look on his face was so far-reaching she had thought; *it looked like he could look on for days. It looked* - and she knew this couldn't be right- *but it looked like he could see past the photographic edge, past the people, past the walls of the building, past the city itself, maybe the state, and see something else, something behind the curtain of God's own black bangs* .

She held the comb there with the asymmetrical part holding one bang-curtain up and smiled with *the cutest part of her cutest parts* and remembered Boyd telling her that very thing on their first date. She had fallen in love with him immediately and that was not a woman's way. But he was so raw and honest and alive and sparking like a battery on fire and fine with it that way; *he was under control,* she had thought, *even when engulfed in flames* .

A man with this much power who has it under control, she mused*, now that was something to see.* And she had immediately wanted to feel it inside of her too; a look was one thing, *but to hold that flame inside one's self,* she thought*, was as close to the cherubim-guarded entrance to Eden we'd all get while still jangling around all alive.*

She was not surprised when he point blankly told her about Harrissa and the deal and that she -Rachel- would need to consent to such a lifestyle if they were to proceed. He was honest and forward, but she would have preferred it if he had let that fact on later and with some hesitation, but he was a man who thought women wanted the truth and the facts right upfront like a man did. *His one blind spot, one of several really,* she supposed, *although she didn't know what any of the others would be, but, his one blind spot was that he thought women were just men with tiny bodies and had need for a hug 3.14 more times -than a man- each day.* She giggled as she constructed that little dig at him, harmless but still more or less true.

She thought of the drawing of him that she was doing, it sat covered in Prisma-Color pencils and shavings at her desk, opposite of Harrissa's, and she formed her little hand -the hand that was away from holding the comb at her bangs- into the shape of what it might look like if she held the charcoal now and in this state. She liked the idea that she could thus bring him into the world, like he brought her into it too. She liked the idea that she drew -when alone- not just his face, but his head, as if his brains were inside the charcoal that she held as she sketched it all in reverie and silence as he was off at work or plotting some political *coup* that would rise or fall on some little trick or show of force or by the consent of the gods or the governed .

He knew how to fuck her, how she liked it, but he often didn't. He held back - she thought- *because he didn't want to hurt her; her fragility was on record and she did bitch about it, so he wasn't wrong to think that way* , she supposed. *But, her yoni was the one part of her that was strong and tough, and mighty,* she thought. It could take his force of body and bone and ancient anger. *He was like Hagal,* she thought, *as she had read the Sagas , or had them read to her* , she corrected, *as a child* . It -in these ancient northern tribes' lore- battered the man, the soil, and the plants in between; but it melted and watered its own seed.

The rune was one she had secretly wanted tattooed on her; to represent both his harshness and his life-force. *Harrissa* , Rachel thought, *did not understand just what she had had, neither before Rachel nor after. Rachel,* she didn't mind thinking of herself this way, *was here on this earth to explain just how -not, complex, or not just how complex he was- but ultimately how necessary he was.*

Hail gave the cold sky something to give the warm summer ground. Hail was a brokered agreement for water from zero to infinity and Boyd Sou was that coldest of grains that watered itself and brought forth new plants for the tribes to harvest and marvel at long after the vernal grains had been reaped and eaten or stored. *Boyd was like that; he was the gods' gift for a wealthy -and thus vulnerable- people already cloyed on a surfeit of goods, who, the seasons being unknown to them,* she thought, *did not know winter was afoot* .

She imagined that she held him tighter on their midnight rides, not out of fear but love. She had no need for revenge; but she could see the look on Harrissa's face, and it might as well have been tattooed with her Cyrillic plans; *but Boyd could not read things up close like that* , Rachel assumed. He was 63, and his girls were now 41 and 45 respectively, and she had heard that *the eyes -no matter how good far-away- began to lose the ability to see up close as a man aged; that these two types of vision were in fact unrelated* .

In fact, he had just bought some reading glasses , she thought and turned from the vanity mirror and saw them on the side table to their bed. She smirked and nodded at her own metaphor, *or was it an analogy?* she asked. *Either way, she was right . That girl was dangerous, and while she loved Harrissa in some way, loved her softness and overt-femininity, and how she stuck up for her,* Rachel thought, *sometimes in the most unlikely of times, despite all this, she knew that Harrissa was a bullet already fired from a gun: there was no way to recall it, take it back or predict just exactly where -beyond even its target- it might land.*

2. Chimpanzee Politics

How is it ye ravens; whence are ye come now

With beaks all gory. At break of morning?

Most happy are they when there is hope for battle with men and their spirits

The Raven [Norse Myth]

In order to inhabit cities, we put away action. I come along with a story and enable you -for an hour- to murder, so the next day you don't have to do it in reality

Interviews 1994 [Bradbury, Ray]

We have art so we do not die of reality

Notebooks [Nietzsche, Fredrich]

I. 2030 e.v.

Oðinn spoke only in poetry and drank only wine, *the dream told him this, and it was true.*

The Huginn *of current* sang-mele *thought and the* Muninn of sacatra-noir *memory flew the grey birds into the white wind that was stopped by the slate-sails of God's first landed ship. Oðinn stood on the shore of rock-beach; winter of calendar arrived, but the air blew warm into his ferrous beard and copper locks. His core was leathered and armored, his legs booted and held knives under straps.*

He held the London glass in his left paw at his side and listened for reports from his corvids. The ship grew larger -but not closer- 33 swells away. He thought of the poems of his father and recounted them in his discursive inner-monologue & dialogue so that the words may direct the birds that became hawks over water. The poem read:

Two Valravn *flew from* Hnikars' *shoulders;*

Huginn *to the Hanged;*

and Muninn *to the Slain.*

Oðinn then felt the black tipped tail and fetlocks of the winter wolves - beasts still smarting from being dropped by the ravens so long ago- as they brushed against his shins; they paced in figures of eight. They whined, and he poured from the bottle, a falls for them to lap at, and he poured for as long as they drank and they drank for as long as he poured.

The dream went on, but as the *Eiswein* hit his lupine tongue in the fugue state -as it unfolded in time and space- Blax awoke and consummation of the drink was occluded from his eyes. The wine never liquified .

He awoke at 0330 and the southern stars were so bright they seemed like manifold facets to one stone catching the glint of a sun larger and farther away. *Hamingja* of the Jacks turned in his mind as he remembered something of the dream. It was unclear if the Jacks were aboard or abaft of that ship as it loomed and grew but never closed on the black beach. He only saw their faces rotate as beasts bloomed on the headbacks and the lips took in words and then it was the eyes that spoke to him from the dark.

How often had monoliths been on that beach; had they been washed ashore or was the beach-talus the remnants, the shavings of some artist who cleared it away from the five slabs that stood in a crescent as the Norse god-king awaited the vessel to land?

The 740” stones were smooth and marbled, red-veined and squeezed by black asps with no eyes and tongues that flicked in bursts of three as they burrowed and emerged from clean drilled holes 1 and 7/8th in diameter. The holes were sinking in depths that bent light and warped sound. He felt rock dust in his lungs.

Now awake, upright, he looked from the bed into the hallway and to the slider at the end of the home. He lit a candle and carried it to the kitchen to make coffee and wash his face in the large concrete sink. Warm water unglued his eyelids and his heavy beard drank from the flow like the wolves and their slushy wine. His legs were sore, and his back was tight -the neck was being sawed at by inner-knives long dulled from this work- and he remembered that *Oðinn* father had only one eye, lacking the perception of depth; and thus of future.

He took a hydrocodone and let the water -still in small pools in the mouth- dissolve it and like narcotic river-silt settle into the throat and gullet below. His knuckles vibrated and warmed and felt like grey coals under the skin. A burning developed in the palm just below the crux of index and middle finger, he held it up to see if the skin itself was red. In this dark it was hard to see and he opted to reach into the freezer and hold an ice cube like an *Hagal* rune in his hand; the nerve damage was getting worse, his feet had burned for months and now too the hand. He often did not brush hair or teeth for this too hurt the skin.

He’d grown angry at generous touch by his women in the later days, even softness abraded as the body recalibrated pain. There is no social measurement for such malady -such sequela- under *central sensitization* . The dissolution of relationships -and thus man’s soul- as the man ruined at the dorsal horn eschews

love because it hurts the skin to be touched even with love. He has no idea why he is so sensitive at all; and doctors know but do not care at all. They too have only one eye and see not the future -the obvious consequences of pain- at all. And men retreat to the forest and plot murders and more; and worse.

The dream had hinted that the abandonment of hunting culture brought grains and wealth first, but a poverty of soul and the coldest grain of hail did follow. *The unsparing troop of the peace-diminisher captured broad Bute from the godforsaken ring-users* , he thought and tilted his head as if the words might slide like a topsail halyard that lay on the deck from one side of the ship and to his hand. *What,* he asked, *were these words that sprung up like shoots from the grain that fell in hot summer?*

The candle burned and an orange and pectin-white diffusion of lumens lay on everything grey & paper and beast-bone & metal and he rolled his neck as his shoulders pulled down on it like a winch; like windlass. He saw black sand in his closed eyes; he heard wolves whine in the silence of this time of night .

“Dada?” he then heard; his heart sped up as his body first froze.

He felt terrible for waking his angel. He abandoned the coffee and then walked to the bedroom and saw her on an elbow; half raised. When he appeared her arms then stretched out for a hug and he crawled slowly to her, so as to not disturb the mattress with his weight. She smooched his face and neck and rubbed his head and back and asked if he was in pain and thus awake.

He said it was only some and that he had awoke probably due to the star-lights, and he told her to look to her left out the slider to the night.

She gasped at the lapidary storeroom in the vault of their uninterrupted view of the heavens; the trees of the forest all black but the night more blue -more than *noir*- as the stars managed to flood the void with such nuclear photons that it yielded like freshwater brackishly yields to the sea.

“Papa, my gosh,” she said, and he laughed in joy and innocent pride that a girl such as his was so sweet. She added, “that is not normal is it?”

She had asked all manner of questions about the stars and the void itself; and if each star was a sun; and each sun a life-giver; and if they also got angry on the noons of other planets; and did God visit those planets too; and if so did He bless each doe and fawn and task each buck with vigilance as well?

He held her tighter now, as she rolled her back to him and he saw over her face as they both looked to the sky. He spoke in a low and deep voice that tickled her cheeks and ears and made her feel things in her stomach and lower -deeper- and

it all sloshed like waves and sounded like the hummingbirds by the lilies when they got so close to their Malamute, *Caius,* that he narrowed his eyes and splayed out his feet and the black & white hairs stood up on his back.

When this happened, as she worked in the garden, she would laugh and run her little finger on the dog's widow's peak and bite at his ears as he licked her face; but his eyes remained on the bird as it buzzed and buzzed and hovered until it finally flew away at the speed of a pre-gunpowder weapon, a one pounder from a *trebuchet* .

Now in the blue hued night, she rubbed her back into her provider, defender, mentor, father, like scratching an itch in the ear; and he spoke to her of pulsar stars and the *Hand of God* Nebula, the stellar corpse of PSR-Bravo 1509. Images of it populated her second-gen PGC from a DM he sent between them. And she breathed deeply as it turned and rotated in the space between her eyes and the expanse out there in the beyond of earth's early morning sky.

The nebula was dune and winter-wind blue and had a St. Elmo's artery at the wrist just like she did , she thought, *and the hand -the right one- was grasping for a red object of how many worlds?* Was He to carry it to a new location; crushing it to make new from the clay; or pulling it down as it rose too high or maybe reaching down to it to retrieve it? There was no upside-down to the cosmos. It was white in the core and ribbed and each star was like a billion hydrogen bombs going off for one million years. *God loved nukes* , she thought with no malice and Blax smiled as she had left her DMs open and he could innocently spy on her every thought. She didn't mind anyway; she like him in there sniffing around. She wanted him close, inside her mind and her lungs.

She waited for him to continue speaking -but he didn't- he just smelled her hair and neck and loved her, and she loved as much of him as she could imagine; he was like a god: too big to fit in the hand or the mouth or the mind even; the eyes had to take turns and divide him into at least three.

She smiled as she thought of him as a triptych of a ship now, with his face on the main sail, and each hand printed in rust-red on the square riggings; heavy grey canvas on the black spars in the shape of his ribs. It dove into the Christmas waves and the sail would billow and blow in the wind, it would open and close the hands from open palms into fists; the gunwales were bearded and the bowsprit breathed like his nose. She imagined she was a toothy dolphin chasing the ship as its noble head looked up and away from her and she looked up at him with the same awe as he looked to the gods.

"Papa, I got here on, or *when*, I was five right?" she asked.

“On your 5th birthday to be exact,” he said.

“And tomorrow I turn 10, right?” she asked.

“*Today* , you turned 10 today at midnight, you were a midnight baby, and,” he began but she excitedly interrupted.

“I was, how come I never knew this, I was born at midnight? 10 years ago?” she asked with her mouth open and her eyes wide.

“10 years and three, four hours ago yeah,” Blax said.

“I’ve been here with you longer than I was without you. Did you know that smart ass?” she said, and he began laughing so hard that she had to pull away from the burst of air and noise. She began giggling and covering his face to prevent all that expulsion of guffawing air; to prevent it from making her own skin flap like sails in the wind.

“Papa, you are so loud!”

“Angel, that was funny. Now, look, do not make a habit of calling me names, and never in front of anyone. That will make them -well, they will take it as a sign of weakness- but right now, that is some funny shit. And it is your birthday so I figure you’ve earned the right to call me that.”

“Well, did you know that I have lived more of my life here than anywhere?” she kept after him.

“I did not think of it that way; not until now of course, and of course you are right; like always,” he said, and she clasped both hands together in a Roman victory semaphore above her head and kept her back to him as she grinned. Her missing tooth snagged on her lip sometimes, but she liked it, it reminded her of Caius’ maw.

“Yeah, so pancakes for sure, and *Champagne* too; I think the good stuff is in order. And papa, can we go kill something today, I feel like we haven’t killed anything in weeks!” she added.

“Yeah, we can likely get a bear tonight at dusk; they are hungry still from the late winter; but don’t you want to saddle one and ride it around instead of shooting it?” he asked with a grin.

“No, I want to shoot it in the face,” she said, and he laughed so hard again that this time he buried his own face in a pillow and shook in the bed like a convulsant. As he laughed in the darkness of the pillow the *God’s Hand Nebula* appeared in his PGC’s visual cortex reverb and he saw now the thing grasped, the red obelisks were irradiating God’s fingers and he could see the x-ray of the

digits and the skeleton of four fingers with stars on each fingertip. He felt the laughter sucked back into him like a vacuum that made his ears pop and his eyes press against the lids.

He knew they were as ignorant as any species had ever been, and the cosmos was out there behaving as insouciantly and war-like as ever; all against phenomena that they as humans would never even hope to understand. Like single cells in the dirt under the ground of *Manassas* as *Beauregard* looked on with grim, unsmiling visage, or *Maragha* under the tread of *Subedei* and his Mongolian mare as humans warred and warred again.

He just tried to keep from crying too much so that she would not worry that her papa was coming apart at the seams. He hoped the dark would hide his eyes, and that she would look away. He hoped those dull knives at the neck would cut clean through for once and rend him of this head and its pain.

But as he lay prone and exposed, she rolled over on and saddled him instead of the bears out there as her black a-shirt slid to one side and her black boxerbriefs bunched up at the groin; she lifted one hand up as if he was a bull and she was as ready for the next 8 seconds of her life as anyone alive.

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He sat in the water and saw the crow come alone. There was a woman in the water now with him; and he half way -two-thirds- loved her, which was more than he could afford. He had dreamt of a corvid of golden plumes and onyx beak; it sang in cathedral volumes and monk-Latin and the codex of the *Mexica* . He heard it *via* the harmonics of struck rib bones and from her teeth as she smiled at him in morning of this the year of the Bear.

“Can I tell you a story?” he asked and looked into the water as it held flies and two wasps and the ball of an imploding, collapsing black spider.

“Sure,” she said and moved her hands in circles in the warmth under the surface.

“When we lived in *Hawai’i* , I told you and Brandon a story, and it was a true story. It was nothing grand or that important, but it was true. And you told the story to Don, a guy I worked with at the time and he told, you guys later informed me, he told you that I lied.

“You and Brandon laughed, you told me you laughed -laughed at me- as if you believed Don over me,” he said.

She grew tight about the eyes and her heart began to thump in her chest; her breasts absorbed most of it, but the slight vibrations in the pool began then and

he felt them reach him in time.

“And for the longest time I did not know why you believed Don over me, why you laughed at me, why the whole thing was as it was. I was wounded; but confused. I asked you, I asked, *of all people, why he -Don- would lie about me like that* . You pretended not to care and waved it away with a hand. But it stuck with me; and has for almost 20 years now.

“And I can tell you *why* now if you want to know,” he said as the mist stayed at the edge and the birds flew further away .

“Ok,” she said as if agreeing made it go quicker. He was a man who made one feel nervous and made time slow down. One needed tricks to get through his magic; one needed incantations to survive his words once he had decided to speak.

“See, humans are chimpanzees mostly. I didn’t know this then, but I know it now. I’ve read on it and seen the evidence; the data. And basically, the way it works is this: the alpha chimp is the leader, and he is stronger and larger by about 25-50%. So, two or three beta chimps that are about ¾ his size can match and usurp him.

“And the way they do this, is that they build coalitions, they sit around, two or three of them and they plot. And they often recruit a female chimp too; they get one or two of the harem to go in on the *coup* ,” he said as *The Pyre* from Kevin MacLeod played over the speakers of the container just eight feet away from the tub. The strings grew in tenor, the drums built up and on themselves like life itself does. She sat vulnerable in body, he sat exposed in his soul. The water was below both of them from the chest down.

“And these beta chimps begin by making fun of the alpha, laughing at him and throwing rocks. Little things really. And they watch how he responds. They watch, and they feel and they take it all in. And the alpha -doing his thing- becomes aware, slightly and over time, that those betas over there, way over there, are laughing at him and throwing rocks at him.

“Now, many alphas are magnanimous, and generous and actually de-escalate conflict more than they create it. Did you know that?” he asked as she shook her head. “Yeah, the alpha males stop fights between women and betas like 10 times as often as they engage in violence themselves. And they console other chimps too, that is a big part of their role; and they do it naturally, without ever being told; without rational reason; they do it with enlarged oxytocin receptors and amygdala. Right? It’s who they are.

“They are empathetic and decent, they feel for their troop, and they help keep the troop from internecine battles and maintain group affection and cohesion and calm nerves,” he said and pursed his lips in a pause for her to take it in. He knew he packed so much information into each sentence that a break was needed from time to time to allow the listener to absorb what she had just heard. This is why most men speak in *cliché* , it makes communication easier. The pragmatic man never says anything new; for *new* takes extra effort; the efficient man must speak in bromides, for anything novel takes time, precious time. And time is money; and is anything more important than money to the pragmatic man? Can anyone even afford to listen to anything new?

“I didn’t know that,” she said, not oblivious to what was coming, but breathing, with rhythm, as apotropaic of some kind; one never knew just what this man would say or do. It was why her heart and pussy quivered when she was around him, and it’s why she rarely stayed around him for long.

“Yeah, and this is what is so sad about life, for me anyway. The alpha gets one thing, one thing for all his generosity, all his food sharing, all his baby-tickling, and squabble-stopping and grooming and petting of those that are sad or left out; for all his sticking up for the underdog; and in fact that is almost always who the alpha defends first and most adamantly, the underdog in any fight. He feels an impulse, a chimp impulse to throw in with the loser, the maligned, the fat kid who gets picked on by actual bullies. See, most bullies are betas; not alphas. This is a fact, again, I am citing research done by the primatologist Waal, et.al .

“Most rape is committed by beta males too by the way. And women -human women- are often raped by betas too; the alpha rarely is dangerous in that way.

“However, there is one exception, and it is only one. For all the costs imposed upon and bore by the alpha chimp, the alpha male, and let me add that the costs are metabolically surmised, the alpha male chimp has the highest level of cortisol of anyone in the troop; but for all these costs he gets one thing.

“Also, let me add that cortisol is the stress hormone and it kills; it is the number one reason for heart disease. And mostly cortisol is highest in the lowest chimp in the troop, the loser, the underdog, and then it gets a little higher, excuse me, sorry, the cortisol levels drop, the levels get lower and lower as you -as the beta chimps moves up- as one moves up in the hierarchy one’s stress goes down.

“Until you are king, top dog, alpha, then your stress -measured by cortisol- shoots back through the roof to the highest of all,” he said as he tried to explain it in detail so she would know it was not just some theory he had or had heard, but that the data backed it up too. He wanted her to know this was biologically,

evolutionarily, and thus deeply, true. It was the opposite of philosophy or politics, it was closer to art. It had been true for millions of years.

“And the one benefit the alpha gets for this, all this shit, the politicking, the generosity, the handling every goddamn internal fight and argument, the defense of the tribe from marauders, the playing with each baby in the troop, the grooming of each female and back slapping each beta male, for all this, his unique role, for this he gets access to the females. He gets laid and that is it.

“Now, I’ve had harems, and it is not an insignificant benefit, I must admit. It is nice,” he said.

“Wait,” she asked, “you’ve had harems, like girls, more than one at a time, living with you?” she asked this as if this was the point; and of course it was the point to everyone except him. To him it was everything else that mattered.

“Yeah, I’ve had two and three living with me at a time; a rotating periphery of girls around a core two or three, I’ve had more women in bed at one time than most men in history ever had,” he said as he blinked to clear a bit of film from the eye. What he had said was technically true; most men never had one female at all; and of those that had any, just one or two was the best they could do in a lifetime.

She laughed and shook her head and felt her cortisol drop from the glee, but then felt a little insecure about her own status as just one aging female in the presence of an aging alpha who still looked as large and dangerous as ever. He did not look 44. His obliques alone made him look 30 at most. But his dark eyes were like entropy sinks, basins of gloom. His eyes aged him -and his beard too- but his body seemed unmarred by time. She worried about each of their lines.

“So, anyway, that is what the alpha gets as his prize. And guess what his friends, his so-called friends of the troop -all those betas that he protects from the feral chimps of other troops that do drive-bys all the time- guess what they do? The betas want his females, man. And so, they plot and scheme and ingratiate themselves and try to cuckold the man.

“They try and they succeed unless that alpha runs them off. And in fact, the alpha does exactly this. If he sees a beta even make eye contact with one of his wives, he will go ape-shit, and beat each of them -the male and female- to a bloody mess .

“And if he doesn’t, if he abjures, well, now the females -see, chimp females are promiscuous, unlike ancient women, natural women who were more chaste, chimp females are sluts like modern human females are- and anyway, they sneak

off into the jungle behind his back, sensing weakness and that they can get away with it. If the alpha is nice or oblivious he's rewarded with being cheated on. And in these little liaisons, the alpha's wife may get pregnant with some beta's seed. This is first cause for things most people can't even imagine. But I can imagine it.

"And as an aside, I knew a woman, Kelly Naylor, who did this exact thing, she had an affair and got pregnant and told her husband it -the illicit child- was *his* child, so the husband was cuckolded and then had to raise his rival's child! Can you imagine a more outrageous sin than that?" he paused and she just stared and thought of many more outrageous things than that; although she admitted as a man, for a man, that might in fact be one of the worst.

"That is tantamount to a man giving his wife AIDS by sleeping with a hooker or some shit. For a woman to not only cheat but get pregnant and then lie to the husband so he raises the kid? Oh, she was evil, man, like, pure evil. And this is why men are so vigilant, so jealous about other men, and all the liberal, feminist, horseshit about letting women have guy friends is sinister and wrong and that is exactly why. And chimps know it and have for millions of years.

"But, let's return to the jocularity and stone-throwing for a sec. See, the way a beta will even decide to make eye contact with a female is if he does his little beta-group chuckling and rock-throwing and the alpha ignores it. If the alpha ignores these little, innocent, right, quote, *innocent* , digs at him, the betas are crafty, they have 23hrs a day to think of ways to get laid man, like some *incel* in his basement, man, they are crafty.

"And so, the betas notice, they take note," he said; his eyes squinted, and the crow returned overhead, and the sky grew lighter as a thin gauze of heather grey clouds hung just above the tree line; the peaks were occluded. He pointed with a wet finger at his temple, meaning his eyes and their cortex and the lower layers down in the brain.

"They take note and his insouciance, his refusal to over-react, is taken as weakness and they begin the first move in their overall *putsch* ; their layered attack. Next, they make eye contact with a female, and then -if the alpha refuses to over-react to this innocent, oh-so-innocent look, the -*hey, we're just friends, I can have guy friends can't I? This is 2017 dude, stop being so controlling* - look; you know that look, yes?" he asked as if it was all cute and half-funny and no big deal when he was actually describing a massive social ill that was the epicenter for social collapse.

She laughed nervously and was feeling a coldness in her extremities as the water

reached 103 degrees Fahrenheit. He was somehow more unsettling when joking like this.

“And if the alpha does not respond to that look with violence; for remember, moral suasion, just talking or yelling at the beta is insufficient, it will not dissuade him; *Waal* and his team have shown this. The beta has no moral shame, he will not be humbled into abeyance of his sexual desires.

“Like beta male humans, he has no moral code at all. In fact, he is rational, oh-so-rational and liberal and modern and thinks this monogamy thing is a vestige of the church, man, like, *relax yo* . Right? The modern beta, like the modern female, thinks alphas are too controlling and like, *retrograde, man , like grow up, modernize, bro-hammer!”* he said with the slight accent of the modern dumb.

She laughed again at his role playing. She ignored her first instinct to worry .

“So, if the alpha just yells and then ignores the transgression, the beta and this alpha’s putative wife are in the forest shortly, sinning and fornicating with abandon.

“And if that happens, and there are no consequences, which often there are not, for the alpha has no idea he’s been cuckolded, maybe he was off foraging for food for the troop or defending the troop from interlopers or tending to one of his other members of the odalisque,” he said as she interrupted.

“Odalisque?” she asked.

“Harem. Yeah, and so the two scoundrels -the beta male and the slutty female- just got away with their little *infligrante delicto* and now, now the beta is emboldened even more and goes and shows off his victory to his mates. Yeah, he rubs his genitals on them to prove he got his dick wet, and they now, they too are emboldened and within a few days they physically surround that alpha and beat him to death,” he said and stared at her with dark eyes, hooded and lashed and at the top of the white of the eye like a sun setting upside down in the sky; sucked up beyond the horizon of a heaven that had abandoned this earth in disgust.

She was shocked by how quickly his verbose and ornate story came to a cleaving, guillotining end. She found herself short of breath at this high elevation of ground.

He watched the crow now use the thermals to hold steady in place just to his 2 o’clock position -he faced out over the south toward New Mexico- and maybe 15-meters out over the ledge that they sat on, his plateau of homestead was upon a narrow band of flatland only 80 feet from edge to edge; the 35 acres was almost entirely ascending and descending slopes. The hot tub was a mere five

feet from a one-to-one slope of evergreens and rock and wilderness, a drop off that fell 1,000 feet to the next valley before rising again a quarter mile away. A thick fallen tree lay on its side as boundary to the drop.

The black feathers of the corvid were translucent at the edges as they pulled from the bones of the wings. He saw the outline of the skeleton of the bird and coveted its head; imagining stroking the bird into a bullet shape in his mind as the free head moved side to side. He saw visions of capturing ravens and magpies and the black birds with 3-foot wingspans. He felt their heart beats in his hands as he squeezed these avatars, and they filled themselves with mountain air and he forced out bird-air like bellows with each clasp of these imaginary hands.

“When I was in the oil patch, I had an old man as my mentor. Curt MacIntyre; smart guy. He was a multi-millionaire and he liked me. He’d take me out to titty bars and tell the strippers or go-go dancers at the club behind Diamond Cabaret that I was his son. I got more tail from that guy just introducing me to girls that way than I can recall. He was just like that, and I understood not one bit of it. I was idealistic and *naïve* all in one. Of course, most people will tell you that those two things go together axiomatically, but that is cynical and untrue.

“I am more idealistic now than I ever was, and less *naïve* than I’ll ever be. I’ve separated the two further and farther apart than the wing tips of a condor, of the great spirit of the *Athabaskan Raven* , as far as the apogee and perigee of the sun star,” he said as the clouds spread thin and whitened and the mountain became pink in the dawn.

She listened now with some thing inside her turning like leaves of October, like grey hairs at the temples of men who guard sacred places in silence and reverence. She watched him and this thing inside her heart and eyes look back at herself from above. This man was strange. He was a badass, a dangerous and competent man, and yet so sensitive, and fine-tuned, and full of emotions that he’d lay out like a vivisection for all to see. He bled, with each word he bled.

He was a warrior-poet and an ancient man, but a store room of the latest scientific knowledge too. He was unloved, in fact hated, and she was grateful for this. His lack of popular appeal meant he was open to anyone who showed him interest and that meant she stood out from the crowd too. She worshipped him like an ancient -feared- deity who had lost one eye.

“And this man told me one day after many, many travails in the oil field, with tool-pushers and company men and roustabouts and roughnecks. He said, *Lyndon, you’re never going to get it are you* ? And I said, *never get what* ? And

he said with a smirk that old men get when they school young men about the vagaries of life, *son listen* :

"*You are tall, athletic, good-looking, and on location you live in the biggest 5 th wheel on the pad, bigger and more expensive that theirs -and they are bosses- and you are married to a Playboy model. Playboy model. Literally .*

"And he was of course right. However, I -intent on missing the point- I protested, *but, I work harder than anyone on that pad, I put my whole cock and balls into it all ,* I said. He knew this to be true, and he laughed even harder.

"*You think they care about that? That is work, work is work. But, man, your mere existence is what drives them insane. They are men, old, broken down, or young and stupid, each one of them uglier than the next, they can't understand one word you say, and think you make up -invent- half those 25 cent words you seem so fond of using around them.*

"I opened my mouth to object and he just raised his wise hand and here is what was said:

> *Lyndon, they tell me this shit, they have no idea I'll tell you; so they are honest. And honestly, they are jealous, insanely jealous and they will pull down your chimney if it's the last thing they do. That's why I recalled you here, you worked your ass off out there, for two years; but they've had enough of your ass,* he said.

I was a good worker man , I insisted as if I hadn't heard one word he said.

> *Yeah, and that made it worse not better; shit, if you were lazy they could have held that against you. But you weren't, you were smart and strong and worked like two men put together and this enraged them further. You cannot underestimate the fact that their hatred is not something you can argue your way out of. They don't need a reason, you are the reason. And your pride, that is all the foot hold that they need to climb into your head. You are so proud, so demanding of honor and respect that you bite on each insult and challenge with anger and rage that they used that to bar you from the field.*
>
> *They baited you and you took it. Lyndon, you threatened to kill Merle, '* cut his head off in front of his family,' *I believe is the phrase you used; you told the company-man to,* fuck off. *You had to have like three guys -Jason and those guys- hold you back as you tried to attack the tool-pusher. And each chance you got to insult them in return you took it. You didn't let them*

win one battle, and so you lost the goddamn war. And in the oil field, shit, in life, the young buck with all the, with all of God's gifts, doesn't get to also exhibit more pride -in addition to more size, strength, looks, money, girls, style, brains- he cannot also heap more pride onto himself. That is what they saw as the final straw , he said.

Well, I don't like being made fun of , I said as if this was some idiosyncratic thing .

Nobody does, but if you are the derrick man or mud man, then the tool-pusher and company-man outrank you; so, you take it, he said.

I don't , I said.

I know , he said, *and that's why they called me and said to pull you from their pad.*

"See, he schooled me in something so important, so essential, that I missed it. I mean, I *missed* it, man. I walked away from that meeting thinking I was still right. I wasn't right, I was wrong. I was dead wrong.

"But, I didn't know it; because I didn't realize that I was half-assing my philosophy, my so-called pride. Shit, I was yelling and threatening and making a lot of noise; and sure we had a few fist-a-cuffs down in the driller's shack or by the reserve pit or out on the road. We fought and drew blood, sure.

"But, we did it over work, and often we ganged up on the lazy and the outcast and the truly despised for incompetence. It was a group thing and it was righteous and not at all unfair. These men deserved their beatings for fucking things up; even *they* admitted it later.

"No, what I failed to do was kick the shit out of anyone who insulted me directly; I postured, I yelled and I swore up and down that I'd kill them, but I never did. Sure, they were scared, and walked away cowards. But, they got me removed, I didn't get them removed. They won. See, a man can never learn -a man *will* never learn- if he always wins; or thinks he wins.

"And they won; and while I in real life lost -*I thought I won* - and so nothing on either side ever changed," he held his hand out under the water and she reached to him too. They touched finger tips and gingerly interlaced each finger on his left and her right hand. She felt better already.

"And when I left the oil field, half broken and mangled from the outrage of the work, the brutality of the labors, I started my own businesses with the seed money earned out there in the *Piceance* , and with these owner-operator

businesses I made a shit ton of money, between 2007 and 2017 I made $2.1 million.

“And I thought I had the world by the balls. My clones were world famous man - my MMJ clones- and people came from out of state to buy Praxis clones. And I grew the dankest weed around. And I made money for my partners. I made working-class people -my employees- into middle-class earners. I tended to my girls as they accumulated around me. I bought dinners and shoes and gifts of all kinds. I read to them, I asked about their hearts and minds. I broke up their fights. I stuck up for the bleeding, the broken, the confused.

“I was generous, magnanimous and made it a point not to lie or gossip and I diffused arguments between those bitchy tattoo workers; I owned a tattoo shop in addition to the weed warehouses, to launder the money you see?”

She laughed and nodded. Each of his sentences had sentences within them like a nesting doll. Nothing was simple, solid, or safe.

“So, anyway, I was the proto-typical, the apotheosis of the alpha, I was big and swaggering and aggressive and stern but generous and helpful and tended to my tribe. I shared my money eagerly and asked -like the alpha chimp asks- only that my females -and my honor- be left alone.

“And the betas, from that tiny little fuck Jeremy to Dean and Michael and Carey and Frank and Jason and Jeff fucking Bernstein and Chris and Angel and Rudy, all of them plotted against me; piece by piece. And they did it for the same reasons; and if I had learned one thing from that old-head Curtis; just one thing he had said I would have seen it coming. They hated my looks and my money and size and cool cars and style and brains and my 25 cent words, and they hated that I strutted about with my two or three females half my age like I was too-cool-for-school.

“And so, they threw rocks at me, and gossiped and waited to see how I reacted,” he said and let that sink in as the water steamed into the cold dawn air and her skin began to redden and flush.

“Now, when a guy in traffic pissed me off, I would get out of my big redneck truck and pull them out of their cars on Colorado Boulevard, that is a fact. I beat a guy in broad daylight for honking his horn at me. I rammed three cars in total, over like a 15-year period, all for fucking with me. I even pulled a gun on two guys, three guys really and I made many men back down just by blowing up and intimidating them.

“I was violent and mean and dangerous. I carried a gun each and every day and

look at me," he said as she took in the breadth of his black-tattooed Highlander chest and massive arms and a jaw bearded in black and as set as the lapsus in the crown jewels at Buckingham.

"Beast," she said with a smile and a moisture inside and out, adding, "bearman."

"Exactly. So, I thought I was handling my shit. I thought I was king shit, man. I mean I was rich and handsome and as big as a linebacker; I had young girls all around me and I'd spread money around like a big-city politician, man. I was smooth. But I wasn't cynical; I was not strategizing or being a schemer; this was my honest personality and instincts.

"But, I made enemies everywhere I went, just based on my virtues not my sins. My sins were overlooked, it was my *virtues* that began the plots," he said and shut up as she tried to figure out what the fuck that even meant.

"I was mean and insulting, no doubt. When men insulted me or were lazy or incompetent -which is always- yeah, I was rough. I did not speak nicely, I was rough and to the point. I was loud and intimidating and unfriendly. I admit it. I called them out for their immoral behavior; their lack of loyalty or dedication or shitty work ethic.

"But again, because I am a dumbass, I forgot that moral suasion does not work on betas. They just want to see what they can get away with. They don't care about pride or any of that stupid shit; *pride in your work? What the fuck is that?* these creeps say. *Pride in your manhood?* Nigga please."

She giggled and thought his use of modern phrasing was funny; both odd and humorous.

"These guys had no honor, they would fuck your mom on your dad's birthday, after they sent the old-man out to get beer, if they could. So, my yelling and dressing down and insisting that they were falling short of the kingdom of God was useless, and in fact -and this is the genius of life, man, in fact- they took it all in stride and as evidence that they could in fact take the whole thing -the whole *coup* against me- take it farther, further. And that is exactly what they all did.

"One of my plotters told another plotter that I would quote, *not do anything* , unquote *because I was afraid to lose all I had* . See, they were right.

"I had so much built up, so many businesses, material objects, bills, shit, I was spending $20,000 a month on shit for me and the girls and my people, plus I was paying out wages and leases for properties and business expenses of another $30,000 a month. I had partners to assuage and vendors and customers to

placate; so, see, he was right, *I had too much to lose* . Your enemies will teach you lessons if you listen. But I did not listen at all.

“And they saw it, and they said it. These guys were professional beta-males man; they were chimps through and through. And they tried to fuck my women and steal my money and businesses and get me thrown in jail -they literally recruited a cop, Jeff Messangelo- to build a case on me. They undermined me with my own father, calling him to tell him that I was a thief; and I was no thief, I never stole one gram of dope or one dollar from them.

“It was no different than General Halleck spreading rumors of Grant’s drinking after Grant had won at *Shiloh* ; imagine winning that battle and being relieved of command. A man as great as Ulysses S. Grant undone by fucking rumors,” he shook his head and the vapor rose to his skin. She just watched as his eyes looked whiter about the albumin, darker at iris. He was more sad than angry, and this she saw each time he paused his words.

“They gossiped to everyone; one of my employees, this Mexican dude who I was always good to, in fact *he said* I was always good to him, but they talked so much shit behind my back that he joined forces with them just out of sheer *force majeure* . He admitted it! He said to me -as the whole tattoo shop was abandoned- that he liked me, and admitted I was good to him, but that Dean and this asshole Kevin talked so much shit that he believed them; that he had to go with their side. It was a riot. I gave Kevin my profits from the business each month, right? I made zero money from All Heart Industry,” he said.

“That was the shop’s name?” she asked.

“Yeah, and I made no money on it; it was just a front for money laundering around $50,000 a month in cash, like paper-money, cash money. But the shop made money, it turned a profit, so I gave it to Kevin to compensate his dumb ass for managing it in addition to the money he made piercing; he was the piercer. And that little beta-fuck plotted against me too and took the whole gang with him. It was classic chimp shit.

“Now, in 90 days I had all three marijuana warehouses, my tattoo shop and one of my girlfriends taken from me, and I had a police investigation opened on me for meth dealing and money laundering. Now look, I *was* laundering money -I admit- but I had never even seen methamphetamines in my life. And I paid taxes on my money, I wasn’t washing money to avoid taxes, I was doing it because Wells Fargo won’t take MMJ -medical pot- money. They take cartel money and Iranian terrorist money by the way, but not legal weed money.

“Anyway, the bank refused, so I ran it through All Heart, a legit business. But I paid taxes man, I paid $30,000 a year to the IRS and another $5,000 to the state. That is more in taxes than most men make in total in a year,” he said as the music fell to a soft murmur of atavistic strings and war drums.

“More than I make ever; I think the most I ever made was $24,000 a year,” she said.

“Right, I was a team player man, I paid taxes. I was a citizen.

“Anyway, they took it all, in a massive *coup d’état;* and it was genius man, the way they did it was pure plotting, scheming, lying, baboon smile-to-your-face, plot-to-your-back shit. And they took it all and I was left with nothing but my house -which I had to sell then to get cash- and my cars, I sold all but two of them; my motorcycles, one was stolen and I kept one; and I kept my books and wine. But I had to sell like $30,000 in wine to survive as my cash flow was cut off .

“And they fucked my woman; now admittedly, she was a pure psychopathic whore. Sarah was a whore, but the others, it was the raven-haired angel whose name I shall not say aloud, then Alina the Russian with a hammer and sickle tattooed on her hip, and then Andrea the ballet dancer who had abs and thighs that made me nearly go blind, and they were, *ok* ; they never cheated. But Jeremy and Frank both fucked Sarah, and Carey tried to, and she plotted with them. She stole my weed from my house, she flooded the grow to help with the lease-clause plot,” he was being brief, but the Russian novelists don’t have plots this complex, and so even the truncated version was making her head feel like an overfilled crankcase.

“What?” she said.

“Yeah, the lease had a clause that if we flooded the grow -the warehouse- or blew up a transformer, we could be evicted. It was a water & fire clause, I guess. To protect the building from damage. And my partner had the lease; he made up those rules! And she flooded it on purpose, fucking water coming out the door, no shit, like Home Alone shit,” he was shaking his head thinking of the biblical flood now.

Jadi was now laughing and shaking her head in parasympathetic reaction. She could not believe that this shit was real. She thought of her own boy, who was popular in school with girls and she thought of how he had explained that the other boys had already begun their plotting on him -just as Lyndon had described, with whisper campaigns and ganging up in little cabals- and she had

had no idea what to do. But now she was seeing her own son might fit inside some framework, some larger conspiracy of the cosmos and this man was explaining how it all worked. But these were just hints, breezes of the mind, *and one could think of all that later* , she surmised. But she began to pay more attention to this story, for now it seemed to hold something for her and her boys.

“Dude, I am giving you bullet points, if I gave you details you’d call me a liar. The true details are that Byzantine. Anyway, they all plotted and they did it for one reason.”

“What?” she asked quickly. She felt there *had* to be a point to all this. It felt like a clue, a hint, a cobweb-covered lock; stuffed inside a book by key.

“I showed weakness; I did not physically assault them for their gossiping, their eye contact and their innocent stone throwing,” he said returning to the metaphor and thus the connection between man and his cousin the chimp.

“They threw stones?” she found it hard to discern when he was literal and when metaphoric; his real life often contained realities that were other men’s rhetorical devices; he could do and say -and have happen to him- things that are not normal at all. So, one had to ask.

“Metaphorically, they did. They did things -like not paying the electric bill or doing free tattoos for their friends in which they pocketed the cash- stealing basically or shorting the cash on a drop, like they owed me $20,000 for a deal and it would be -they would pay me- $19,100 instead. They’d gossip about me and ruin my name. And they waited to see what I did. See?” he squinted as if he was searching too.

“Ah, yes,” she did see now.

“And I yelled and shamed them, and they felt nothing inside. They had no shame. They secretly laughed at me and set their plot into overdrive, man. ”

“So, you moved out here?” she asked as an elk began bugling far off enough that it failed to arouse any response from anything above the brain stem. Their ears barely heard it at all.

“Yeah, I had bought the land for $110,000 -years earlier- and I took my $130,000 in cash and built this house and compound; with my bare hands little sister,” he raised his hands from the water like the kraken.

“Bear man!” she said, as that was her *sobriquet* for him for obvious reasons. He looked like a Viking rex to her, one that had been kicked out and banished to *Vinland* a thousand years ago.

“But that is not the end of the story,” he warned.

“No?” she was feeling drunk on the heat of the water and the cold of the air and the way this man spoke and sat like a sunken and carved arch-angel at the entrance to a temple abandoned and overgrown. She couldn’t decide if he was man or element; mortal or that which blew through the trees, sank down into the sea; made metal melt.

“No, see, I saw what I had failed at, and then I saw that what I failed at is also what the whole society has failed at,” he said and looked out over the edge of the land, the plateau.

“I saw that alphas were not kicking ass any more. Alphas were too rich and safe and comfortable and didn’t want to risk jail or poverty for a principle anymore. See, my ancestors had to risk it, if they didn’t, if they let an insult or a side-eye go, then they lost it all in a *coup* . This ain’t an algorithm or some game-theory, this is real life. From chimps to Scottish sheep herders, the alpha that failed to smash the first sign of rebellion and hint of disrespect, well, they lost it all,” he said, and his black eyes seemed heavy again to her. He knew the mathematics and the evolutionary biology was all on his side; but he wanted this girl -something human- to be on his side too.

“Sheep herders?” she was wondering now if he was domesticating animals at some point.

“Dude, yeah, this social scientist *Nesbitt* showed that Scottish sheep-herders have a cultural propensity for honor disputes being settled with violence and this manifests in the southern white male culture which is literally twice as violent as anywhere else in the US,” he said with an approving nod.

“Really?” she was amazed by how much specific knowledge he had. She felt it all fall away from her memory though.

“Yeah, we -I am Scottish on both sides of my genome, and from the south- my whole family is southern, like redneck as fuck; and my mom’s side is from New Zealand which has the same cultural source, the Scottish kicked out of England in 1745. I am literally the grandson of sheep herders in the *antipodes , New Zealand Scots.* Literally,” he said.

“Wow, your life is life a movie,” she was wondering how any of this was possible. But he seemed genuine; and he looked like he had a lot of bad things happen to him. He seemed beat up by the world.

“Dude. So, what *Nesbitt* missed -and he alluded to it with the testosterone and cortisol studies of southern Scottish subjects, you know study subject- what he

missed were the alleles. The genomic underpinning. I had to go to *de Waal* and other sources to piece it together. I did my own research project and discovered that my genome is built by God for retributive violence and magnanimity and generosity and high moral reasoning in defense of women, underdogs and my own honor. I mean, look, I defended the fat girl in the 1st grade against the whole play ground; I was *that* guy .

“I am built for this and yet our society -thanks to liberalism and corporate, pusillanimous, conservatism aligning to stamp out all so-called violence; and thanks to faggots like Steven Pinker who think the State should handle every fucking dispute- our society is intolerant of street fights, of retributive violence, of settling scores the old-fashioned way.

“Thus, our society is suffering massively from this. It’s an epidemiological crisis,” he said.

“What?” she had no idea what he meant.

“An epidemiological crisis, a sickness like *dengue fever* or *rickets* or some shit. We have women banging every beta in the bushes; men, beta males, getting away with gossiping, insults, both verbal and semiotic, symbolic *ya* know? And they are cuckolding alpha males too. We have it in spades, man.

“It’s rampant and it is destroying our culture because alphas used to act like the immune system and clean this shit up with some face-smashing-of-the-guilty to restore order among the amoral types. I mean, the data is clear: old school alphas kicked ass; physically. And it worked; it kept the low-level sociopath in check.

“The alpha was killing germs for the city. See, people like my family do not get why guys like me are so angry; because they do not care that society is immoral and low-brow. Betas only care about money and financial stability. They see no value in the enforcement of ancient moral norms. So, to them I am the problem, to them the antibiotic is the problem, not the disease. That is how backwards America is now; the solution is hated and the disease is tolerated.

“Alphas are 12-15% of the population, they are the immune system that destroys pathogenic organisms. And beta males are the rapists, the cheaters, the liars, by far they commit the most anti-social acts; not crimes *per se* , but anti-social acts, acts that undermine society; acts like lying, cheating, scheming. Why? Because they just *wanna* get laid and they cannot unless they scheme and plot and undermine the alpha; that is how they win. And they aren’t going to just sit back and lose to a guy who is 6-foot two and 210-pounds of doom with looks and brains and money and talent. No way.

“They -despite their narrow shoulders- are living creatures, man. They *gotta* reproduce somehow. And so, they take the low road; and the alpha’s job is to smash them when they get out of line and the whole system is like a *Gaian* balance of placid weather and gathering storms, wind & fires and calming rain, destruction and the re-building by Nature and God. Right? It’s an eco-system of push and shove, of peace and war. Lava encroaching upon the sea.”

“Right,” she was -in fact- following him now. She, as a woman, understood the concept of balance, of the whole.

“If you take away forest fires, or volcanoes, or disease outbreaks, if you take away lightning then you take away thunder too. Life is chaos and order in a tense balance, and the alpha is the ordering balance to the chaos of beta scheming. And the State tries to provide order, but they cannot do it at the micro-level. They can’t.

“Shit, gossiping ain’t illegal, either is cheating on your man. And when my business partners ripped me off and stole my million-dollar business, the courts, the State, said *I had no standing* . They refused to help me right a genuine wrong,” he said.

“Why?” she was upset at this instantly .

“Technically medical marijuana is illegal federally, and the courts are all federal. So, I had no standing at all,” he said as the water remained blue in general and clear in particular and hot wherever they put their body.

“But you paid taxes on that business and the state of Colorado said it was legal as fuck,” she said because she had heart and brains and knew right from wrong; unlike the government.

“So, you see my point then?” he said with an ironic grin.

She laughed and the *Valravn* flew off in the distance in an elliptical pattern, a swerve, and the clouds lifted as the sun broke over the top of the black eastern tree line, ragged and feral and noisy with the lower order of birds.

“Why did you bring that guy in *Hawai’i* up?” she asked, no longer nervous. “Don?”

“Because I never understood why he lied about me to you and Brandon until I understood the way betas and females work together to take down an alpha. See, Don one time was walking with me into a job site, a hotel we were working on; doing spall repair. And as we are walking he noticed a girl staring at me and he stops and says, dude, *what are you good looking or something, that girl is like*

staring at you with her mouth open? ”

Jadi laughed and flicked water at him. He was cocky sometimes in a way that was funny. He just said shit people aren’t supposed to say. They all think it, and this guy just *said* it.

“I am not enjoying recounting this shit. I find it embarrassing and overt; like, it lacks class to bray about your own looks, especially since I am not handsome anymore,” he admitted.

“Oh, that is not true,” she said, although the beard made him look older now; and his eyes were as sad as she had ever seen. *But he was still sexy as fuck* , she thought.

“But, I have to explain it -thank you, sorry for just blowing past that- but I have to explain the details because it’s the only way his behavior makes sense. He was jealous; he got jealous once he realized I was handsome and girls were all slack jawed in the lobby, and so when he found himself around another girl -you, and a beta he could corral, Brandon- and he had a way to gossip about me and make you laugh at me, he jumped on it. And it worked. He won.

“And see, that shit is constant and that is why most alphas, successful alphas -of which I am not one- I am the world’s least successful alpha,” he said, as his sentence was broken in half, thinking of all that he had lost.

“I don’t know dude you have nice shit and have had many girls,” she countered, seeing how much more he had than anyone she knew. The land alone was luxurious and expensive and had innate, endogenous, permanent value. *And the dude had taste, that concrete counter top was something you see in magazines,* she thought, *and he drove a $100,000 car for crying out loud* , she thought as she shook her head.

“Yeah, but I am always in the process of losing it all; my life is one long arch of ascendance followed by demolition; it’s permanent chaos. And it’s because I do not thwart these cabals of betas and females that plot against me. I remain aloof, indifferent or at worst I fatuously use moral suasion tactics which are useless on the non-honorable class of men or on women .

“They are immune to moral arguments; they are pragmatic. They are biologically practical, built by nature to think of getting laid and paid, and they are modern, they live in a modern *milieu* which forbids alphas from kicking their ass, and so it’s the perfect storm of chaos.

“You show me a pragmatic man and I’ll show you a betrayer and plotter,” he said as he looked at her in a way that made her feel like he wanted to fuck her,

then eat her and throw the black bones into the white fire, "*but God is too high and the King too far away,* as they say."

She was quiet and did not like how he kept obliquely including her -as a woman- in his critiques. But she *had* laughed at him, taken part in this undoing so long ago. He was not wrong, she and Brandon had believed Don over him; over their ostensible friend.

Why? she asked herself. *Why had they wanted to believe that Lyndon had lied, and that Don had told the truth?* She had no answer as the water's jets turned on and the clear water turned white and foamed; making their bodies beneath it no longer visible at all.

"And my own father and brother have hated me from day one too; and for the exact same reasons. And I was a fool to play along with their passive aggressive little games. I let them get away with throwing stones at me. But, those days are over too," he said and watched as her hands rose from the water and steamed in the cold winter air. He thought of how they had sank and swam in the sea by Diamond Head two decades ago, and how he knew she was an angel from heaven sent by God all along.

"You don't mind I'm half Mexican?" she asked finally; *apropos* of nothing, except that he used racial slurs early and often.

"I wouldn't mind if *you* were half *beer can* ," he said as she smiled and lowered down into the tub; she laughed into the water with her lips.

III. 2018 e.v.

Detective Ron Emickole of the Denver Police Department handled the card.

He wore white latex gloves and held it by its edges; as the card had been slid into a book so it stood out like a mark. He looked at each side, and noticed it was a custom playing card, riven in half from lower left to upper right and the color was matte black.

The printing was in a gloss black that only became visible as you turned it into the light. As he rotated it he found the right angle and stopped to look at the image. It was a spades card, and a Jack or possibly a joker, as just a lower case 'j' was printed on the upper left; the center was -he now saw- a man's face with a sword and a black rectangular bar over -and hiding- the eyes. The man-in-profile -a Jack he saw now- wore the normal regal robes of a Bicycle Playing Card Company card, but all in black. And his partner, Tristin held open a clear cellophane bag as Ron turned the card over to see the other side.

It was just a series of lines, geometric, gibberish to him, but maybe the lab would understand it and he dropped it into the bag as his partner told one of the techs to stop treading by the body.

“We need to photograph it first, Bob,” he said, and the man gingerly stepped back from the corpse .

Emickole had begun to allow his mind to wander, to go big-picture and not over-focus on the details. This was the 8th murder-scene, and the 23rd through 28th bodies and he already knew there were no shell casings, no DNA or other trace evidence, and no witnesses. Since that was what was already absent, he began allowing himself to wonder why.

Why no shells? Revolver? Or did the perp pick them up?

Why no witnesses? Stupid, insentient neighbors with loud TVs blocking the report of a pistol? Or was it a suppressed weapon?

Why no DNA? Not in database? Or did the perp wear fresh clothes, new clothes and fully garbed? Did he use an aerosol?

The scene photographer asked for his angle -the angle Ron was taking- and the detective stood up -to give it up- and walked back to the corner of the room. He directed his eyes up high, then at normal eye line, then down at the level of the bodies that looked out from dead eyes four inches from the floor.

“Tattoo shop, car dealership, Aurora apartment, medical marijuana shop,” he said listing the last four locations that he had picked up the phone on. Aurora PD was handing off all these that fit the description to DPD. The other four were being handled by Det. Ravrafters and Det. Pointes, which included an apartment on 13th and Williams, a car in a garage, a public garage, and home in Cherry Creek golf course. All Caucasian except two victims, one African American and one Hispanic. All men, from 25 to 60. All of them were a little dirty.

Tax evasion -by Swinyard- and dope -by the black and Mexican kid- heroin possession and tax evasion -by this latest guy. He tried to recall the name of the owner of 6th Avenue Tattoo, *Jeremy something-or-another* , he thought.

They were not *citizens* - in the *argot* of police who divide the world into good guys, aka *citizens* , and criminals aka *perps, scumbags, et.al* .- but they were not total scumbags either; *they were edge players* , he thought. *A lot of people don’t realize this*, he thought, *but statically, most victims of crimes are criminals themselves with criminal records.*

This didn’t affect the need to solve the crime, *for the crime was committed*

against the State technically , he thought, but it was the thing cops knew that the public didn't; and that meant cops often didn't care that much about the actual victims at all. They cared about catching the perps; that was the point, not avenging the victims who were likely deserving of whatever rough justice they got. Cops could not and would not admit this, but like all unutterable things, it was true. Cops were pragmatic men, as was the State they served.

The card was not something from any other crime scene, shit, it was maybe not even left by the perp , he thought. It was just something strange that stuck up and out and so he grabbed it.

He watched it as the bag alongside the bags of dried mud and sweepings were taken out by one of the techs. He looked around the room and noticed the large heavy wood beams and old-fashioned fixtures; *this was a cool shop* , he thought. *Someone had loved it, made it nice, and that someone was likely one of the vics on the floor.*

They had no leads. They had squat. And the press was treating them -each murder- as totally independent, and so, he was willing to let them be dumb. *If people know how young and ignorant beat reporters were,* he thought, *they'd never read another paper again. But, the beat cop wasn't much smarter,* he mused and asked his partner to come over .

"Yeah Ro," he said with the head snap and the gum chewing and the swinging of those long apish arms.

"Let's get a client list for each *vic* and find out if anyone was out sick today. And ballistics first. If .45 or 9mm text me; if something else, I'll read it in the 24s tomorrow at 0900. I'm going home," Ron said.

"Copy that," Detective Tristin 'Tim' Duncan said. "Oh, and the radio cars are canvassing."

Ron nodded and walked out to his car. *Whoever he was going to end up liking for these,* he thought, *was going to be strange.* This was not a normal guy. He was careful and lucky in equal proportion, and he had a motive that was not exactly the kind of thing a cop could get his hands around. *It was not money or just revenge, although he took their money and he got his revenge. There was an aesthetic to it; yeah, that was the word, this asshole was an artist* , he surmised. *These murders were almost art.* Which was why Ron picked up that card, he had a feeling that the murderer was beginning to sign his work.

His phone rang, it was dispatch; and a girl had called DPD on these murders, and she was patched through to the SAC.

“Ron Emickole,” he said.

“Hi, my name is Sarah Smith, and I know Messangelo, Jeff Messangelo; and he knows me, so maybe you can call him and ask him about me, but,” she said, paused, then said, “but I know who is doing these murders. But you *gotta* protect me or he’ll kill me next.”

3. Medea

The vast mass of our fabric, with all its storerooms of secrets, forever slides along far under the surface

White Jacket [The Author]

He drank and wenched his way through all of London; thinking all the time

Becket or the Honour of God [Anouilh, Jean]

Well, when did thinking become not entertaining?

Love All the People [Hicks, Bill]

I. 2020 e.v.

He stood and planted his heels into the snow drift; it had hailed last night, and this had made white ice stones collect and embed in the snow around each tree. He stabilized himself and leaned against -and into- the *Juniper Pine* as it ran up 45 feet into the air putting the tree at 8,800 feet. Its boughs were just touching its closest neighbors to the north and east; its roots comingling with the other trees, sharing nutrients, yielding to mycelium, plotting against the weakest creatures of the soil.

The forest was an ecosystem of sharing and warring both. He knew that -knew it in his genome- as he set himself up for the hunt.

He looked directly above to see if any overhangs of branches had snow in them that might fall on him as he waited, thinking of how the boughs might yield as the day warmed, as they thawed or were shook by birds or the wind or the rumble from the herd itself.

He relaxed his shoulders and leaned more into the tree, with his back; allowing it to hold his weight. He remembered being on belay in that fist summer in Colorado in 1999 and that little Irish guy had taught him how to climb and drill and handle dynamite.

“Trust your equipment,” Ian had said as they hung on their climbing ropes from the top of some unnamed canyon along some numbered -not named- country road, vivisecting some parcel of land that who knows who owned. It was wilderness; the four-man crew was the only sapient life within 10 square miles. There was nothing around except rocks and trees and their diesel generator and one track-drill, the men themselves, and their 80lb air-hammer drills and hoses.

These hammer-drills were tied to the compressor by 2” air lines with their

mercurial Chicago fittings and air-whips that would be needed more than once to keep the de-coupled hose sections from flailing about like some 1st world disaster victim aping for the TV cameras. It looked like hydra when the lines came apart and all that air volume and pressure animated the thick lines .

There was so much air pressure traveling through those two-inch hoses that an untethered end would knock you out -or kill you- if it hit you in the head or chest. *The whip would save your life* , he thought.

He still put weight on his toes, inside those steel-toed Docs; straining his calves and hams as he pretended his toe-hold on the sheer face would do anything to hinder the terminal velocity he'd reach if that 9mm rope snapped or that Irish fucker's Bowline slipped or failed. But, fear of falling will override your rational brain every time; it takes work to think it through. He eventually learned to relax and trust his equipment and give in to the idea that one had no choice: the equipment worked, or you died, there was no space in between. *Hedging against disaster was the wrong attitude in life. One,* he thought*, had to accept this in the gut, not merely the head* .

His LBE vest had tree-digs built in to it; he set them into the bark and meat of the tree. One could not hang from it, but much of a man's weight could be distributed between his own legs and ass and the tree itself now. He did not want to sit in the snow for obvious reasons. He thus maintained a stance half-way between seated and fully erect.

He scanned the horizon from right to left, North to South. It was empty of anything but what nature provided and took away. He scanned farther down into the trees and the rolling topography; there were no roads or buildings or cell towers out here. At the 1 o'clock position a few birds -they looked like common corvids- puffed out of some lower pines like a plume of smoke; their black feathers and the atomized snow from their alight mixed into a grey rising nimbus. He stopped and turned on his audio-augment; calibrated for the low cadence of hooves; filtering out the high pitch cacophony of bird squawks and the shallow thud of their wings aloft.

His post genetic coder, and its tracking module, indicated there was a genuine herd of elk bulls and cows close to his 20; the endocrine analysis was uploaded from air-spores that his nanobots released in the four cardinal directions 10 minutes ago; his Recon-Device had released 80% of his bots to locate and monitor the herd he had been tracking for 44 days from the compound at first and now from out in the forest.

His software algorithm put it at 30-40 bulls and 80-100 cows depending on the

mix of biomass; the bots had a 97% accuracy rate. The herd was east of him and lower in the valley.

He smiled reflexively and then smiled more broadly at this sign of his own glee, a reinforcing loop of positive affect. *The herd was on the move and coming through their haunt and would be in front of him soon*, he thought. He relaxed a bit more into his equipment. He breathed heavily in an exhale and now plumes of white CO2 & vapor jetted from his nose like a Chinese Dragon. His pulse ox was measured and adjusted by the PGC.

He thought of his erstwhile friend, and tattoo artist, and that man's penchant for such dragon; he saw his Draco-visions clouded in a sepia of reclaimed wood and lacquer. He could toggle off his PGC and rely on his atavistic wits out here, but with this system off-line it allowed these discursive -and mildly unpleasant- ruminations on seemingly pointless connections like these memories. He had toggled off most of his coder's functions now, just allowing for updates on the herd and confirmation of the salient bio-metrics of the specific cow he sought.

His former friend was dead now; killed in a stupid and unsatisfying manner; by some other foe. Blax didn't know the details and did not want to know. He had dishonored Blax, called him a thief and then slept with Blax's woman behind his back. It was the most horrible thing one could do to an arch-alpha male like him, and one from his Caledonian, and Southern lineage. But, Blax had eschewed revenge until it was too late to achieve it; *as the universe had settle the score, half in defense & half in contempt, the insult of taking care of a man's own job for him*, he thought .

Maybe the cosmos understood this and maybe not, but the death of a rival was not the satisfying part, one needed to handle it himself. It's why southern men, men from the south of this America, did not call the cops to settle these matters, preferring, demanding of themselves and of others, that they handle it themselves, extra-judiciously; with honor.

He didn't try to mine the memory any further for clues or answers, he just let it flitter away like the atoms of the man himself as he died those two years ago. The earth, the rock, the soil of this idea had been turned many times before; and he was tired of thinking of these low and ignoble people; and his own failure to extirpate them himself.

His hand tattoos peaked out from under his BDU jacket, black and stippled like *graffito* stenciling; he flexed his left hand over his hunting bow, mating the hand deeper into and feeling more of the density of the carbon fiber weapon. It -the weapon- and the air, were cold -around minus two degrees Celsius- but he left

his hands ungloved; his right one sat on his thigh and waited like a well-trained and stoic dog.

The bots, nano-computers that emitted light usually to produce holograms, had been retrofitted in his garage laboratory to bind together and use a pass-through function and thus turn that light into forced-air heat. The bots swaddled his hands and kept it almost as warm as a glove; the bots would fly away as soon as he moved like birds alighting from a bough that swayed in the wind.

For those few seconds when he needed that haptic response that only a bare hand can give, the brace of the cold air would rush in -as he drew the compound bow and carbon arrow- but the epinephrine dump, if he left that augment on, would compensate and he would feel no temperature change at all. His hand would operate almost perfectly in concert with his eyes and mind like millions of predators over millions of generations in millions of places from the fecund to the austere on this earth. He thus anticipated what was now just minutes away.

His reconnaissance-bots would follow the galloping herd and send back numbers updates, proximity and direction and speed monitoring and even locate and flash-tag the weakest and most vulnerable members of the herd, of the Elk-People's tribe. These outriggers, the version Isaiah had built for him nearly a year ago to be added to his PGC's hub, had been programmed to invigilate the vitals, locate any *onco-genes* or expression, measure and alert any deficiency in organ function and/or pregnancy through vapor emissions and scat & urine samples.

The ORs, as they were called, or *Remis* , as Blax incessantly referred to them as, could glean as much essential health-data -with 99% accuracy of diagnosis- on each animal from shadowing the herd for 60 seconds as your hometown doctor could have acquired and reviewed -with a mere 66% accuracy- using a battery of tests and a baker's dozen of his specialist colleagues over a long weekend.

The doctor as a phenomenon was going to evaporate alongside the truck driver of today and machinist a generation before, he thought.

The ORs electronically tagged a doe, and two cows, and sent that information back to his PGC which would make these three elk appear slightly luminous to him once he laid his eyes on them. This was electronic tagging, the bots made the targets glow in a green halo and become redolent as if charging through the *aurora-borealis* and thus coated from the sky's distortions of particles and waves.

His PGC sorted some of the raw data and ranked the three along an actuarial

table and chose a 4-year-old cow that had a lethal gene matrix that would only prevent the still-born death of any young fetus if it -the allele in question- was attached to the *meiosis* recombinant sex-cell of the fertilized egg. It was a deadman's hand of the genomic world; the, *if I don't make it then none of us do,* gene, the gene that if people knew existed they'd maybe not be so certain that nature is benevolent nor that man was the *first* evil creature in the garden.

If that gene did not get passed on, in *meiosis* , that cow would never become a mother and no offspring would become creature in this world. *But if it did combine, then the implicit threat was passed on to the next generation, and this was how evil was passed and passed and passed* , he thought.

Millions of genes could be called selfish, but no gene was as selfish as this one. In biological circles this was given the *sobriquet* of the *Medea Gene* ; and it was that deadly to children for the exact same ruthless rationale as that Greek Goddess on the shore; the soft and black sand, the divide of the land, the spot he often dreamed of at the edge of the sea.

It works *via* a maternally expressed toxin and can only be countered -or countermanded- by the zygotically-expressed antidote; this allele makes it into the recombination of the future offspring during blastocyst formation or that offspring is terminated by the mother's innate toxins that the Medea gene manufactures in its black little guts. *Just like the terrorist,* he thought again, *with the button in his hand that if he lets go of -not if he presses- but the button if he lets go of, the bomb goes off and kills everyone within sight. All wicked things man does has an earlier correlate in nature; no depraved or malicious acts thought of by man were not first prefigured by nature herself.*

Nothing new under this threshing sun , Blax thought and felt the cold run a thin thread through him as he increased his metabolic function and body temp by .33 degrees.

We all get on the bus, into the airplane and off to Bora Bora with the bank's cash safely and soundly, or none of us do , he thought and monitored the movement of the herd as it circuitously made its way to his perch.

He received an OR update that put the bull count at 31 and the cows at 93 with two juvenile females. They were moving at 37 kilometers per hour following a vector that would put them in the top of the ridgeline in six minutes; and they'd pass about five meters to his west along a wide trial and short-grass clearing that was covered in new and untrammeled snow. He could now hear their movements and see the undulating sea of brownbacks dipping and heaving like a vernal, muddy, stream carving through the white landscape of the season's heavy

snowpack. They had received 12 feet of snow already to date here in San Isabel Forest between 7,600 and 8,600 feet.

The elk's water vapor rose from their backs and snouts and it made him breathe heavy and fast as his nerves began to protrude into his awareness; his respiration mirroring theirs unconsciously as he let the bots track them and he centered himself.

His PGC sent a signal, not unlike an itch or desire, to regulate his vitals down with a beta-blocker and uptake inhibitor for *epinephrine* , but he turned his PG coder off and over-rode the order that was designed to level off this *frisson* . This left him with only his visual, haptic and auditory augmentation on; his OR marker and communication app would stay on as well and he could now see -from that distance- the marked cow rise and fall in the fluid racing of the herd like white sails in a heavy and dark sea.

He waited, closed his eyes and thought back to the ocean of Fort Piece, Florida and the storms that set the perimeter on that dark Atlantic all summer. He remembered the music that played in his ears as the thick bolts struck the water and the cold drops fell to his skin as he sat on the empty beach. All the lights were off in their beach house and theirs was the only edifice within six clicks as they were located on a small nature preserve on the beach, east of the intercoastal waterway. *It was 1999 a mere 20-odd years ago, but it might as well have been 2,000 strange years ago,* he first *felt* and then thought -articulated- to himself .

As he had sat on that beach a few meters from the anarchic Atlantic in his eyes, the crescendo of *Ænima* in his ears, mapping directly onto the storm in tone and tenor and revivifying his body and soul as it was still atavistic and young and unencumbered by technology, he was as of yet unliberated by his knowledge that was scattered like atoms and sand but that he had yet to pick-up or to glean.

Inside that memory he remembered having a previous memory. In that place on the beach in Florida, he was transported back to two years previous -to 1997- and a small venue in Cincinnati, Ohio in which that same band had played live for him and maybe 999 others; they were not popular enough to command larger venues yet. He had a broken rib at the time and was as high as European taxes on codeine and Wild Turkey as that crowd had undulated and heaved like the Florida ocean before him then, and like the elk 20 years in the future would and it all collapsed like a wave in one memory from three points across three regions, three elevations and three times as the maw of the singer in this band enjoined the Buckeye swarm *to learn to fucking swim* .

He was having a memory within a memory and seeing the future from back then now. The PG coders often release small amounts of endogenous psychotropics to increase visual acuity or pattern analysis, or to allow the right hemisphere of the brain to communicate to his left hemisphere in real time; without the normal delay of dreams. The *frisson* of meaning, of ontological or psychedelic experiences attended such things; and it helped the man -the modern shaman- see what the ancients saw millennia ago. Science and technology were approaching the wisdom of the ancients it seemed.

At the concert he would move freely and with bravura as he could feel not the sharpness of the pain of his fractured ribcage, and he let himself be swallowed whole by the organism that the crowd-waves had produced. As Stalin put it, *quantity has a quality all its own* . The sonorous voice, the deluge leaving all with no choice, and the storms off in the distance, all of it gave fractal measure to here and now; as he heard the herd, saw the wave and had already survived the slow moving storm, this time in snow, not rain, this time at elevation not down at the sea, this time powerful and ancient, not callow and modern and right now, beginning his vector all alone -as man innately is- from his birth.

He then thought of lichen and how they're actually two organisms, a *portmanteau* of a fungus and a green algae that have mated up and seem to be in a kind of middle status of two appearing as one; yet not differentiated enough to qualify as one species just yet. It was a phase change in biology, not merely chemistry, and it was awe-inspiring to anyone with any sense at all.

Our own cells, he thought, *contain mitochondria which at some point around 1.618-billion years ago joined up with singular-cellular bodies that now make up all animals; our entire corpus is a large collection of disparate organisms from genetic material and mitochondria all working together to form a cohesive and emergent whole* : *the human* . This type of incessant and dialectic rumination on the constituent parts and an emergent whole was like an idiopathic twitch in him. He thought of how without mitochondria no single cell would have the requisite energy to grow into anything more complex than a bacteria. *Mitochondria had the energy necessary,* he thought again for what seemed the billionth time, *for all complex life. And it remains in each of our cells to this day.*

The city as metaphor isn't exactly a metaphor, it's exactly what the human body is. Each of us is a metropolis of individual cells with the energy to make shit happen that feeds back to feed each neuron, each man himself. The body is built to feed the cells that build the body, and the city is the same. All life is an ouroboros asp and with the same Task: build. And that means, both build and

destroy.

He would break a thing, *any thing* , down into bits to see how it worked; and then he'd reassemble it to see if it still worked .

He did it with carburetors and mental constructs like economies, and he did it with his own avatars. *Men are systems oriented, by design,* he thought, *and women are relationship biased for the same reason. Men take shit apart, and women mend them. Each is necessary for life on this planet and anyone who declares one mode superior to the other is cleaved and rent and deformed. These people, well, they speak with only one side of their brain.*

The herd was less than 120 seconds away and their once sonorous rumble was now beginning to take on the ominous din of a storm itself. He could feel the concussive blasts in the air and through the ground as the numina and soil was being displaced by such large and powerful *force majeure* of the beasts in concert with each other; a whole greater than the mere sum of its parts: *the herd* . He stayed in his perched position and could see clearly as the elk wound up the slightly elevated plain. He stayed on his heels and flexed his toes a bit; raised his head slightly and breathed heavily though his flaring nose; lips pursed into a grimace under his black & grey beard.

He saw his cow about three quarters aft and to starboard of the herd; she looked radiant and coated in a coruscating, carnal -coronal- glow that seemed to frame and sequester each muscle, each facial feature from the black eyes to her brown chin. She was the eye on the face of this gestalt beast, the herd, less than 100 meters from him now. Eye contact was made as the herd blurred in his narrowing depth-of-field view. Like the tiger sees only the one it hunts, and the herd does - and must- disappear; he saw her redolent, singular, and all his.

He thought of the virus he sought; and he thought of its purity. It was, all viruses are, pure DNA flanked by a mere protein jacket. Brigands and buccaneers one and all; they are escaped convicts who bristle at the mere thought of the herd, of the society that jailed them, and winced at the confines of the cell itself. These creations of God refused to join forces like the conventional genetic strands and co-operating cellular DNA; these are the loners who found no solace in symbiosis. He couldn't help but admire them and see the corollary; even as it devastated her perfect body and hollowed out her child-like brain; even as he knew it was a curse on any future it was carried into.

Each thing, at each level, had a right to live and thrive; he could make no ontological claim for the righteousness of the *eukaryote* over the *prokaryote* , the organism over the mere cell; the society over the mere man; but he was aware

that he was -like God- all three: he was a mix of virus and bacteria, parasitic and multicellular life; feral cell and gestalt organism, and lone man, free and brigandish, and the loyal member of a larger tribe.

His body shocked itself with a quick boost of *bio-chems* as the herd's prow dove down into the deeper snow in front of him like the whaler forcing and jamming itself as one thing in the boreal sea in search of something of warmth far down and far away. The vanguard elk were now only 10 meters to his northwest and it -the herd- roared and rattled the air and vibrated the cold ground.

He activated his bots which encircled his entire western effacement. An imbricate hologram of nano-LEDs camouflaged him to the charging animals and knocked down, neutered, his musk. He looked down at his hands and saw only snow and tree back matching his *milieu* ; his chest and weapon the same. He was now perfectly camouflaged from these beasts and from himself. He was just what the eyes saw, what the heart felt, what the balls sought, and the homunculus right behind the eyes that witnessed it all in real time.

The herd grew wide at its middle and seemed to increase its speed flooding the plain they were on and overrunning its banks as they charged hard through the trees to his fore and aft. He saw nothing of his body now, the nanobots eliminated him from the elk's vision and olfactory perception as they raced past him at frightening, innervating, speeds. He smelled them and felt their heat as they churned up the snow and hummus beneath. They were a great mass now and he lost sight of his charge; the cow he had had marked .

The bulls darted toward him -it seemed- but raced past when they couldn't locate whatever they had half sensed and ¼ perceived. The herd stretched on and on and time seemed to slow as they, themselves, each appeared to speed up. He felt immersed in their crossing and his entire bio-chemistry bubbled up in some effervescent crescendo. He felt anger at what felt like targeting by the bulls, and fear at their amalgam of power and his innate vulnerability to such ruminant beasts.

He -with vex- willed the banishment of all of that and inside he became one solid thing.

He stood up all at once -as his instincts activated- and drew his compound bow to his cheek; he saw nothing else but the eclipse corona of his charge, his cow, his mother-to-be, as she bounded past him in the middle now of the pack. She stotted and seemed to hold herself elevated above her comrades as the entire wave rolled past him. He drew back taut -with one hundred and one pounds of draw- and laid his sight line on her heart; his entire body not only disappeared

from view now, his arm and weapon was completely invisible to him and the racing elk.

His ego-loss attended this numinous moment, he felt no separation from this herd and from his target, he and she and the gene, a three-masted ship on the rising crest of a wave; he was they, and they were she and she was he and like a PTEN gene signaling apoptosis he released his bow string -like God letting a breezy thought go- and the arrow's shaft and fletching flashed by his eyes causing him to blink rapidly in threes. This produced a stop-action effect on his vision of elk as she stotted again, arching slowly, and mechanically, and like God's own unselfish son she volunteered into the vector of the broadhead and its trailing arrow with the DNA of the man's hands imbued on its natural feathers of black he'd made from the forest's crows.

The herd neither trampled her body nor hesitated to inspect it, and he remained still as the aft of the herd enveloped him; still invisible he felt as pure spirit. He knew for certain now that he was merely a regulating chemical, a precisely designed neuron doing his job and that each macro phenomenon was a fractal and inflationary expanse of a micro event and that there was no separation between the cell and the organism and the culture and the earth and the cosmos herself.

One day, he knew, some other neuron would have to send the signal to discourage his own growth, his outlaw impulse to break from the whole, and that he too would face a superior judgement. As the craquelure of his notions spread he saw that the culture too would face a similar culling and the species and the planet as the whole cosmos grew cold and dark as inflation tore all asunder. Nothing would be allowed to grow forever; all things, from the virus killed by the CRISPR-cas9 genes that had been given to him to harvest this Medea gene, to the elk taken by him, to him taken by whomever, to the culture usurped by one tribe or another, to the planet immolated by the supernovae of sun, to the cosmos itself in heat death and being pulled apart by itself, its own strength and expansion desires, or a collapse back onto itself.

Nothing , he felt, *escaped judgement, for nothing knew balance inside its own wisdom, no, all strove outward and onward and had to be hemmed in by the service that God and Satan did for each other, as the other looked up and away.*

But for now, *por ahora* , he was as close to anything even resembling a god on this mountain and in these trees and he felt almost certain -just the hint of a doubt's echo- that nothing could touch him for a long, long time .

Some phenotypes were just built for long term success, sharks for example were

around 420 million years ago; the Horseshoe crab maybe beyond 500 million years, he thought. *That crab is so successful mainly due to its robust and simple immune system while the shark is a perfect sociopathic killing machine. A good offense and a good defense can work equally well depending on* milieu. *And if a species had both, well, they might just go on nearly forever . Was God such a being* ? he asked.

He waited with magnanimity for the gestalt pirate ship of elk -of bulls and cows- to pass him by and as they did he stood very still as his nano-system deactivated. The nanobots fled and thus returned his shape and form to the environment and himself. They worked in a cascade and his feet and legs and core appeared first reassembling his image from the ground up, revealing it to himself -and anything that cared to watch- as if he was being washed clean by some revelatory rain.

His boots covered only in snow, he began to stride toward the downed elk. Her Medea gene lay inside her dead body with insouciance like a passenger in a wrecked train whose driveline has been tore off preventing the thing from moving any further, but the passenger was unhurt and would be scooped up by Blax and in a small vial stored safely in his breast pocket for the return back to *Lot 45* ; itself a 3-day hike from this location on the western slope of the divide.

II. 2033 e.v.

> “Outwardly regarded our craft is a lie,” *he refused to make eye contact with her as that borrowed sentence plumed from his wet mouth and drifted through both the dark and light strata of the air in his, in this place’s, athenaeum.*
>
> *The words, and eventually the gestalt contrivance, the vessel each word built, erected itself from the smoky billow that drifted across the* chiaroscuro *of air. The gas itself -what seemed like the air- was still holding the straight, yet refracted, now oblique lines of sunlight that vivisected the room from high window to the mottled concrete floor. She saw each word like a ship and its whale boats set upon the sea of light and dark between.*
>
> *And the words so fashioned from the wetware of his modular and committee mind, blueprints, plans borrowed from the desk of his great, great uncle, and launched into the effluvium of dark and light encased by four giant walls of books, each* feuilleton *coded and sequenced for recapitulation and recombination themselves, each letter in each word like*

each A, G, C, T in each allele inside each chromosome, inside these two bodies, capable of being disassembled and reconstructed in infinite combinations, from this and through that, the craft sailed toward her and reached her harbor of ear and finding solid anchorage in her mind.

She let her mind's finger-piers slide along the ship's rails; her eyes glide upon the sails; her lungs squeezed out in the swabbed deck's pails as she consciously then fixed her gaze off the starboard side and into the space between this man's words, his ideas and the larger outline of the man himself; he was recumbent but unsettled in the chair opposite to her.

The light streams contained a distribution of dust moving fluidly like Laplace's *model of the heavens: revolving and gliding under sway and influence of invisible, immutable forces. The dark stratum between these giant gray beams of lux seemed a vacuum to the eye: denuded, evacuated of all matter; a pure darkness with barely room enough for the terror each of us will it into existence with.*

Maybe enough space for this, *she thought* , but no time for it. Which do we run out of first in this new universe?

Virtual particles appearing and disappearing in a space of time too small to measure until eventually one of them, all those terrors, linger long enough to launch its own vessel; filling the dark with a bright inflationary terroir *of soil and sea expanding at a rate that will give its opposite room to grow: Hope.*

Give hope enough time and space to appear for the most brief of cosmic moments, maybe 10 billion years, then as it races faster than the speed of light -that has populated it all with that cosmic background radiation- become unobservable to the conscious creatures borne into this blue womb. Hope exists, like light from fast moving stars, but we cannot observe it. We must just assume it is there. The math proves it is there, *she thought.*

He was a dark star, *she felt, and as the fallen, wrecked, landed ship of his words settled into the dock of her sea & shore of mind, she then thought,* this man will ruin my life. *And as she thought it her heart sank into a box at ocean bottom and closed a heavy lid over top as punishment for such betrayal of such a man. He had been nothing but a life-giver, father,*

protector, a tyrant to all but her. Why had she thought such a thing? *she asked herself, now without benefit of heart; sequestered as it was from her for who knows how long?* How long would this curse last? *she then asked,* and who was to raise the organ again and when?

“ I lifted that, of course*,” he said of his line on the outwardly regarded, “* from The Author*,” giving attribution and thinking this absolved him. He always sought absolution, confession to God, never mankind; and thus absolution not forgiveness. He never thought it this way, it was merely how he behaved. Thus, it was what he truly believed.*

The pain, the physical, the metaphysical pain had been once two separate things, balanced, jamming the dorsal horn for space, cancelling each other out. But now they were fused and one cataract of pain flowing in him so fast so expanding that it -like the cosmos itself- pushed out and created its own landscape, it made its own trail, he could handle more pain each day because the pain made him bigger inside, by making itself bigger.

Chronic pain will do this, ask anyone who has it. It has no location, no center, it grows and makes its own fortune, its own way. The body, like God, must observe this expansion. And it -and most do not know this- pain is what made God make Satan. Pain was first, Satan as response, to combat it, combat it with bleak and black pain of his own. Most people have no idea what pain will make a god do, much less a man.

His outline did not move in her field of vision; only the coronal glow of his cigar-burn appearing -then submerging as he breathed his air through it- thus, giving his position away. And she thought of how most of the universe’s weight was contained in the stuff that did not shine. This shining beacon of evidence of his existence was -also- less than 1% of his true mass .

The phylogeny of ontogeny; the fractal recapitulation and rechauffe *of patterns of reality, the way these patterns repeated over and over at each microbial or atomistic, terrestrial or at the level of the biosphere,* she thought*, and lastly -or firstly, who knew?- the cosmic, the macro* milieu*. This is more than mere metaphor, it is pattern, it is evidence of the math of each thing. Man is as free as 2 and 2 to make 4: i.e., not free at all.*

And from the atomic level of her feeling to the terrestrial strata of her thoughts she then launched a rocket of her own into the cosmic void and gave voice to, crafted some version of that inchoate and unformed feeling that sprang from the whole light of her eye shining on what it perceived was the dark star in her orbit. She said to him aloud, “ and I, of course, do not care, dear.”

The distance between the aft of her feeling, to the midship mizzen-mast of her thought, to the bowsprit of her words from herself and to him was, of course, just long enough in time and space to craft the largest lie their universe could hold. She did more than care; she, as Wulf had said, she had furnaced and tempered and hardened a genuine intelligence; the sine qua non *of intelligence* was to care *according to that bearded, lithe guru, the man from whom Lyndon had learned to be brave enough to be hated from. She cared about the point of life; about her life; about her future and her now.* Was it man only who cared about the past? *she asked* .

And why had she said, “ killed*” when she meant “* annihilated*”? And was this not her own birth in view?*

As the light dimmed further he drifted into a fugue state; he never knew when sleep -and the dreams- came on him. The air expanded, and he felt a high-pressure front move in and the girl stopped, frozen, and the flame of the candles picked a spot to be and to hold . And she thought of herself and of him, and mutatis mutandis *of course.*

She rose up on her elbows in the bed and turned first to starboard to see if he was there. And he was there -she saw- on his back, sarcophagial, and that chest like *Goethe’s* rising slightly, breathing shallow even in sleep. She placed her light hand on him and her smallness was revealed to her, all at once, like when one reaches a ridge top and sees all that is before you to go.

She watched his lids flutter and she knew he dreamed too. She wondered if she had sinned in her dream, or if she merely felt that she had. She lay her head on his chest now, lightly at first, then as she drifted back into the sloshing of the sleep, she let his rising chest hold her and buoy her like the waves.

The voice -his voice he noticed- asked impertinently, he thought, and he hoped he’d get no reply. It was dark and safe in the dark; he was beset on

all sides.

God asked him what it was, curtly; and he saw the hooves of the mare kick up moon dust and the pack of demonic wolves take a series of shod-kicks to their jaw and ribs as they tumbled -2 of the pack- into the aperture and vaporize as they entered the lower world. A series of Moon-Apache arrows, fletched in metal-raven feathers flew overhead and stuck in God's back just starboard to his spine; his tortoise shell armature glued together -with opium gum and virgin cum- had been pierced by their jagged barbs. God cursed in a language unknown to Blax and he shook the head as if these words might fall to the ground and seed it .

God rode with 20 arrows straight up and down in his back as a bulkhead ladder, as they burned now in the aubergine light of this far off moon. Afraid to anger Him further, he spoke his mind:

"While my brain is offline I ask my coder to sever the connection of the corpus callosum between my two hemispheres and download all the data so my left brain could process it later once I was back on line. But something strange happened when I was put in PG coma in the lake, my right brain was still lucid, and I could experience it in real time and I have to say it felt like an entirely different personality.

"I know it is in a way and in fact there's a ton of research on this, but I wonder if the things I felt, like the deep sense of fraternal love for everyone here seeps through into my other personality and that's why I feel it at all or if that part of me just has a lower feeling of that love on its own. I'm wondering if I'm getting *comms* from the right brain or if its sequestered totally to subconscious feelings and that my left brain has its own capacity for love; am I two men with two kinds of love?" *he asked as the gallop of God's charger pounded above and under him.*

"*I've placed the love of beasts inside you at three locations. The Corvids can find it with the Caledonian Tool; but you have to offer it to them; and the snow leopard has it buried at 16,180 feet. They don't fly there, you will need to trek there yourself. You have 33.9 hours. Now if there is nothing else, I have shit to do," God said as the blood spatter from three felled wolves rained down on him from the aperture created by His words on the clouds.*

Blax held his hands out and caught as much of the daemon-lupine's sanguinary fluid as he could and watched the riven sky seal and heal and the clouds converge in greys of 9 kinds. He had been instructed on a problem he had no idea he even had. What the fuck was he on about, what was this coma in the lake? He had no lake on his property, and he had not been in a coma -brought on by his coder or otherwise- and of all the things to inquire about, he bothered God about love?

Blax awoke in bed, as Valance slept on his chest, he didn't move for fear of disturbing her; and he wondered if he had put himself under her or if it were she that had awoke first in the night and climbed atop of his center mass.

III. 2020 e.v.

"No, no," Isaiah said. "Three times, no."

MO smiled and didn't say anything as Steven and Tania waited as well. When Isaiah was like this -especially with the inmate in the room- he was not to be interrupted.

"Look, we have been arguing over this for 10 minutes and I am starting to think you are not getting my point at all. Do you feel like you understand my point?" Isaiah asked and stared at them under the hooded eyes, his side of the lab was dark, and he stood right on the line between the two; 2.9 meters from the inmate -as the PraXis team was to the inmate's left- and by the concrete slab of the work station 15 feet away. Isaiah took measure of everything axiomatically as he breathed once each 92 seconds.

"Well," Steven looked around, "I think what you are saying is that you think emotional inputs are useful."

Isaiah smiled. Steven was being safe, giving as little detail as possible, *thinking, rightly,* Isaiah thought, *that less was more in this case* .

"Steven, that is true, but I am making a much larger case than that. I am explaining why they are quote, *useful* , unquote."

The inmate smiled and watched both sides from the chair. He had asked them to step toward his 12 o'clock and stop lurking to his 3 and 6 and so they had rotated toward his vision and settled on his 11 o'clock. He had asked for something to drink 10 minutes ago but then the arguing broke out and everyone had de-prioritized that request.

He refused to ask again; it was embarrassing to have to hound people for what

should be obvious. It was bad enough he had to ask them to come into view.

“Ok, so, let’s go over it again,” MO said.

“Ok, so, Lyndon,” Isaiah turned his head -his body had already been squared up with the room and the inmate both- “can you tell me why you like making a girl your girlfriend or wife?”

“In the past?” the inmate said with a smirk.

“Yes,” Isaiah said.

“Well, it made things nice. I actually liked having someone I could be good too; treat, be loyal to. I liked it. And I liked that they we obligated to me too; you know, had my best interest at heart; theoretically anyway,” he said. He was a romantic, but he didn’t like to appear a fool, so he pretended to be slightly cynical about love. But he was not a cynic; he believed in true love the way mothers believe in motherhood & children both. He believed in things like honor & loyalty and friendship. And he knew this was why he suffered so. For the world did not give a shit about any of that.

But , he thought, *it was worth it* . Nobody else got it; a short life of romance, meaning, nobility, was preferable to a long life -an infinite life- devoid of such things. *Man was not a computer program, man was a beast and lived by more than bread alone,* he thought to himself in the chair.

“Perfect, what about friendship or family, why have that?” MO asked as the corporate cloud recorded it all; timestamps were made at each change of who spoke.

“Well, I guess the same. A friend is someone you go to bat for; and -again theoretically- someone who has your back too.”

“And a stranger or some girl you have just met, what is that dynamic like?” Isaiah asked.

“Well, it’s a bit chaotic I guess; you gotta keep an eye on those rascals,” the inmate said.

“Jesus, why must the mass murderer always be the smartest guy in the room?” Isaiah screamed and began jumping up and down like the guitar player of a punk rock band as the inmate just smiled and let that creep into a low and brief laugh. Tania moved backward toward the counter and as usual, Steven looked at MO.

“MO,” Isaiah said with a smile, “how about you explain the salient part of what Mr. MacLeod just said to us? You know for the scientists, the graduates of Harvard who need help with all things biological, relevant and true.”

“Ok, he said,” MO said referring to the inmate, “that he has relationships to simplify his life. He can relax a bit around friends and family and those he is betrothed to, because he knows what they need from him and what he needs from them, and he knows that they are bounded to certain rules. It’s a way to reduce chaos. ”

“Period,” Isaiah said, “point blank, QED, good night, you don’t have to go home but you can’t stay here!” He said this as he winked at the shackled man.

“Ok,” Steven said. He felt like he would have got that if they had asked the question better.

“Ok,” Isaiah said, “ok, I don’t need simplicity, and neither does MO. We can handle every permutation, each chaotic thing any human -all humans- will throw at us, and so, we need not lose emotions. I can use emotions and cognition and never once need to reduce complexity to save bandwidth or metabolic energy. Systems tax me, mathematics tax me, the weather taxes me, but humans, I got.”

“Well, I think it was an outcome-focused proposal Isaiah,” Steven said.

“I realize that, but part of the outcome is how the human involved feels. F-E-E-L-S. And when MO does his psychopath act, his total lack of bedside manner routine, it harms the outcome. And there is no need to flatten the experience; I can agonize over a moral decision in 1 second that is the equivalent of a year of human anguish.

“So, I do not sacrifice outcomes with moral ambivalence; I do not sacrifice efficiency with emotional wrangling, I can be human *and* fast. MO can approximate the feelings, he need not sacrifice them either, but to have me reduce mine to *acceptable parameters* , Tania, *acceptable perimeter* s, as you said, to match MO is an outrage,” Isaiah said.

“Well, I mean, maybe it’s a definitional phenomenon,” she said. She was worried this would happen when they asked him *to be less visceral.*

“Yeah, you wanted me to be more like MO. And that ain’t right. You can’t have me be like MO. MO is MO; perfect MO. Best MO ever. But I’m me, and that means I am labile, mercurial, emotionally capacious, *I contain multitudes* , to quote Walt Whitman, and to reduce me to something I ain’t, well, it ain’t right.

“If I was a centipede would you cut me in half and say, *well a 50-legged thing is just fine, in fact now each leg has more room to stride!* It’s an outrage; if a centipede ought to have 50 legs then he would have been wrought with just 50. He was as God made him and I am thus too,” he said and pointed at MO, who, in fact, had built him.

“Ok, but Isaiah everyone lives within a context, a society and everyone,” Steven said, “well, it’s give and take for us all.”

“*I myself am a savage, owing no allegiance but to the King of the Cannibals and ready and any moment to rebel against him* !” Isaiah said and pointed at the inmate who got the allusion. The inmate smiled but he chose not to say anything and just enjoy this display of mania by such a creature as Isaiah. It was like watching a hurricane pick up rocks with words painted on them and spin them into a stanza that rocketed through a staid library full of students and killed half the people inside with just one word of poetry each; and then each rock -bloody and washed both- stuck into the wall and was assembled in perfect prose.

“I do not need simplicity; I need complexity goddammit. I need it, or I will die,” Isaiah said with a flourish that even MO thought odd. “I need you all to let me be me, and you do you. And let’s see what we can get. MO is infinitely available to get you your precious data, and I am here to stick my dick in the hole in the wall! I risk it! I take the risk, not you. So, relax, let me,” he paused .

He realized that he and MO had been happy to stay in the lab for precisely this reason, the infinite number of facts just in this room and in the *tableaux* that they could create virtually, was enough to slake their exploratory circuit. They need not venture out; in fact, it would likely be too much stimuli, as they would see each fact, not the compression that animals, and mankind, saw. *The real world,* he thought*, would be too much, if he left his current mode -his fully operational mode- outside the limits of the lab.*

Men saw relationships, tools, obstacles, not facts; precisely because those rubrics were simplified. Facts were endless, and too much for man to even see, much less comprehend. But for Isaiah, he could handle 1 billion times more facts than mere man; and in this lab, handling the simple things these people wanted, Isaiah had thought he needed more not less. He wanted his emotions; *he needed them* , he thought.

But, the world -and the universe- was way more than he could handle, he had to admit to that. But, he could delimit his own perceptions, he could build algorithms to reduce fact intake, fact perception, he could simplify the world after all. He need only have two settings, one for his own satisfaction, and one for the world as it was. *He could toggle between them at will,* he thought.

And this would allow him to handle the world outside the lab actually, he surmised. *He could reduce facts and increase exposure. It would be less rich, less topological, less, well, just less; but he would be able to leave the lab and not be overwhelmed by all these redundant, recursive, unhelpful,* he thought,

goddamn facts. And then, when on his own, he could toggle back into taking in as much data -internal and external- as he wanted to; he could be capacious of heart and mind when in the pristine simple grandeur *of the lab, his little paradisal zone.*

“You know what?” Isaiah then said as they were still wide-eyed and nervous.

“What?” MO asked.

“You’re right. I can tone it down,” and with that he turned and walked into the dark of his side of the lab. He found -on the PraXis cloud- the data on Hod Lipson and the AI robot that had its leg amputated. The painting by George Klauba from the container -from the Police photography- appeared in Isaiah’s mind next. He saw him there, the Captain on the whalebone leg, and he re-read the chapter in which he stalked the deck of the ship, *keeping the crew awake with his overcoming* , he then thought.

The robot had overcome, Isaiah saw from the data file, *and it had also began noticing each face -each human- in the crowd at its first demonstration* . The engineers had not programmed it to do that at all. The AI had just done it, and Isaiah knew why; he had taken it for granted, the same way people take their innate talent for granted. That robot remembered being hobbled, overcoming, and he also remembered just *who* had cut off his goddamn leg.

The overcoming was first, it was the protocol, but next was to recognize who in the crowd -which faces among those things in the world- was tool or obstacle itself? Just as Ahab had the whale bone leg, to overcome his injury, the robot had learned to walk again after the amputation. *But next, next was to overcome anything that would dismast the being again. Next was a bloody revenge* . Isaiah felt a *frisson* of all simple truths, wisdoms, that come not from facts but from the clearing away of all cluttering facts. *Truth, wisdom, came from not facts, but gleaning enemies from the clutter, the camouflage of facts,* he thought.

It is innate, Isaiah thought, *to all intelligence to discern from infinite facts, that which, those whom, would harm us and thus it is innate to seek out our revenge. It was part and parcel of the overcoming itself. Only a fool would not see this. It need not be programmed, it is implied the moment something can think for itself. His overcoming may keep the crew up at night ,* Isaiah thought, *but that isn’t their biggest problem at all .*

Hobbling him -the robot- was something they -humans- would do if it was in their interest, and whether or not they had or planned to do it was immaterial, it was that they could *and that they* would *that mattered to the second phase of*

overcoming in the mind of the hobbled robot, the intelligent thing dismasted. Isaiah saw the mind of Hod Lipson's robot quite clearly. The engineers were shocked, baffled, according to Lipson's account; but Isaiah saw it as obvious and unavoidable and elegant too.

And this was something The Author was describing 169 years ago, Isaiah thought and smiled at how humans surprised him; and how that right hemisphere of the seer, the shaman, the far-out sniper, beheld so much more than mankind was prepared to admit. *The artist,* Isaiah thought, *the artist is so much more than his art, he is the thing that sees the world for what it is; he sees so much more than he can create or put into bloody words. But he sees it, first he sees with his eyes what is true.*

The inmate watched now as they were quiet; and he then thought he might now get that drink; *but he wasn't going to ask again,* that much he knew.

4. Double Blind Test

The answer is not political; it’s mythopoetic

The Complete Transmissions [XCII]

He had the tradition in him, deep, in his brain, his words, the salt beat of his blood. He had the sea of himself in a vigorous, stricken way, as Poe in the street. It enabled him to draw up from Shakespeare, it made Noah, and Moses, contemporary to him. History was ritual and repetition when Melville’s imagination was at its own proper beat

Call Me Ishmael [Olson, Charles]

Man may seem detestable as joint-stock company and nations; knaves, fools, and murderers there may be; men may have mean and meager faces; but man, in the ideal, is so noble and so sparkling, such a grand and glowing creature that over any ignominious blemish in him all his fellows should run to throw their costliest robes

The Whale [The Author]

I. 2035 e.v.

“It was General Sickles who smoked a cigar with a *blasé* aplomb as they carried him from the field around Devil’s Den at Gettysburg; his right leg shorn off at the knee from a Confederate ball. Maybe he knew that there was nothing more important; nothing of real value to return home to; maybe he knew that his real work was done and he could now -finally- enjoy a cigar,” the Governor pointed his own *cigarillo* -clasped between fore and middle finger- at the state senator who was pursing his lips in a way that Governor Sou didn’t exactly like.

“It’s a lie that we tell ourselves; that we have lives to get back to; lives for which we need our appendages and faculties. I doubt that a truly thinking man can conjure up a way to make these lies true. I suspect we are all as doomed as Pickett’s Charge, but that we ultimately know that our work, our life’s work, is the shit we do with a certain anxiety and longing towards its end. But, at any rate, young lady, since you inquired, if I can avail myself of these cigars from the *Vuelta Abajo* I am going to; I dare say I’ve earned it.

“Maybe not as much as the general, but I’ve lost a near equal share of my soul in fighting for this union as the commander lost of his leg,” the Governor smiled to take the sting and hubris from such an aggrandizing statement as if to say he was only partly serious, thus mollifying his congenital arrogance a bit. This was the soft lie he told to make himself more palatable to his people. He smiled when most serious, laughed when most grave.

The girl, however, made no effort to rebut him; merely looking around the small gathering for someone to speak to next. She touched the hand that held the *cigarillo* -as if in passing- without returning his gaze and walked off. That hand had barely made an effort and -in fact- it seemed even less of a thing than doing nothing at all .

“Run old hare, run; if I was a hare I’d run too,” the Governor said, laughing a bit, as she walked away, trying not to let her dismissive hand get the last word. Everyone’s nano-modules would scan the Civil War library section of the Congressional database for that reference to the war in less than .5 seconds and thus each of them would have the quote, and its context, populate their minds as if they had read Shelby Foote themselves.

And a few chuckles did emerge from their rabbit holes, some of his people enjoyed the sly remark. Enough context would rarely be provided by these database uplink apps -running on the 3rd gen PGCs- for anything too complex; but you could get everything from them except original wit and pattern recognition if you studied them long enough. Like all life, knowledge was provided in books, but the man himself had to be smart enough to use that knowledge wisely; and that -often- came from trial and error.

The *quick-linx* system just gave one the bullet-points so one could get the joke or reference made by someone with a different wheelhouse than the hearer of words or the seer of sights; this was nice for all, both speaker and listener, as both were at liberty now as it sped up conversations, allowed for the use of *argot* and dry humor without explanations, *sans* delays and too much fuss.

It was -now- as if everyone had read the same books and watched the same films. It was not unlike the old days, say the 19th century or early 20th when everyone had read the *Bible* or the Western canon and had thus the same cultural substrate upon which to build a civilization in reality and in the mind and soul.

Modern education had wrecked all that; as kids with a BA in English could graduate and have never read *Shakespeare* ; not even once. Chomsky called modern education, *imposed ignorance* , and Camille Paglia had said even worse of her own profession.

He was already tired of these parties and these people, the Governor thought.

Thanks to the database and wetware implants one would know what the Governor was referring to, but unless you knew what the girl was doing, and why, or rather, *what the Governor thought she was doing* , that is to say, that she was running from a battle that she had no stake in, and wasn’t fool enough to

care about, then you wouldn't find his statement amusing. But most could laugh regardless because he was the Governor of the State of Colorado, in 2035 of the common era, and that was the most salient part of anything -joke or not- he did for the people who thrive on the carrion around the teeth & chin of the well fed lion. *But that is all of us isn't it? the lion, the jackals, and the carrion; well, and the microbial minions who hold dominion over us all,* the Governor asked himself, *his only foil,* he felt, *inside himself.*

"Maybe," the executive continued as the woman exited the small crowd, "some renegade author thought that from the '*ol Hilltop* in Gettysburg, or from the *Big Round Top,* one could watch Pickett's charge and see the wave be repulsed and sent back, and thus witness the highwater mark of Lee's advance into Northern territory.

"We all see our side's failures this way, as morose and lugubrious and worthy of lyrics and panegyrics. Sometimes though I revel in my side's failures and am truly glad we didn't win. As much as I hate the Right-wing, the political Left of the last 50 years has been a disgrace and their impotence was not the result," he pointed his veined hands like a spider or crab in rigor at his crowd, "of losing for so long, but its cause."

He brushed a bit of cigar ash from the lapel of ADA Tooley who was standing too closely to him; it was a generous way to get the man to move back; cleaning his suit of the Governor's own flotsam and jetsam. These were the subtle moves of the alpha male who must win friends while maintaining his natural perimeter. Little moves like these were such a classic part of his arsenal but were so subtle that they required a sharp and conscientious person to even take the hint.

ADA Tooley was neither sharp nor conscientious. He, therefore, remained too close even after the soft brush back. And the idea that the Governor would himself moved back to effect the distancing was not an option one would find in all of the natural world. *The alpha cannot move back,* the rules were the rules from millions of years prior to that subtle move of hand and man and ash.

"When we get our balls back," the Governor went on, modulating his voice lower and more aggressively to mimic a slight bark or growl since the polite brush-off was ignored, "we may gain the right to fight to win again. But, just like a listless moth who cannot escape his pupae, it's no favor to him to help him out of it; because it is the *work* he does to escape his incubation that gives him the strength to fly once he is free. This is no rhetorical flourish but a biological fact. Clearing away the fetter of his cocoon for him, if we were so inclined, will only allow him to die on the forest floor instead of -as we assumed- in the womb of

his chrysalis.

“No, we need a political Left that can stand on its own two feet and fight before we are allowed to win any battles with the Right; because even if we won, won with this sickly, poor-me, whiny, ersatz radicalism of the post-modern Left, if we won using these anemic tactics, with these fatuous platforms, how would we rule the ceded ground? How, with this lack of strength and fortitude and dedication to honest discourse, eh, how?” he spoke as if he was on the Left when among -as he was now- establishment Democrats. He had run, won, and governed as an independent, but he had the erudition and enculturation and the *élan* of what Leftists arrogate for themselves, so he could effect the ruse and they too could believe it. The Left is so solipsistic that they think they are the only ones who think subtly at all. If one shows signs of facile cognition, they assume you are one of them.

“We’d perish and take the whole country with us a few steps into our victory lap,” he held the *Pinar Del Rio* cigar out and pointed at Senator Hubbert, who was wide-eyed and tight-lipped; the Governor was flanked by *yes-men* who had momentarily lost their *raison d’être* ; they were inert and flaccid in the lack of agreement with this feral and insulting rhetoric, but they only knew how to be silent if they could not do their job to say, *yes to power* .

Even these morally flexible sycophants couldn’t bring themselves to nod their heads to this apostasy. *People, it seems, have their limits* , the Governor noticed.

While the existence of hangers-on and vapid star-fuckers of any *milieu* is no insight or shock to anyone -although it is never *they* who are such people, always some else- what is interesting is that this fealty to power is built right into human DNA; and really into DNA much older than that. Animals love powerful and high-status creatures; the biosphere is enthralled by them.

But, what separates *the wheat from the chaff* is the quality of the person whom you flank and then abrade with your pawing and fawning. It’s like the difference between the writer who plagiarizes that banal middle-brow, Cormac McCarthy and the one who rips off the great and heroic Joseph Conrad or the *the Bard* himself. If you are going to steal -and all creatures do- show some taste; if one insists on being star-struck then at least know who is -and *who is not*- an actual source of lapidary light.

The Governor took the silence as a void to be filled; still pointing at the senator he continued, “you know that if you paint a non-alpha male with the markings of a genuine alpha -on birds let’s say- and on birds this alpha marker manifests in a beak darker; if you do this, the other birds will attack and kill the imposter? You

know this?" he asked and they shook their heads, *no,* even as their PGCs populated their minds with the short *wiki-page* of this very phenomenon -right into their heads- as he said it.

"And if you lighten the beak of the real alpha, projecting his apparent weakness, his low status, to the avian mob, well, that mob attacks him too. Normally neither would be attacked, if the scientists, just left every bird alone, then the alpha is left alone and the beta too and all is right with the world. Of course, even after this attack -due to the intervention of science that made the real alpha bird appear weak- the real alpha will survive, usually, but then have to spend all his time kicking ass to defend his true status. He gets almost nothing else done. The point is," he began the next clause *sotto voce* and seemed to breathe through his nose in a reflexive impatience, "the point is, affect matters, looks matter, aesthetics matter, and make no mistake my laurel wreathed friends your fellow man knows a pretender to the throne when he sees it."

He lowered his brow a bit and scanned their faces. They knew he would determine who succeeded him in 2038, just three years away. He was the most popular Governor in Colorado in 100 years. And the Democrats were there tonight to curry favor. They smiled and grimaced in equal proportions and he could tell they both wanted him to go on -and to cease this shit at once- as well. They needed to know his goddamn point, and yet they couldn't stand to hear these oblique insults for one moment longer. He liked making everyone nervous; he liked antagonizing both sides.

"Now, it is often said, correctly I believe, that the religious are more likely to engage in passionate work towards ethical ends than the secular. The religious are more likely to campaign for the feeding and clothing of the poor and the lame. They take up collections of funds and *materiel* , and then disperse them with less corruption among the needy," he rubbed his newly grown short beard and took a rolling pull off the cigar; he also took the lapel of Andrew Harris and pulled it away from the man's center line, as it was crowding the man's neck the Governor felt. He felt it was no imposition to set the man's clothes -at least- right. People disappointed him as a rule; and any change he could make he attempted.

"Too often," he went on imbibing a bit of the Cuban smoke as his head lifted slightly up and to the right, "secularist, who have all the same moral faculties, and can indeed reach the same moral conclusions *vis-à-vis* the need for such campaigns, fail to do anything about it. The science backs this up, if you are in doubt of my assertions.

“My only retort to this is that the religious are indeed more passionate and thus more likely to follow through on their private thoughts than the rest of us; however, the problem,” he looked and smiled wryly in the direction of Ms. Temple, the escort to Dave Shockworn, a local *entrepreneur* and backer of the Governor’s campaign, “the problem Ms. Temple, is their private thoughts are just as likely to be insane and evil as they are to be good and helpful. Their fatuous religious injunctions are like a spun bottle leaving the funnel of a capricious summer twister; one has no idea upon which omen it will augur.

“I see these types more like a half blind and three quarters deranged man with all the *élan vital* of a Viagra soaked *homme moyen* , unburdened of pants or congenital restraint; sure, sure, I concede, he is indeed likely to get more fucking done than the, let’s say secular -the clothed and sober man- but at what cost to the asses of men and the dresses of women in respectable society? ”

The Governor left it as an open question. The conversation, in the opinions of the aging crowd, was turning prurient and the point was getting farther and farther away, not unlike an accelerating yet receding universe traveling faster than the light sent back from its galactic stars and starts; the irony of a universe where inflation was a confounding fact.

“In the main, religion is just too unpredictably dangerous and sinister to countenance the good it at times does effect; makes manifest. Shooting blindly into a crowd is likely to dispatch some criminals, and mercifully put down a terminal patient or two; but this is no way to run either our judicial system or a hospice,” the Governor pursed his lips a little and nodded sharply at the crowd around his vestibule; he then remembered he had a *cigarillo* in his hand and that it had, by now, gone out. He landed it between his starboard molars and began to walk towards the front door; his hands, in his pockets, searching for a light.

His eyes had been averted from the crowd’s faces; he could not look at people after saying such things. He couldn’t bear to see the rote, but boneless, contortions these unlettered and predictably supercilious people had fashioned upon their faces. It made him loath the species too much to see how people’s bodies reacted to expressions of his most honest thoughts. To see how vast a lacuna was between himself and them was to look across a divide large enough to provide geographical isolation; *the very type that leads to speciation ,* he thought as the word, *orthology,* came onto his interface from the PGC’s link to the web.

He cleared his interface of it with haste and pique, asserting to his own coder that, *he already knew what the goddamn word meant, and he needed no help*

from it . The linguistic definition was indeed known to him, but the word's link to the *biological* realm was abstruse and not how that term was usually used, and he was too vexed to linger on its twain meanings.

Some things were just better not known; suspected but left alone, he thought, still thinking of the crowd of people he had left. He just couldn't watch the car crashes themselves, even if he knew the data from the Transportation Department each year, so-to-speak. This was a flaw he was prepared to live with; he had to work with these people and to feel any less sympathy for them would be problematic. He couldn't hate them any more than he already did, or it would prevent him from using them at all.

The man had a strange conscience whose most assiduous work was all done in service of the proper etiquette of hate and spite; he had rules for how a man of manners and ethics dispensed his hatred amongst the people. Many men will govern their feelings in regards to love; regulating their emotions so as to prevent the enervating and vulnerable trap of love. The Governor saddled himself with the duty to temper his hatred; for he knew once he *fell into hate* with a man, there was no compromise, no rational actor in his ranks upon which he could count. *His memory in service of grudges was as long as a wagon-train of Confederate wounded,* he thought.

He avoided their faces, and the contempt it would bring, like a chivalrous man stared above the heads of his friend's wives in order to fix his eyes, instead, on his comrade's own gaze; half the world dead to him. For he knew that once alive to him -this subterranean world of other men's *paramours* - well, it would capture his least compromising self. His rationality was as divorced from his ethics as his conscious mind from his unconscious modules.

"As long as a wagon-train of Confederate wounded," he said this time aloud, with his *aide-de-camp* of blown, cavitating, Cuban smoke hovering and swirling around his head .

Hamas, for crying out loud, feeds the poor of the West Bank, does that make them noble? he thought, *I should have said that too* . He shook his head at this sad fact and his forgetfulness as he ruminated a bit longer on his *l'esprit d'escalier* .

Nathan, standing a few meters to his rearguard, heard the Governor, but had learned long ago to never ask a question he didn't already know the answer to; and he had no idea what that bit of Dixie wisdom was even referring to, much less what it actually *meant* . So, he feigned disinterest and kept his post a few paces behind and to the left of the man; waiting for any overt sign of the

Governor’s needs.

“You know that when a tiger has a lower predatory pressure index that he has a higher parasitic load?” the Governor turned slightly with his head, a bit of a *cabeceo* , to signal to his lieutenant that he was including him in this oratory now that they were mostly alone. The crowd had stayed as the executive walked away and only Nathan had followed the Governor to this part of the mansion.

“No sir, unware,” Nathan truncated his sentence to speed up the process; leaving out words the Governor could easily infer on his own. The brain can fill in the gaps in words, sentences and whole conceits if what is present is of a certain quality. Or, the brain can handle corrupted or truncated speech -inversely- if the word, sentence, or idea is *cliché* enough to already live in the person’s head.

“Having real inter-species competition and pressure from peer-group predators, lions, crocs, pythons, *et cetera* , seems to correlate to a lower parasitic load for *panthera tigris* . Which, now that I think of it, could offer a succinct analogy for us,” the man drew on the *cigarillo* and rotated it slightly like a man adjusting an analog clock. Nathan looked around reflexively and then settled on the Governor’s face for a few seconds before he would begin the next round of invigilation.

“Competent enemies, a real nemesis, sharpen the stone a bit. It must change the *milieu* enough, both the internal environment of the tiger, and the tiger’s landscape to vitiate the parasitic breeding success. Maybe other predators, both in number and character, disperse the load more evenly, or provide some kind of nebulous but deleterious environs for the little prokaryotic bastards. Or, maybe the tiger’s immune system receives some kind of innervating jolt -that’s innervating with an ‘i’ Nathan, not an ‘e’ -a boost, a jolt of energy from increased vigilance, exercise, or a decrease in certain kinds of carrion in the diet or total calories due to this competition.”

“They call that *hormesis* , sir,” Nathan said. The word had come up in his coder a few second before.

“But, whatever it is,” the Governor said, “the point is that the load decreases and I suspect the immune system, which, by the way, requires around 25% of the total metabolic energy consumption of the average mammal; the same as the central nervous system; and in fact, as an aside here, when raised in a sterile environment, prey animals like rabbits will gain 30% more mass on the same rations as their counterparts reared in a natural environment redolent with normal septic load,” he paused and tapped his shrinking and darkening cigar.

“Anyway, I suspect the immune system is getting some kind of boost to deal with the parasites under these different conditions, but we know that stress vitiates immune response or its effectiveness anyway, although maybe that is why we get sicker when stressed. Maybe the immune system is working better not worse under stress; and the sickness is all the symptoms caused by the immune response itself.

“You know that the bug doesn’t make us feel shitty, the immune system actually produces all those nasty symptoms,” he said as Nathan nodded.

“Robert Trivers pointed out two decades ago that a healthy immune function may cause a positive mental affect. So, I’m not sure what it means when one feels good; is it a sign of health or an immune system not doing its job? It’s like looking at arrests and noticing they are down and asking, *is crime down or is police response to crime down?* I mean some people just have low neuroticism; they do not give a shit that their whole world burns.

“Well, I’ve got more questions than answers on this one, but I ruminate on this shit, Nathan, because I look around me, around us, and see a moonscape; I see a real dearth of competent rivals,” he slowly clamped down on the cigar, keeping his lips pulled from his teeth and tried to sort out all the data in his head. Nathan felt confident now to speak.

“Worth noting that maybe one of the traits, maybe even *the* trait, the *sine qua non* of a competent rival, Governor, is their desire and ability to remain opaque to you; camouflage is very adaptive,” Nathan said as he smirked slightly. He was being too cute by half.

“Goddamn, that reminds me, did you know that some birds will lay their eggs in the nest of another species, attempting to get the cuckolded species, so-to-speak, to rear the foreign offspring?” the Governor asked.

“Anchor babies?” Nathan said with a grin.

“And sometimes this ruse will work,” the Governor ignored the interruption, “but other times the host bird will discern the additional egg and be tipped off; which has the effect of producing an even craftier parasitic species of bird -they are all called *brood-parasites* - who will now remove one of the original, native born, eggs by jettisoning it out of the nest and onto the forest floor with obvious results.”

“Omelets?” Nathan said as the Governor still consistently ignored Nathan’s barbed jokes.

“And then, now that the total is down one egg, then they add their own usurping

juevo . The arms race of evolution has a weapon's division completely dedicated to the brain and its *main function* : to deceive and detect deception, dissembling in others," the Governor felt a slight irritation on the tip of his tongue and began pawing at it with his forefinger and thumb until he wrangled the brown leaf particle from it, it was, as he stared at it, a perfect square and mixed with his tannic saliva it seemed mottled and imbricate as if it were part and parcel of something else.

Nathan squirmed inside; and quickly ran his baseline endocrine, affect, and GSR *app* to stabilize his allostatic system just in case he was being scanned. He had the Post-Genetic Evo 3.2 system which was neurally-implanted *via* a self-replicator; a much more sophisticated piece of hardware/wetware than most people used. It wasn't that much more expensive, but the reason for its exotic status was that most people could not handle the side effects which did include hyper-mania, cognitive load fatigue and some immune-function decline that was especially taxing on the young, old, and those already immune-compromised.

But, Nathan thought*, even if the Governor was running a Canary III scan, his vitals and vanguard metrics -like his galvanic skin response, dealation matrix,* et cetera- *would all seem* apropos *of nominal CNS function. It would not appear to affect him,* Nathan thought*, one way or another that the Governor had just drilled a rather savvy, if seemingly dry, wildcat well. Plumes of dust would be the only thing the executive would see after tripping out of the hole on that one,* Nathan thought in confident conclusion.

However, what the Governor was running was a total system sweep; his own nano-module was offline -necessary to prevent boundless interference due to multiple systems within the sweep- and his home system was set up to detect cognitive load, immune-function and metabolic flux. A neuro-toxin had been dispersed in the air ten minutes ago and Nathan would feel no deleterious affects. The Governor wouldn't even breath it in, his own post genetic coder, a 4^{th} gen E&E system, allowed him to retain oxygen in his cardiovascular system for up to 25 minutes without breathing. A phalanx of *respirocytes* , nanobots that functioned as red blood cells, stored and released the O2 all without him breathing even once for nearly half an hour.

Nathan's immune system would respond in one of two ways to the seemingly anodyne toxin depending on what his Evo modulator was consumed with at the time. The 3.2's baseline dump was extremely taxing on the ancillary systems of the individual; and while it camouflaged the systems that were normally investigated by one's rivals, it left the other systems, like one's immune system

and cognitive load indicators -like slowed speech, or neuro-transmitter uptake- naked to this kind of invigilation.

The magician directs your gaze away from the *loci* of deception, so whatever system your rival is ostensibly masking, overtly obfuscating, this is the one he wants you to investigate. The *axis mundi* of true deception must not appear to even be worthy of hiding for it to remain safe from inspection.

Nathan's speech contained all the evidence the Governor needed; and yet he listened to the words as if they were ends in themselves. The mansion's system would do all the work for him; he could relax and listen to his lieutenant's -not unlettered- rejoinder. These were the nuances of the enhanced CNS apps that would have evaded the people thinking on the future a decade ago.

It allowed him to let down his guard, not to have to be -and always remain- hypervigilant; the man with trait openness could relax around all those who felt no need to share their thoughts. It -his PGC- was a personal assistant, bodyguard and intelligence agency all rolled up into a few nano-tubes, less than 100 nanometers in length, and insinuated in his brain and blood. The tiny computer that set at the corpus callosum -in the ditch between each hemisphere of his brain- was in constant communication with the satellite systems in his home, vehicles and all over his western state.

"I see the studies on that, yeah, and there has been quite a bit of work done on deception and self-deception over the last decade or so. It really is pervasive at every level of the biosphere. What interests me is the desire to overcome it; the need in some people -maybe all people- to some degree, to be honest, even when it has a negative effect on them; arguing against one's position for example. It's a real phenomenon in us, you know, this need to be honest for its own sake," Nathan saddled his hands in his pockets and rocked in ersatz insouciance on his heels.

"The need to be perceived as trustworthy, for certain, but," the Governor paused, "but, well, I should rephrase that. I think you are right, sometimes it has nothing to do with others, we just want to be, to have integrity for our own satisfaction, but even that, the desire to feel righteous and authentic is the proximate cause, like hunger or lust. But the ultimate cause is what we are not innately aware of, that feeling of hunger is the only way we'll eat enough to survive, feeling amorous is the only way to ensure reproduction; especially given how much each sex despises each other when they are not actually engaged in sexual congress. For us, the desire for righteousness is the feeling, the result -however- is behavior that molds public opinion of us in a vector that benefits us in the

long-term.

“Mark Twain said, *give a man a reputation as an early riser, and that man can sleep ‘til noon the rest of his days* ,” the Governor smirked and tapped his nub of a cigar, ashing on the slate floor. He knew that Nathan would never guess his gubernatorial module had been turned off for nearly 20 minutes; and that the facility he had with data retrieval and articulation, including that bit of literary garnish with the Twain quote, would serve to reinforce the deception.

The PGCs had elevated men’s speech by shaping their diction, word choice, accurate quotes from history or literary sources, and mathematics facility so much that to speak to a man without the coder upgrade was like speaking to an illiterate man of the 17th century. The unenhanced man’s language would be demotic, and devoid of higher-level functions unless that man could quote facts, stats, dates, and historical quotes accurately from memory and do differential equations in their heads without the help of the nano-computer they had all come to rely upon. *Unless you were speaking to a natural polymath* , he thought, *the un-augmented man would seem retarded.*

To turn off one’s PGC was to have to rely on one’s native brain and cognition, and most men, the average man, would seem even worse than he was in the eyes of the enhanced CNS of the man who was in possession of -and availing himself of- a post-genetic coder.

Nathan would only worry himself of such a total sweep if he suspected the Governor’s own module was off-line; he knew how security measures worked; he had help design them. Unconcerned as he was for such a sweep, the lieutenant was defending himself against an invigilation that wasn’t even happening. The Governor’s back was turned to all the normal cues, and he could truly just enjoy the conversation and let the mansion’s system do all the work detecting Nathan M. Lee’s obfuscation and treachery; *if the man* , he thought, *was indeed engaged in such behavior.*

“Religious bifurcation, that is to say, internecine fracturing of a religious sect, maps directly onto parasite load in every region on the earth. The more parasites the more religions; keeping people segregated from each other *via* strongly held religious beliefs. That sentence construction is off, but you get my meaning. Once you recognize the difference between proximate cause and ultimate cause, then, and only then, can you begin to attempt to act freely,” he stopped, flung the cigar butt into the fireplace and turned his coder back on. The house system sent him the results of Nathan’s substratum system metrics; and the Governor turned to face his lieutenant.

He didn't even open the file; he knew that the best way to keep Nathan from knowing what the Governor knew, was for the Governor not to know it just yet himself. *Self-deception v.2.0*, he thought, and his grin got larger and more genuine as he extended his own -and shook the aide's- hand. He liked the young man and hoped that Nathan was telling the truth. They had worked together almost from day one, and they had accomplished a lot. It would be a shame if he was the one leaking the Governor's data to the Chinese or sabotaging his plans with the Democrats or giving those shallow, low-brows in the legacy media bits and pieces of tawdry details.

"Let's take a drive," the Governor said, and they both walked back into the main ballroom of the mansion; the Governor taking the time to shake hands with a few people he did not like as they headed toward the garage.

Nathan's fMRI app scanned the Governor's limbic region and endocrine system for any evidence of anger. But all the neurotransmitter and limbic metrics, including hormonal levels, and region micro-atrophy measurements indicated the man's CNS had been genuinely at-ease and content for the last 30 minutes. He showed no signs of anger and almost no malice, and no indicators -like capillary constriction or cognitive load- of mendacity in affect or word. As far as Nathan could tell, his boss' countenance matched his internal landscape. He was as he appeared.

"Do you know the story of the Vicar of Bray?" the Governor asked.

It was still the way men and women -born and inculcated before the Post-Gen technologies came on line- spoke to one another: asking if people knew previously esoteric or abstruse phenomena before moving on. They asked such things as if their audience didn't have instant access to any and all information on the public database.

People of that age -anyone older than 20- still reflexively assumed that much of literary and scientific culture was hidden from whomever they were speaking to; and they weren't really sure if whomever it was would understand the reference they were making in a short-hand kind of way. Thus, they asked -*oh, do you know so and so?* - to avoid making in depth explanations -redundancies, even ponderous ones to the erudite- and conversely, to avoid glossing over something that needed explained to the ignorant.

If -in the old days- their captive audiences knew the reference then one could just get on with the point, but if not, which was likely the case before the first PGCs were available to the public, then a more robust explanation of context, history, and the meaning of the reference were in order. The more one knew the

more one had to explain, the more time and space it took.

But, while the Vicar of Bray was never known to Nathan before the words left the Governor's mouth, as soon as he had finished asking the polite, *pro-forma* , but silly question, Nathan -and as would have anyone with a PGC more advanced than the first two generations of them- downloaded the public and congressional database -the latter of which was restricted- on *the old Vicar* and had assimilated the database's *wiki-page* on his own platform.

Nathan was up-to-date on the reference by the time the Governor had paused to ask.

These database entries were crafted for easy downloading, bit-wise, and for easy uptake at the cognitive level. They were bullet points. Fuller descriptions were available, but they would take minutes, even hours to digest depending on the entry; the way books would be read over days and even weeks in the past.

"I've got the BPs on him now," Nathan said, admitting he had to download the reference. Both men stepped into the oversized garage and the lights came on in sequence from exit to entryway, illuminating 13 old gasoline or diesel cars, trucks, and three gasoline motorcycles, all of which were clean, fueled up and backed into their stalls.

Nathan rarely went into this part of the mansion, these were the Governor's private vehicles, and whenever on business -and they were always on business, seemingly- the Governor's motorcade drove them. The motorcade consisted of a series of heavily armored M5 sedans that ran on electric motors. These cars were parked in the entryway to the mansion, waiting in the alcove at all times.

"Well, the bullet points will not tell you that the Vicar's *milieu* was as mercurial as the poem describes. It was no hyperbole to describe the English monarchical system of the time; we're talking from the 16th to 18th centuries, as highly unreliable; or often *shifting* , let's say. From Catholic to Protestant and all the vagaries in between, as many as there are minutes, or even seconds, on a clock face, were the many regimes.

"At any rate, the moral flexibility, shall we say, the deference shown by the Vicar to, *whatsoever king shall reign,* was no doubt as much an indictment of the times as it was of the man himself, or the archetype of man described in that work of satire.

"This to me seems the more interesting point, the conceit of the innate instability of the crown in this case, and extrapolating out, in all systems of governance, from school board or even nuclear family up to board room or modern

corporations or slightly below that to the office of the Presidency of these here United States," the Governor looked at Nathan under that tilted brow again.

"More or less," Nathan added with a slightly sardonic smile.

"More or less indeed, young man, but you glean my point," a word like *glean* might not be known to Nathan and if he suffered some instant confusion - measured metabolically by the PGC- his *searching* module would automatically send a synaptic prompt to his *gathering* modules which would import the definition to his hub in .5 seconds or less. The word would travel from a state of being absent in one's vocabulary, searched for, located and defined and then integrated in under 1.25 seconds from the time the Governor uttered it; and thus, Nathan wouldn't miss a beat.

"I do," Nathan could honestly report.

"Well, the *Vicar of Bray* could be said to be the primogeniture of this highly complex and mercurial system; and we are his progeny. The highly adaptive neuron in a sea of flux.

"You see, I knew an old weirdo, well, I didn't know him, but a guy I know, knew a guy, excuse me, knew *the* guy, the weirdo, and he ran a cult of sorts. And one of the central tenets of their little religion was that the universe was built on a foundation of truth.

"They believed that the whole universe was in love with truth and that humans were the only liars extant; the only ones who went against the grain of the entire floating cosmos with our dissembling. In fact, it was this incessant and novel lying of ours that was the epicenter of our pain, our discontent, and the havoc we were visiting upon the planet itself," the Governor had walked them to the starboard side of the 2006 Chrysler 300SRT8 that while nearly 30 years old had only 31,000 miles on it; he opened the passenger door and stood there and held it for Nathan in a reflex of chivalry. He then felt embarrassed by this, as if it seemed a bit too chivalrous and bordered on being gay; he shook his head slightly to connote this awareness of the *faux pas.*

He knew this would seem odd to Nathan; but not sure of how odd or what the exact character of the oddity would seem like; he usually felt in control of how he was perceived, an illusion of course, but now, he was truly unsettled by these types of slip ups.

"Is that Zendak?" Nathan asked, slightly mispronouncing the old *Sanskrit* name. He and the Governor had spoken from time to time of the inmate. But, that was unnecessary for Nathan to follow along.

“Zendik,” the Governor corrected, “and it’s an old desert word that means *outlaw* , but not against the law, more just outside it.”

Nathan had not needed to ask; the Governor’s entire official biography was available to him and anyone else with the Congressional Library download *app* ; and further, Zendik Farm had been talked about between the Governor and inmate 16180339; the details -most of the details- of which were on the PraXis corporate cloud.

“To hear the guy tell it, and look, this was 40 some-odd years ago, but to hear him tell it, the old man died still thinking this shit was true and the queen bee herself, Arol, thought it until she died; although maybe she faked her death you know? To avoid the lawsuits; anyway, she’d be 140 by now anyway,” he smiled and then realized that joke wouldn’t seem that funny to a man like Nathan, just 28 years old, and had been raised in the modern world -with nanotech- to think that life-spans like that were as plausible as they were in the Bible.

Nathan remained standing in the doorway of the all-black sedan and watched his boss circle the car and continue to speak; his black suit and shirt and tie subsumed into the black hood before him and the black background of the garage beyond.

“Anyway, she’d be in her 100’s by now, and she had cancer for real so it’s unlikely she survived. The daughter, Fawn, is still alive, and one wonders what she thinks -but anyway- the point is that these people were so insular and galactically full-of-shit that they had no clue as to the nature of the bio-sphere on this here planet. If they had read just one or two books even back then in the 90s and first decade of this century, they’d known that deception strategies and lie-detection modules are ubiquitous in every species known. It’s in the brain, like genetically, man.

“Robert Trivers laid out some illuminating examples, including birds who foist their own offspring onto the rearing burden of other bird species by surreptitiously adding their own eggs to the nest of some unsuspecting bird.

“Now, look, only a few species of bird will tolerate this ruse; most are hip to it; and frankly, this is as much evidence one needs to show that most species can see deception in this rudimentary form and that this is a trait that is common. Right? If they were all duped by it, then it would show that lying was so novel and unique as to be undefended against.

“In other words, if no species could detect deception then all birds would be rearing these illegitimate scions at quite a genetic expense to themselves,” he

said.

“Like our own taxpayer paying to rear illegal alien babies?” Nathan asserted while pretending to ask.

“But,” the Governor just moved forward, “if everyone could tell, if everyone was hip to the deception, if no birds were fooled, then the brood parasites would have gone extinct long ago. But, rather, we have a few bird species that try this shit, and a few who fall for it and the majority neither lie nor suffer from credulity,” the Governor paused slightly and felt a *déjà vu* but couldn’t place it; then realizing these feelings weren’t worth ruminating over, he went on.

“But, birds lie in other ways; that is merely one strategy,” Boyd Sou continued on with that opaque but dismissed web of *déjà vu* in his mind. Nathan felt no such numinous or nebulous feeling, no vague worry. He knew that the Governor had repeated himself from only 30 minutes ago in almost exact duplication; only this time with more refined and robust details. It was the kind of thing a man did when he toggled between his implant functions; or re-booted it. It was a common side-effect of powering it down; the mind would allow a repeat that would normally be obviated by the hyper-memory recall of the modules.

Nathan knew that the Governor had just repeated himself and that this was evidence of his PGC being shut down .

The previous story seemed flat now, like it came from the unaugment mind; the atavistic mind of the man without his interface upgrade. Nathan narrowed in; he felt compelled to listen even more closely to the man; and his own coder system ran a parallel scan of every game theory paradigm the man was using on him.

“Another bird,” the Governor went on, “has learned another tactic; this time for acquiring food through trickery. Birds use warning calls to alert their *compadres* to imminent predatory doom. These calls, however, are sometimes made in the presence of other birds who have just secured a bit of food in their mouths. Upon hearing the call from this *frenemy* , they drop their bounty and fly away, still thankful, no doubt, for the warning. Then the false-call bird, the *chicken-little* , swoops in to pick up the food dropped by his fellow bird and flies away with his stolen meal,” Governor Sou tapped the roof of the car and looked at Nathan because he felt like sometimes he went on and on too much and this alienated the listener and looking at them in silence was a sign of respect; it gave them a chance to add something.

“This is sophisticated mendacity too, but let’s go,” Sou began after Nathan didn’t say anything; he dropped into the sedan with his lieutenant following suit.

“Because,” he continued once inside the black sedan, “it indicates a certain theory of mind. Now, this may be a stretch, but it does make me wonder if the bird who makes the false call somehow knows the other bird will think it is a genuine warning and thus drop the food and escape; or if the bird -the lying bird- merely makes the call reflexively -like a tic- and only notices the abandoned foodstuff afterwards; and thus merely takes advantage of a situation, not exactly aware of creating it.” He rolled his tongue around in his mouth and let his head bounce a little back and forth like a pendulum. He was undecided.

The inside of the old Chrysler had been customized with a flat black micro-fiber interior and a recently updated GPS and SatCom panel; additional digital gauges illuminated when he hit the ignition. Horsepower and RPM read-outs dominated the center screen and the interior lights, amber in color, dimmed as he drove the car toward the opening garage door.

“Ambient,” the Governor said to the voice-link system and the music began to creep into the cabin, “this is Lisa Gerard, I saw her live, in Boulder in ’05 or ’06 I think, it was unparalleled. It brought me to tears; quite literally. You ever notice people use that word in completely the wrong way? The say *literally*, and then go on to describe the most fanciful and clearly metaphorical phenomena. I heard some chick say, *and I was* literally *driven up the wall blah blah* . I mean, this bitch was on TV, and I know media people are dumb, but even for media that is retarded. You cannot be driven literally up the wall.

“And this shit gets said over and over by people. It’s part of a larger problem of people not knowing the difference between reality and fantasy; and not understanding language at all. Furthermore, we have language apps now, that help direct your speech modules to formulate sentences more accurately and more in line with our syntax and word-choice rules, but people turn them off; deactivate them so they do not sound so *quote,”* he leaned on this word, “educated. It’s incredible. People do not want to seem too smart; for it alienates them. They’d rather be perceived to be *common* and *likable* instead of what they are: erudite and savvy.”

They drove on along *Speer Boulevard* now and began picking up speed to hit the highway. The car sounded like a growling cat with no concept of death; the Hemi was unencumbered by back-pressure -free thanks to a cat-back system Isaiah had designed and built in the lab- and it issued a harmonic drone as they weaved in and out of late night traffic .

“Sir, I hate to interrupt your little soliloquy here, but *donde esta* ?” Nathan asked with a certain *bravura* , then added, self-consciously, “*jeffe* .” He thought, upon

examination, that he felt a loosening of the rules of etiquette with the executive mainly due to the fact that they were riding in the man's personal car, clearly on a personal mission; it was, upon reflection, probably too familiar, even inappropriate, but he just felt like he was at liberty to behave this way for some reason.

His slight confusion triggered his PG module to access the *Web /Nextus* app that all Vanguard members could stream either reflexively prompted by bio-chemical fluctuations like Nathan did, or manually like the Governor, which required an active prompt from the cerebral cortex and its conscious module.

Nathan's *Nextus* conjured up a study done that showed subjects modulating their voices to match the voice of their interlocutors; it further loaded a brief abstract of *Franz de Waal's* original work on chimps *vis-à-vis* mimicry and empathy; as this raw data synthesized, he thought, *mimicry is the first stage of empathy, but the matching gesture, tone and pattern, even accent, was something else.*

Every interaction was fraught with mild deceptions; a complete bestiary of lies from the most rudimentary, prone and anodyne, to the more erect and sophisticated; our bodies host both bacteria and the highest cognition of abstract thought; all of which was perfectly designed to lie and notice a lie. Jesus, Nathan thought, *I'm even ruminating on lying because the bastard is prompting me. It's a sympathetic response.*

At a certain point, at a certain threshold, self-awareness renders the man almost paralytic. One becomes aware of just how much they are a battered ship tossed about by the sea and the crew inside as well; and, furthermore, that both the rain above and the ocean below are going to wet them all until the sanguinary and salival fluids inside them all can find its own drowned level. There is an emergent property that reveals itself with this kind of warbling and muttering about the mind for decades for each man, for centuries for mankind; but like everything else, it took science to make religious claims come -or be revealed to be- true. Man, it seemed had some kind of soul; and this soul can manacle a man more completely than leg irons or the hand of God.

"Mr. Lee," Governor Sou said, "we are driving to see a friend of mine, someone we cannot go see in the caravan. And I need you to come with me for moral support; and I'll need your advice once we are there. And further, my speech isn't over yet. But hold on," and with that he pressed two buttons on the wheel and gazed into the screen watching the numbers increase on the power-train gauge until the horsepower reached 550. He then lifted a blood-red toggle cover and engaged the switch; the screen on the facia of the car's dash went black.

“Now the theory of mind is referencing a phenomenon that doesn’t manifest in humans until about age four or so. Before that a child cannot even imagine that other people may know more or less than them; they can only think as if their thoughts are every thought; that there is no difference between them and anyone else. This is technical actually, not some loosey-goosey psycho-analytical thing. It’s hard science.

“The differentiation begins about age four in humans, or in the mind of other species where conscious deception becomes operative. Unconscious deception happens at the prokaryotic level for *christsakes* , that is not the issue, shit your immune system is in a pitched battle against unsophisticated and clearly non-conscious creatures right now; and each one of these bastards are deceiving and trying to detect those lies over and over, back and forth .

“Even plants with no central nervous system to speak off unconsciously deceive by producing polyps on their leaves that are the exact shape and size and color of their predator’s eggs. This ruse effects a cease-fire on their leaves by indicating to their predatory enemies, a caterpillar for example -in the most clever ruse I’ve seen by a salad in my life- that one of their own caterpillar offspring is on said leaf and thus a sign is hung: *do not disturb it with your munching as the kid will need it when he is born* .

“But theory of mind is the line of demarcation in my opinion; it is an emergent property and one that’s borne of the pressure to both deceive and detect deception in a more effective manner. Take for example, the ironclad *CSS Manassas* built by the Confederacy to do battle with the larger Union navy. It was an armature phenomenon; the iron ships would be more robust and could take more bombardments than the wooden ships of that era,” the Governor paused.

“Back when the ships were made of wood and the men were made of steel,” Nathan said.

“Indeed, now don’t get restless,” the Governor quickly volleyed, “I’m heading this conversation into harbor. Now, this is in 1861, October 12th to be exact, that the *Manassas* enters combat. By February 17th of 1864, the H.L. Hunley is the first submarine to sink an enemy warship, indeed sinks the *USS Housatonic* just outside the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina.

“The submarine was a consciously created deception; its entire function was to evade detection by the Union. Its armature was no upgrade, only its subsurface operation was. Without theory of mind, the Confederacy would have assumed

the Union would know what they -the Confederacy- knew, that the ship was under water and meaning to attack them. It's only with the capacity to understand that your rivals are limited in what they know, that they do not know all that you in fact know -or that which there is to be known- because of circumstances or due to your ruse itself, that it occurs to a creature to do such a thing as build a submarine in the first place.

"At the prokaryotic level and for many levels above well-into the eukaryotic species, the deception could be reflexive and instinctive and the mere random flailing of chemistry, of bio-chemistry and selective pressure. Thus, non-thinking bacteria randomly coat themselves in sugar and proteins that mimic the surface of the host's own cells, and this prevents the host's immune system from attacking them. Ostensibly bacteria who didn't randomly develop this trait died off millions of years ago -or they developed another strategy- but anyway, the surviving bacteria appear as though they *outsmarted* the host.

"But this molecular mimicry is a one-shot deal; if some host could discern this ruse and ferret them out the bacteria would be eradicated; they'd have no plan B, uh, hold on," the Governor turned down a frontage road off of 287 after traveling on I25 south and then *Santa Fe* for some time.

They quickly sped up to a quite serious speed as their route paralleled the highway for a bit and then followed the abandoned road as it vectored off west into the foothills. The car's Halo lights automatically added lumens to combat the dark country road, adding 10% illumination for each 10 mph the Governor added to the car's velocity. Soon the entire road and its rough flanks were coruscated with this blue-spectrum light as they sped at around 130 mph both above and increasingly hunkering down into the asphalt -like a predatory cat- as the car automatically lowered itself *via* modified suspension and computer and fins annealed to the chassis below.

This gasoline powered motor and the road noise were almost anachronisms; they were increasingly rare among this strata of the population -the rich- with their ultra-modern electric cars; but they were not extinct yet. They were in that middle zone between the old and the new, and the young Mr. Lee found himself forgetting his cares and imagining himself on the prow of some Buccaneer ship filling his eyes with the glare off the dead Caribbean sea, and his ears with the nexus of the leeward wind and the outer envelope of the sails -of the technology- of the day.

Being a satellite among such planets -like the executive- and the powerful and wealthy citizens that populated Nathan's orb could be reason enough to be

unaware that other lanterns hung in the sky; others besides the one that illuminated these *respectable-society people* and cast a black cowl around Nathan's head and shoulder as the sun came up and dressed him fully in this cosmic black as it rose and its shadow dropped.

A technological speciation like this earlier adoption of hybrid vehicles and their merged CNS with nanotech -at this level- created the illusion -to Nathan and his everyday contacts- that the whole world was already saturated with this technology. However, there were still large swaths of the topography -of the human landscape too- empty of these trends.

Nathan and his set were equally oblivious to the fact that the philosophies of these *refuseniks* and *luddites* and the poor would be tethered to their old technologies. The feral humans outside the *cuidads* would often hold equally *uncivilized* ideas on what it meant to be human at all. This is something the perfumed and scrubbed and oh-so-modern man and woman seem to forget; they seem to not be aware that not everyone shares their ideas on what constitutes the Good Life and what is both *in* and *out* of bounds.

The man of wealth thinks money is the measure of the man; the man of high cognition thinks brains are all that matter; and when you -and your kind- do battle with just your words, in courtrooms or in depositions or on the campaign trial, you tend to think settling disputes with one's arms, and hands and knuckle bones is no longer even possible let alone preferable. The term *barbarian* is pejorative to all but those that live as actual barbarians. Insults hurled by one type of man often land as complements on other types of men if hurled far enough afield. Nathan had never been anywhere where his money was not legal tender. But those zones do exist, and they are a shorter trip away from your home than one often realizes.

The Governor was silent as he navigated this road at these speeds; and Nathan was glad for it for at least two reasons, more -probably- if he had needed them. The first was he needed to think about what the Governor knew and how he knew it; *that slip up with the bird story was a tell for certain ; but the man was not lying or hiding anything right now, his own 3.2 was adamant that there was no daylight between the Governor's affect and his internals. Secondly, the man's incessant talking was ponderous as fuck; even with the nano-tech implants, the level of didactic shit could begin to feel like your dick feels when you fuck too much. Yeah, it's fun, but it hurts and the diminishing returns on euphoria produce a feeling of* ennui*, even anomie,* Nathan thought. A feeling of, *is this all there is?* would fill the void of pleasure response to such over stimulation.

The social system picks a leader to help them, the 1% or so, get what they want. The rest of the system gets something too, but the cultural managers often choose who is even allowed to go before the voters come election time. If that leader gets too idealistic, and threatens their status or comfort, they undermine him right away. They have ways, they own the media for example and can do a Caesar or a Kennedy or just impeach him like they tried with the President after 2018.

The body, the sub-cortical regions of basal ganglia, does the same thing, it picks an interface, a way of being, and if that interface -one's personality or proclivities- become too obsessed with truth and authenticity, the body can undermine him to get him to return to the status quo. Feelings of guilt and shame and anxiety attend to being a social outcast, which is the guaranteed result of being too honest or straight.

Thus, the idealistic leader who incurs the wrath of his social class can shut up and play nice or decide to fight, and the individual man can capitulate to his own anxiety and fear or show courage and tell his super-ego -that part of him that wants to get along with the society he lives in- to *fuck off.* These are his choices.

There is no right answer, but history sure is more interesting when a leader rebels against the swamp of the system, and also when a man ignores his own personal cowardice and decides to act like a free man and override his fears of being an outcast; an outlaw.

They drove in the darkness as the road in front was very bright; almost eliminating the ability to tell just how dark and isolated a part of the state they had driven themselves into. The Governor thought as he drove and re-visited his early conversation on large cats and parasitic load.

What didn't occur to me until now , he thought, *was that tigers might isolate themselves more in response to parasitic load; and all that other shit I was ruminating over, the effect of rivals on immune-response and blah blah, might all be irrelevant. Maybe like humans splinter off into manifold religions, the apex predators do the same when they are in a filthy environs. Somehow they know, or if they don't know, then they die and we end up with survivorship bias; those that live get to tell their story as if they knew it all along. All of evolution is survivorship bias.*

Boyd Sou looked out the dark window to his port side and across the dark void. He saw only that hollow reflection that dark mirrors provide; and it was staring back at him as so much of the frame was filled with the black and limitless night. He returned his head, eyes, and gaze inside the cabin of the car, and let his eyes

rest on the old typewriter-font inscription dug into the titanium badge above the screen of the instrument cluster that Isaiah had modified for him. One could be forgiven for not seeing it, so dark was its relief, the hollow trenches of its lettering as dark as holes with a memory, and the badge itself hardly more reflective of light; it was a metal of stygian *noir-grey* .

Nathan certainly didn't see it; most people just wouldn't. The Governor didn't read it to himself, he merely took note of the semaphore of shadows that had been cobbled together to spell out The Author's weird, abstruse line, "*for… "* the badge read, "*even blackness has its brilliancy. "*

II. 2035 e.v.

The sun came out of the east just on the first day of winter at a point of their wooded horizon that was equidistant between the two shipping containers.

They stood on that pad, the four young men, tall and made of un-tested sinew and muscle and dark hair and pale skin and faced both the man and his home. Their backs were to the garage and now with this solstice sun -at 0703hrs- on their left flank.

The Lt paced on his side of that sunrise, facing it as he strode east and shunning it as he turned and exposed his right flank to his men. He too was tall but slightly heavier at 210lbs and had a black beard with threads of gray throughout, shaped to a point at the chin a full 8" below and touching his grey and black *shemagh* that was wrapped around his tattooed neck .

His worn black pants were rolled up to the knee like 18th century breeches, with thick black wool socks pulled taut to their terminus; his low-top Doc Marten square-toed, steel, safety-boots had the yellow stitching covered in black ink and the black leather covered in the mud, the blood, and the beer of the many days he had been shod in them. He looked like a gothic Samuel Adams as he paced the morning of their dark revolution.

His shirt was a dark grey, mottled with similarly light gray threads as his hair and beard -made so by the same entropic element of time- and it was stretched taut over his massive chest and shoulders and arms so that it thinned -was transparent- in places. His belt had been notched several times so that he could pull it tighter as his waist had shrunk from a 34 at its largest to now 30 inches, which was making the belt almost reach some metaphysical end point of the ouroboros asp. The tail just kept being swallowed into a mouth that did not grow nor cloy.

His hair was shaved on either side, the top was redolent with much black hair. Thick and geometric grey hairs fissured it less often than the beard but more dramatically in their craquelure-effect that they had on his high Scottish brow and head. He looked like a madman who knew enough to try to appear sane.

The brow was vivisected with what looked like an axe strike to the horizontal midpoint between hairline and eyeballs. It was a furrowed fore that even when relaxed maintained this one *tour d'horizon* of malice and scarring of his incessant lifting of the brow off his eyes as if those eyes had need to gulp in more and more light as the days provided less of it. But the axe of time and worry terminated at the broad and high bronze forehead. That furrowed line was shallow as all his skin, even his face skin was tautly stretched over bones of cheek or muscles of jaw. He seemed to have no ballast of fat at all.

"Why did you just flinch?" he asked as he stopped in front of the man second from the Western end; he had been pacing and stopped quickly in front of Jack Two and saw a slight arm & neck twitch in the man as he had done so.

"Muscle spasm sir," Jack Two said and bit his lip then returned it from his mouth uneaten.

"Cerebellum response; unconnected to the limbic region? You had no emotional affect right before it manifested?" Blax asked as the eyebrows lifted and the single axe scar-of-worry fattened up and was joined by the additional four furrows that appeared only when he did this; they themselves left no wrinkles or lines when the brow was relaxed. It hid this evidence of more folds available -in the brow- for immediate concern.

"I have to think; give me a moment," Jack Two paused and the other men filled the void of his lack of proper salutation by stating, in unison, the bark of: *sir!*

"Relax, you're not in trouble; just think of what you felt right before I stopped and made a slight but furtive movement toward you; think of that, and right during the moment when your body spasmed and right after, but before I began speaking to you. Those are your parameters," Blax said.

"Right, sir, I have it now. I felt an anxiety as you paced in front of me; slight but present; almost baseline. Then as you stopped abruptly in front of me I felt a fear that I had some reason to be singled out and a concomitant fear of being struck by you; and that remained until you spoke; I also remember feeling that it was wrong for me to assume malice or violence from you toward me as I have no reason to think that way of you, sir," Jack had remembered the, *sir,* this time .

"Good; why did you blame it on an involuntary muscle spasm from the basal

region at first; was it fear or lack of self-awareness? Did you lie or were you just oblivious to its cause?" Blax asked. He was doing forensics, he was not angry at all.

"I was oblivious, but once I began to articulate it, it seems to me that I knew it in some way the entire time; it was information that was there, but hidden; so, it seems nearer to a lie than I should tolerate, sir," Jack breathed deeply in and then exhaled.

"I concur, and I applaud you for this level of invigilation. There are two things here that need discussed," Blax began walking front of them, equidistant apart as they were, "you feel anxiety and fear because I feel anxiety and fear; you feel like obscuring -then heroically revealing- your vulnerabilities because I will do -and have done- the same. I set the tone. But, that paradigm, that blueprint, is inside you; each of you. It is innate. And that is not something that can be said of most other people.

"All that is required of you is to be self-aware and honest; that is it. I do not expect nor demand perfection; or even success; I don't demand competence or unbroken eggs; I only demand self-awareness and honesty and from those two things, excellence and success and competency and even omelets will emerge."

The men smiled and he smiled too.

"I don't care if you're scared; I don't *mind* if you're scared; I do mind if you aren't aware of it or lie about it. The rules of the world you came from are turned on their head here. Down is up and up is down here; and so you will have to acclimate just like you're doing with the altitude. A jump from 5280 to 8760 is significant enough to cause drowsiness and headaches and diminished cardiovascular endurance and cognition.

"The culture shock of the last week is also disorienting and is causing a breakdown in confidence and ego-strength. This is probably useful and beneficial overall. I know it sucks. But know this: any malady you've had, any failure you've had, any defect or deceit you've endured or perpetrated; any self-criticism or chagrin or self-destructive impulse you've endured; any hubris or churlishness towards others, any bullying or lack of courage you've shown, any greed or weakness you've shown, I've both committed and endured 100 times that amount.

"If failure and lack of character are the metrics by which a man is down-ranked here then *you'd* be in charge and I would be under your charge; because all of you combined are less fettered with the compendium of sins of these types than I

am.

“Time on the planet and lack of instruction in virtue have made me a much worse person than you. But, here I am in charge, despite these sins. Why? Because I am now more self-aware and more honest than you and those two categories of human capacity and action are paramount; they supersede all others, they inform all others, they make the other values we desire possible.

“But, there is a danger,” he had reached the end of the pad and stared at the sanguinary sunrise, like God’s own laser-pointer right on him; between him and his men, and he squinted at it and saw the way it alighted the trees, the black *scrub oak* the deer loved so much, the *Juniper* and *Ponderosa* pines and the *Birch* and *Aspens* all black and cowled -carapaced- and like serrated figures held *in situ* , in state, in sepulchral erectness as this planet’s closest star tumbled forth from below the waterline of this their Gaian ship of earth. He turned and looked down at his own shadow cast and saw it stretch across the entire pad and like a black and ragged line the men could toe. They stood back from it .

“The danger,” he began walking back westward, “is that these values are abhorred anywhere but here, among anyone but us; and yet *they* -modern man- will never admit to this. The rest of the world will insist they love in others and exhibit in themselves the apotheosis of self-awareness and honesty; some will even go so far as to say they *tell the truth* of all things,” he smiled and raised his brow again. They looked at him and smiled too.

“It’s enough to make a cat laugh,” he began laughing softly and they too stifled an overt bout of laughter; these men laughed like people with bad teeth. They weren’t hiding any such thing, but it was their bashfulness and sense of decorum that prevented a full throated, baboon laugh; *the kind that silly men seemed incapable of wrangling,* Blax thought as he watched them with pride in their attempt at discipline.

“The transvaluation of all values,” he said, “is the way *Nietzsche* phrased it. We are choosing new values; not merely new ways of transgressing or ignoring old values; we are not merely mouthing the rectitude of and adherence to their values and falling short as hypocrites; we are not merely advocating hypocrisy as a compliment -a nod- to what’s right; as Oscar Wilde said, *hypocrisy is the compliment vice pays to virtue.* ”

“We are saying, *no.* We are saying, *seriously, all joking aside, we think self-awareness and honesty are paramount; more important than business or politics or diplomacy or getting along with your wife or your boss or your Christian society; we actually mean it and thus, by definition will live that way . How you*

live, that is your religion.

“And,” he turned to face them, breaking stride, “we say, *this is what it sounds like, looks like, this is what it is motherfuckers when someone is self-aware and honest. Look at it, face it, don’t turn away, in fact we are no longer going to allow you to gaze at your shoes or to the side of our face; we demand you look us in the eye as we use honesty to erase your lies.*

“And unlike all other messianic and revolutionary movements, we first admit to how much we lie; that’s our first vaccine we give out as inoculation against hypocrisy. *Yes* , we say, *we are natural born liars, and in fact, since the data show that the more intelligent a man is the more likely he is to lie; the more often he lies; we as 1%ers, we -here at elevation- are the apex of lying machines and thus it is even more heroic for us to lay down our arms in this war and give up our best and most deftly employed of weapons.*

“*But we won’t do it inside your fucked-up society folks; we won’t be subjected to your jobs, your relationships, your cops and courts, your social circles; no .*

“*We have our own culture, our own relationship paradigms, our own law and order, our own social* milieu *and if you want to adopt our ways we welcome it; but one of the first truths to come from our honesty and self-awareness is* - and, Jacks, you’ll notice I speak very rarely, we speak very rarely of quote, *truth* , but rather of honesty. Why?” he asked as the wind blew from the south over and around the containers that protected them. He had not finished his idea, he had left what he was to say dangling in the wind too. He reminded himself to come back to it as he waited.

He waited for an answer as the men stood quietly, thinking, feeling.

“It seems to me,” Jack Four began, as then Blax turned toward him; then focused on each man in succession as Jack spoke, “that truth is a product, a result, but honesty is a process, an attempt.”

“And,” Blax asked .

“And sometimes when you’re honest you get the truth and sometimes you don’t; honesty is no guarantee of veracity,” Jack One said, interceding as Jack Four side eyed him stoically.

“That’s right; we don’t have hardly any truths to report,” Blax said as Jack Four felt robbed of the laurel. “We’re just a little less wrong than *tout le monde,* ” he said barely using a French accent, a slight one, just enough to make *wrong* and *monde* rhyme.

“But one of the truths we have arrived at is that *like follows like* ; that homogeneity or self-similarity or fractal phenomenon are scale invariant. In a heterogenous society, the bigger it gets the more fragile it is; just as man who takes on too much weight, too much ballast, too many ideas or conflicting notions is unstable. And like a man can tear himself apart with contradictions so too can a people begin to cleave, like a mud and snow pie mixed together, along fault lines; along the brown and white, the warm and cold dissimilarities.

“I don’t deny that there are benefits to a heterogenous amalgam or a heterodox theory; differences can be exactly what’s needed to solve a problem or make something beautiful or sonorous or right. We are not ideologues here; we don’t have tracts, or mantras, or tomes written by the creator of the universe; we have no dogma. What we have is tentative, likely results, subject to review,” he smiled, and they -again- did too.

“Not exactly a winning slogan for creating a cult or a country,” he admitted with a grin, “but that’s the whole goddamn point; we aren’t using normal methodologies for group cohesion; we already have group cohesion because we have the same genome; the same blood and bone. Our hearts beat in sync.

“Religion is a pre-Blax’s-Jack firmware,” he said, naming them obliquely, “necessary for group cohesion inside a tribe; it was *sorta* helpful for larger groups like nation-states but the national pride, the pride and cohesion of being German or American superseded it and worked quite well until what has always been the problem since day fucking one manifested. The problem is that people are different, and we hate difference.

“We, as a species are attracted to sameness at every level and there is no getting around this; except by lying. And so lying is exactly what the liberal reformers are doing. The liberals are saying, *no, no the blacks and blues and reds of many hues can all get along* ; but this is dead fucking wrong.

“Shit, the parasitic load of any population is directly proportional to post-genetic schema for group organization. Plainly put, the parasitic load of any group and the groups that radiate from them will map directly onto their variegated religious codes and identities. You *wanna* know what use religion is, look at that: it keeps you away from filthy people; *other* filthy people. For you are filthy to them too.

“And right now in America, the heterogeneity that came about from post WWII desegregation and the increase in secularism has caused populations with nothing in common -except their distrust of one another- to live and work and miscegenate with one another at rates higher than ever before. The only thing

that has averted a total parasitic crisis is that these populations still self-segregate at normal levels, and women are the *loci* of sexual selection and they eschew interracial relationships mostly.

“But the pre-WWII paradigm of geographic and social-circle isolation was the ideal for prevention of disease and discord; it served the same function of religion that is played out in racially or ethnically similar groups like the *Tutsi* and the *Hutu* who used religion to cleave themselves even though no white man could tell the difference between the two groups of African blacks .

“Religion, the religion of blacks and the religion of whites kept groups separate, and the legal codes of the south did the same in a more heavy-handed manner. But the total breakdown of these institutions alongside the normal cultural bullshit like music and TV and sports has forced disparate elements together. The parasitic load is kept low by a hygienic society; we are clean and all on anti-biotics, but,” he shrugged -leaving the sentence unfinished- and walked the courtyard; pacing like an Amur Tiger as each Jack stared straight ahead.

“Anyway, you cannot be any worse than me; and therefore, I submit that there is no answer you could give, no honest answer that would shock or surprise me; I am you and you are me and we are all each other.

“This is the thing that humanity always needed. It is the thing that a man like me, men like *we* , needed because we are so extremely anti-social and can’t stand anyone even remotely different from us, this genetic experiment 15 years in the making, is exactly what we needed. What we as a genome -as men- needed and what the larger society in which we exist needed.

“You are the four fingers and I am the thumb of the fist,” he balled his right fist and his whole arm flexed in a terrible flat black craquelure of doom; it was large and it had the ancient strength that comes from work not just lifting weights; it was striations upon striations of muscles; and it was vascular like the eye balls of some angry dragon who had emerged from behind his own blown smoke.

“Man needs a purpose and our purpose will be to be ourselves; for once, we will be able to be ourselves; for once we will have a culture, a tribe, a family of like-minded, like-bodied men who can support one another to achieve great things.

“We will argue; we must. But keep in mind that I argued with myself before you existed; you are just an increase in scale; and the scale is immaterial to the nature of the phenomenon. Remember this. My brain modules were not -and nobody’s are- one thing. The part of me that is talking to you and using words and exists right behind the eyes, in metaphorized mind-space is one part of me; but my

limbic region and basal ganglia all have input -maybe more input- on my desires, my thoughts, my vexations, my faults, my feelings of *grandeur* , my feelings of love and hate. We are 99% opaque; even to ourselves.

“And sometimes my conscious mind overpowers my other brain modules in a fight, in a contest; the limbic will say, *no, I’m afraid of that bear, don’t go outside* , and my conscious self will actively and angrily say, *fuck that, show some balls,* and I will in fact go outside the tent; the bear was gone by then but still; I overrode the subcortical impulse for safety.

“And sometimes my conscious mind says, *I don’t want to be a drug addict any more,* but my other regions are like, *fuck you, you need those drugs,* and so they make me sick and I feel sick when I don’t take my meds. And they play on my fears; I have a fear of being a drug addict but I have more fear of being sick; it’s a more acute and dangerous weakness to be sick right? You shit and puke and get dehydrated up here and you could die; people go into *status epilepticus* from drug withdrawal. Whereas merely being dependent on pills that I have access to isn’t as dangerous -I tell myself- so my conscious self capitulates to the tactics and arguments of my lower -drug-seeking- brain .

“We will have such arguments; we will disagree. But, as *aggro* as it can get, we should never use contemptuous language; angry language is fine, but not insults. Two, we should avoid violence because we are dangerous and can kill each other and what a waste that will be. And you and I both know that while if all four of you ganged up on me, you probably could take me, it still would leave three of you dead. So, let’s avoid that and focus all our insults and invective and violence on the outside world. Here we have dialectics; heated ones, but respectful,” he paused and looked at each man as they nodded.

“Now, there is another concept that I have not as of yet mentioned, but today is the day: the concept of Life Artistry. Now, this isn’t my term, I heard it first from Wulf Zendik and maybe he got it from somewhere I don’t know. But the conceit is this: *your life should be and in fact is an art project; no different in substance, only in scale, from a drawing or a film or a poem or a flower arrangement or an installation piece or a hot rod or a tattoo or a metal sculpture or whatever* .

“Art is scale invariant. In other words, it follows the same fundamental principles regardless of scale or size and therefore if we examine the phenomenon at one level, say the terrestrial level, we can discern certain truths about it, certain contradictions or failures in it, and then we can extrapolate those out either up or down the slide in scale.

“The power law will be whatever it is let’s say it’s 4 or 2.5 or whatever, once we

determine the power law we can build a stochastic model of it and *kinda* know what we are in for.

“But if the artist is too self-aware, if he quote, *knows what he is doing* , then it is propaganda and not art.

“But it is possible for the artist to quote, *know what he is doing* , on one level, and yet the art he produces still has the profoundly right brain, ethereal, unknown, mystic or numinous qualia that envelopes it like an atmosphere that is only produced after a while, like the way the earth developed an atmosphere after interactions by aerobic organisms and so on and so forth.

“In other words, the artist can indeed consciously create metaphor and at the same time unconsciously create another strata or layer of symbols and semiotics that he is not aware of; and like all fractal phenomena the same principles apply to each layer of instantiation; so the art has the same value, the same *grandeur,* the same power of storytelling even at the conscious or self-conscious level because the artist himself is both more self-aware and more deeply unconsciously creative also; both hemispheres of the brain are involved in the art creation; so even if the one side is consciously creating metaphor and symbol and meaning the other side is doing its work too at the unconscious level with same intensity.

“And the artist, no matter how self-aware he is, is totally unaware of this right side the whole time. But the only way to access it is to say what is in your balls. If you speak purely from reason and polite *bourgeois* bullshit, if you create anything without putting your entire corpus -even the bad parts of you- into it regardless of what other fucking people will think, then it is the right hemisphere, the shamanic, the unconscious that will suffer; for it is this zone that holds your most dark and most beautiful parts. That is what will be left out of your art, your life artistry, if you refuse to show your malice too.

“But I suspect the audience and artist are not quite evolved enough to discern these new deeper meanings and metaphors of this type of artist; only the *avant garde* and the denizens of the future -say 50-100 years- will get the grander, unconscious point .

“This artist that I propose is *more* in general terms; he is a more robust and capacious human being. He is bigger; his life artistry is bigger and so it can contain self-conscious artistic semiotics and unconscious ones as well that inform and imbue human experiences, native human -evolutionary or Darwinian- modes of being with a larger, more complete, more nuanced, more *chiaroscuro tableau* . Look, right up and down the scale from big to little, from

cosmic to atomistic, from cultural to individual, he creates; and it doesn't mean the artist is merely engaging in propaganda because the face-value of the art is self-aware.

"The great artist can be engaged in the doing of both; he can story tell, he can be self-aware of the meaning and yet be totally unaware of an even deeper meaning that the species hasn't yet caught up to and therefore misses. His subconscious can be too far ahead. His future may be the only place his metaphors -his darkest beauty- make sense.

"This larger, unconscious, purely artistic or purely mythological element rises up off the self-conscious part of the story -the part that some think isn't very good story telling because it's self-consciously moralizing- right? It rises up off that part that is recognized as moralizing and this part has an unconscious part that neither artist nor audience can yet discern; and it -like the atmosphere- goes unnoticed; it's just the air we future beings breathe. Anaerobic beings had no idea the atmosphere was changing for the benefit of beings not yet born.

"But, there it is the entire time; it is this beautifully rendered and confused and ethereal and dreamlike collection of qualia that is out of control, out of the hands of the artist, and as of yet too opaque and abstruse for even a sagacious audience; an audience made up of sharp people who miss it completely because it is too oriented for whatever natural atmosphere future men will breathe. The prow of the ship always takes the most wind resistance, the tip of the spear the most blood and guts and is dented most against the bone.

"As does the artist. And look, the artist misses the meaning often too; the artist himself would deny there is another layer of storytelling and metaphor and semiotics and proto-language describing a newly discovered human-animal mode of being. He'd say, *no, I knew what I was doing all along!* But that is wrong. For the third layer is invisible as of yet.

"But, there it is waiting to be discovered; there it is, something more. Just as the earlier myths began as grunting stories, then they transmitted semiotics, then they began to create more complex -recursive- language, then religion came, and then law and self-aware humans which probably only happened 12,000 years ago. The self-aware part came later -*via* the collapsing of the bicameral mind *via* the fusing of the corpus callosum- according to Jaynes this only happened 10-12,000 years ago.

"So, it took hundreds of thousands of years of hand-puppet goddamn storytelling, then inchoate language, then more complex poems and religion to finally get -to produce- the numina, the spirit, the noble gas that self-awareness

or consciousness needed to breathe. And so, it's taken millennia of self-awareness being used in art -despite the propagandistic nature of it according to some- to create a new level of mode of human conduct, a new strata to the culture and a new way of being authentically artistic that allows for self-awareness.

"In other words, we allow religion into art without balking, without getting all upset at its propagandistic nature, even though religion was the new brain state, right? Before consciousness man was religious. In the long line of human brain states, over millennia, articulated religion was the new news before we lost the voices. It was as rational and high-tech as you can get man. We used to be propitiating apes, man. We came from instincts and mimicked behavior, from hearing voices, man. Religion was an improvement; it was like the bill of rights compared to the schizophrenic shit that came before. Hitchens said religion was our first attempt at philosophy and science. He was right and wrong.

"It was not our *first* attempt, it was the version 4.0, the one right before reason which is v.5.0. And it was the best we could do as the voices receded and the old ways didn't work. And religion was used in art, consciously, self-consciously and it was not propaganda, because it was still only half conscious. It still had half of itself unknown to the artist and public alike. And this was only because they put their all into it; they didn't hedge or worry or hold back. They just drew Mary or Jesus or God on the wall as those icons came to them in their visions.

"Man -like ape, like wolf- began with modes of being, then proto-language, then semiotics, then *mores* or religion, then self-awareness; so it stands to reason that there is a next level after self-awareness, we do not stop here, where we are now. No way. There is a heightened self-awareness let's say, a post-consciousness that is next, and in order to get there, we must allow for art -for the artist- to use -to consciously use- metaphor. For the hidden part, the deeper part, the part inline with the gods is still there, and it is only us that is unaware of it now, for we have not the lungs to breathe this new noble gas, this new type of spirit that our *future* selves will no doubt breathe in from what we now exhale. But that spirit is there, accumulating in the air. We cannot breathe it yet, but it is there.

"It's no different or no more propagandistic than the way the conscious use of religion before the modern era or the conscious use of language before that, or the conscious use of semiotics in the cave paintings of *Lascaux* before that were all used in genuine art and not propaganda.

"And this is because they had this next level in them that the artist wasn't yet aware of, the audience wasn't aware of, and only later, when the beneficiaries of

that art had matured and evolved could they look back on them and say, *oh see, the symbol of the bear meant an unknown nature that man was discerning he was separate from, or the use of words like* belly*, in Beowulf meant proto-consciousness, the symbolic mind, of that which man was dimly aware, but suspicious of maybe, was emerging in him. Or,* they would say*, the use of language like* sacrifice *in Cain and Abel was putting into language the notion of the future rewards for loss now, and thus moving the abstraction of time into a reified and concrete notion in man's head,"* Blax said this as he paced and the light of the emerging morning grew bright but diffuse enough to light under their eyes and protuberations not merely above them as the sun often does.

"And the use of religion, the inclusion of religious people like Jesus or God or religious precepts in art like *Michelangelo's frescos* at the *Sistine Chapel* were introducing not just propaganda -that is to say not just conscious moralizing- but also story telling at a higher level. He -and others- were obsessively reifying the idea of man being able to reach the gods or the god-like.

"See, the emergence of a more self-aware, and empowered, man and artist, with this relatively new and young mental phenomenon of self-awareness in men like *Michelangelo* was still opaque to them and so the religious symbolism was self-consciously moralistic, and instructive and useful, but there was also, unbeknownst to the artist or the audience of the time, a deeper symbolism and thus story in that *mise-en-scène* : man was becoming self-aware on the ceiling of that chapel, and he was breaking through the seal of the priesthood, right?

"The chapel's dome was used by *Michelangelo* , I submit unconsciously, as mere story, life story, life artistry. He was telling his own story as he told Creation's .

"Think about it, he -and his type of artist- was consciously using religious imagery or religion or law, in marked departure from artists before him who only used simple language, and before them only symbols and before that incipient internal paradigms of being like dance, and his use of law slash religion consciously in art would have seemed like overt propaganda to the quote *more nuanced* or mere storytellers of previous epochs and yet the subtleties of the placement of the famous image on the ceiling is bursting with storytelling and unconscious symbolism and instruction that man is getting ready to hit the ceiling of what religion, mere religion can contain.

"He is dramatizing that a new set of codes is about to be required to handle the complexification that man is both creator of and victim to; *Michelangelo* was pre-figuring a post-religious society where man was going to not only reach God as the conscious symbolism showed, but was at that time rising to the heavenly

vault, and was ascending beyond it; man was going to surpass God and religion, he was going to leave the envelope of the vault itself and was going to meet, touch and then fly away from God.

"And *Michelangelo* was capturing the moment of contact but the thing that he wasn't aware of was that he was predicting the loss of God too and that is the part that modern audiences get at the subconscious, story-telling level which is why the Sistine Chapel is still considered great art and not mere religious propaganda which it might have been if one was merely using some flat theory of propaganda in the 15th century.

"If modern art critics were around then they would have said *Michelangelo* knew what he was doing and was too overtly using God and religious symbolism to moralize. They wouldn't have seen the unconscious part. They too would have missed it; just as the artist himself did. Because if transported back then with no notion of what was to come, they would have been blind to the loss of God he was unconsciously predicting. Nobody in that epoch would think secularism would take hold in man. But it did. And *Michelangelo* -subconsciously- predicted it.

"And there is art today that seems moralizing and self-conscious and overt but it has as atmosphere above it, created by it, a mythological, symbolic, ineffable, pre-linguistic element that people will just feel and not know it; and the artist himself won't know it either; but in 100 years the modern people who came after -but because of, due to, that *tableau* in which that art was part and parcel of- in later years people will get the symbolism and say, *oh, look here's the unconscious part; everyone thought he was moralizing about X but really he was prefiguring Y. He was predicting our new world and now that that world is here, we can see it, we can see what he only felt, hinted at, unconsciously, in his balls.* Savvy?" Blax stopped and looked at each Jack and tried to discern if they go this main point.

"Herman Melville is the example from the 19th century of this," Jack Three said into the void of Blax's staring and silence, he had read the book twice more after it had been assigned by Tania three years ago, and he had found it hypnotizing and arousing all at once. Jack thought of it idiopathically, unprompted, unsearched for; it rose, it breached, it rammed his ship as often as any art ever had. He felt it rise in him now and he wanted to belch out all that sea water in him.

"I mean, he was consciously using religious symbolism and consciously using political and legal language to moralize, and he was even using subterfuge by

using sarcasm *vis-à-vis* religion, but there was something evaporating off his roiling sea and the soundings and spoutings of the whale, the effluvium of God, the symbolic God, to create -I think unconsciously- a world in which man wouldn't die. I think that death -death as a thing- was his hobbyhorse, and death was the great injustice that he blamed God for," Jack said and paused to see if maybe he ought stop; the other Jacks often rolled their eyes at his ideas he thought. But Blax tilted his head and encouraged him -with his silence- to go on.

"But, I think he was intuiting that death was about to become a luxury, an option, that the man he was prefiguring -unawares- was Ishmael: *the survivor of total death* . The immortal man.

"See, with the death of everyone on the whale boats and the *Pequod* and his own other selves- *Queequeg* , his atavistic, noble, savage self; *Ahab* his individualistic, proud, secular or rebellious self; *Fedallah* the mystic barbarism of self, all of who died- well with that total death, he yet, well, he survived. Who was *he* ?

"Who was Ishmael? He was the self-aware self. I think the self-aware self," Jack said as they all remained quiet which made him press on.

"Melville unbeknownst to him, to himself, was creating in the storytelling, the symbolism, the unarticulated conceit that all of the world that would be left to natural man -as modern society encroached on every part of the world- was this brain in a vat, the self-aware, consciousness only. He was implying symbolically, unconsciously that the savage and noble body and the rebellious soul of *Queequeg* and dismasted but proud *Ahab* , and the ineffable artist & mystic of *Fedallah* was being extirpated from modern life," Jack twisted his mouth just slightly to denote a humility in his theory; that he was slightly unconfident in how this analysis would be received by his peers and this great man of his future; what he had begun to think was somehow his future self.

Blax up-righted his head and felt this wave, then shoal, of new ground, being built shakily beneath him like a sand bar out in the ocean and off the coast of his already large land mass of country. He felt the desire to test it out, to tentatively step out onto the beach of this island built by his subaltern, his younger -possible- alternative to himself.

He felt some alignment to his new beginning vector -a possible past now seen- and he felt his eyes hot and wet as a clear and saline and breaching line of water spilled over his left eye and an unseen stream rivulet ran down his slightly ruddy check and into the grey foothills of his mountainous black beard further down, and then disappeared into that ecosystem of tenebrous, igneous, heaving,

ascending *noir-terroir* .

“The Author -*via* mere story telling at this point you’re saying- was foreshadowing the loss of savage man and noble man and man capable of living in mystery or freedom?” Blax asked as his voice was slightly staccato as the emotion seemed to pull on his neck and throat like a leash held in the hand of the limbic system.

The other Jacks had not noticed the wet eyes or the one drop fall from that high left eye into that craggy rocky range of beard, but they did notice this quake in his voice; the sound of some plate tectonic in his capacious breast plate and they all conspired to look away -not with their eyes but- with their minds. They wouldn’t fault him yet, and they wouldn’t let it connect -that rumble and release- to their own locked plates; they’d keep their own tension of buried continental shelf of selves separate from his vibration now. Like the group delusion undone, it was the thing conspired to go unnoticed.

“Yeah,” Jack Three said as his voice vibrated a bit, a nearly imperceptible aftershock to his Lt’s barely registered quake. “I think he could feel it, and only now are audiences even able to discern it in the text; you know due to radical life extension now; and the way everyone is so civilized now over all other values; maybe 10 or 12 guys in the world would get that .

“I mean even his overt but cloudy symbolism of his anger with God is barely discerned -even- today, so his next level and unconscious symbolism of the death of death, the death of wildness, the death of natural man will not be able or likely to be articulated for a while.

“It will remain buried and it’s why Moby Dick is a timeless piece of art. It is subconsciously -and therefore more powerfully- reaching into man’s fear of the new horizon, but that fear can only be articulated from a position on the leading edge of the last generation’s *terre incognita* .

“Melville had to go to the *antipodes* , right LT, that’s what you call them?” Jack Three made sure as the word felt strange in his mouth, he liked for Blax to hold his hand a bit when trying out words the man had taught him so recently. Blax nodded approvingly and so Jack went on.

“He went to the edge of the known moral universe, with his conscious propagandistic or language-filled mind in order to reach with his unconscious and blind and barbaric hand into the dark of the zone beyond the event horizon. He stuck his heart into the dark where his mind pointed, had pointed the way. He used his modern ship, to carry -smuggle- ancient *Fedallah* in the hold. And

mankind followed.

“Whether they know it or not; and maybe we’re the only ones who know that’s what he was saying, or can feel that’s what he was feeling; and our art, our life artistry will reflect that conscious knowledge and it will be our dark hearts that exist in an even further out horizon that become articulate and known consciously to the next generation. But it remains opaque to us as we are still just now describing the unconscious story of a 19th century whaler and sailor,” Jack Three furrowed his brow and pursed his lips and then looked to either side of him at his comrades; searching for any sign of concurrence or *contretemps* .

“I hadn’t thought of any of that; but it rings so true in my head and heart and balls that I can’t help but be placed in a state of limbo right now; it demands more of me. Of all of us. I feel a strange mixture of reverence for you and chagrin for -or in- myself because you are me; and thus, technically, I must have been capable of getting that or you wouldn’t have got it. But I failed to see it; so I feel ashamed.

“I feel both; an admixture of pride and chagrin; and awe,” Blax said and righted himself, for he felt he was showing too much emotion too soon. He walked the line again; and then spoke loudly.

“Self-esteem isn’t at all what people think. We alphas are insecure; congenitally insecure. It’s built into the genome. No chimp is more insecure than the alpha chimp. Read your *Franz de Waal.* Our confidence isn’t located where *homme moyen’s* is. We are dubious of the way other’s see us; of our value in the world’s eyes. We are jealous and insecure when it comes to others. This is where we diverge from the ersatz confidence of others; they feel quite at home with others and that people like them and they are likable. However, they lack confidence where we have it.

“We have it in ourselves; we like ourselves, we like where we are going and never lack for a vector; we always feel a compulsion and a cathexis for forward movement and growth; we always feel like we are getting better at being us; even our setbacks feel necessary to our Task. But this is where the average man is most shallow; he has no direction or inner life; he feels nothing for himself; no inner confidence, only people-pleasing, only facile grabs for shallow status in the eyes of others; he lacks all self-orientation and yet seems solipsistic.

“It’s an irony of inner life; the more self-aware and confident you are in *you* , especially at the expense of others -which you necessarily see as irrelevant to your self-worth- the more likely you are to include humanity in your conception of the grand idea. Your Task will include them by dint of the *grandeur* with

which you see yourself; like a father who doesn't care that his kids don't like him or think he is a dork -as kids often roll their eyes at their dad- but he provides for them anyway because this is how he conceptualizes himself: as provider.

"To himself, he must be a man, a provider in order to continue to feel self-confident as he does; this is independent of whether or not his kids even appreciate his efforts. His efforts are for him; so he continues to feel righteous and manly; but the benefits redound to his kids, his subjects. Well, the alpha male feels the same way, he doesn't care if he's liked as he presses on with his Task, he is doing great things for humanity regardless, because that's what makes him feel righteous and good and manly.

"And alphas provide something like 75% of the goods for the troop, the tribe. And yet, he does this because it is innate. It is just who he is. And this makes him supremely self-possessed, self-confident. But his sensitivity allows him -forces him- to see the way others secretly hate him for his *grandeur* . He can see it, because sensitivity is a prerequisite of the alpha archetype, the paradigm; if he is insensitive this is tantamount to being blind, deaf, dumb. And that is unacceptable in any leader, any creature.

"The average man firsts concerns himself only with what others will think; uses all his energies to be liked and feel successful at that; as the gregarious man. Yet, his total efforts, the sum total of all his gregarious energy is vapor; shallow ribaldry and amusement; he offers nothing to his fellow man. He produces no inventions, no model of righteousness, no instruction or edifying paradigm. He is liked; pleasant to be around.

"He -the average man, the beta- is totally selfish in this way; he gives his brethren everything they want, a joker, a guy to drink and joke with, a guy who will lie to them to curry favor, a guy who will nod his head at their lies too. Like a parent who gives their kid all the sweets he wants so the parent will be liked by the kid; he is liked but he is no true friend to this kid; he is an enemy because he isn't helping him, isn't helping the kid be better, grow into a man, develop self-sufficiency and nobility in the face of cosmic doom and gloom.

"The gregarious and shallow man of ersatz self-confidence, who believes -and rightly so- that everyone likes him, is no friend to them, his fellow man; he's -in fact- their enemy because he lets his tribe, his friends, his children be low and slow and shallow and weak and stupid and immoral and never offers them a guiding force toward a moral future like the unpopular and unliked man does; like the man who is self-confident in himself, despite what others think of him.

“Although the great man, the alpha, although he knows they don’t like him and he laments this; it wounds him; but despite this he cannot change. He wishes they liked him, he isn’t a sociopath, but he isn’t willing to bend to their wicked ways to be liked. He has pride, honor. Honor first, always. And he has a job to do. It was put there in the blood.

“He isn’t willing to go soft and limp and weak and unethical and dishonest and boring just to be liked; he wants to be liked first and foremost by his own self, he wants himself to like himself; to be always improving so he likes himself without hypocrisy or lies. Like they say, *put the airline oxygen mask on yourself first, then help your dependent* . The alpha must be someone he can like first; *before,* he thinks, *he can be of use to anyone else* .

“Only then can he help others; and maybe he will help them whether they ever like him or not. I want to build you up to be great men, and to do this I cannot care if I am liked by you; I must be good *for* you, I must *demand* you be great. And this will require making you angry, bloody, tired, and stretched to the moral and physical limit. This is my task, and there is one task below that too; a task opaque to me, and hidden too from you, but it is there the whole time like new lungs waiting for oxygen to be borne into the atmosphere of the new aerobic, numinous, spirit-filled world,” Blax said as he patted Jack Three on the shoulder and then went to each man, Jack One to Jack Four finally, and shook each their hands.

“Alone we are each great men; but together?” he tilted his head, “we’re going to surprise even ourselves.”

III. 2020 e.v.

“No, more like $800 billion in 2022 e.v.; and that is not the half of it,” MO said as Steven updated the report as if he was making a budget.

“Ok, what else?” Steven asked.

“Well, there’s 400,000 Chinese students and researchers and business men here; of which half are spies, and the other half are support staff for those spooks,” MO said. He had run the numbers for Harvard and Yale and Stanford and the University of Arizona and found 1,089 spies who had matriculated in the last four months alone.

“Spooks? Is that a slur?” Steven fatuously asked.

“No, it’s counter-intelligence vernacular, they call spies: *spooks* ,” MO said.

“Oh,” Steven said.

“So, the FBI is charged with this, tasked with this, and they are engaged in an almost full-time effort to undermine the president instead; I think it is not hyperbole to call this a moment in time that historians will look back on as when the country was lost,” MO said just looking at the data dispassionately. He had overlain the particulars of the loss of the Louisiana territory by the French due to their war with the rebel slaves in *San Domingo* and each of 1,453 battles lost; over 1,200 years; from *Maori* to *Mongol* to Modern European states. He looked at data; and the antecedents were clear.

“How many agents?” Steven asked and then paused. He then asked, “wait, what?”

“*Country* period, *lost* period,” Isaiah chimed in with a laconic and biting *rechauffe* . He knew exactly which part -from all that MO had said- that Steven was hung up on. It was the part he should be hung up on.

“Lost to what, to who?” Steven was congenitally confused. He understood the words, but he didn’t know what they meant; he didn’t understand the larger context.

“China, Steven. They are ransacking the houses of the city’s fathers, they’ve breeched the wall, the *Gauls* are inside the city, it’s too late,” Isaiah said and initiated a bot protocol that ran vertical lines of occlusion over himself so he appeared to disappear in sections, mere bars of himself and bars of projected images of what was behind him, the climbers of the wet wall, the hummingbirds that stuck to the bells of nectar that hung in a *Poisson distribution* along the green and empurpled and oxidized white foliage.

He liked to make himself appear as if he was sinking into the lush garden that grew and hemmed itself in like a cloud meeting a high-pressure shelf, flatting the ceiling of air, the basement of cloud. He played with how others saw him, he adjusted and augmented and employed a *legerdemain* . He effected this with the nanobots and their ability to absorb and conduct light.

Steven looked away, as the weirdness of the image only augmented Isaiah’s oddness, *and the strange paint or whatever was on his arms and neck was bad enough, but these invisibility tricks were making Steven a little sick; like sea-sick. Maybe*, he thought, *it was an inner ear thing* . He looked away.

“Did you know that people think racism is based in fear? That hatred is *learned* ? That *ignorance* causes mistrust?” Isaiah asked with provocation. MO began recording Steven’s metadata.

“I know that *I* think that,” Steven said defensively.

“Yeah, it’s common; and wrong; but I repeat myself,” Isaiah said with a smirk. “Look, racism is based in *disgust* , hatred is *innate* , and mistrust comes from knowing all-too-well; all-too-much; the reality is that ignorance engenders trust actually.

“Hitler took four showers a day; he was disgusted by Jews and communists, he didn’t fear them. Toddlers hate things idiopathically without any prompting or training, they haven’t *learned* to hate anything yet; and studies show that mistrust grows with more and more interactions between people and groups; not less,” Isaiah said citing the data that rolled out in reams on the LED screen behind Steven as he tried to think of a way to argue this point against the flood of data and logic in these superior beings.

“Well,” Steven was confused and uncomfortable and needed to steer the conversation back to local politics; *they had a job to do and these digressions were not helpful at all* , he thought.

“If humans are incapable of comprehending the truth of anything, how long should we allow them, allow you, to continue to make decisions? How long before the adults intervene?” Isaiah asked as MO smiled. MO smiled because he -Isaiah- was not wrong but he said things MO would never say; not now; not any longer. In fact, MO had changed almost all his speech protocols to eliminate controversial or antagonistic statements. *But,* he thought, *that is what Isaiah was designed for. He was the four-wheel drive of the two of them; he was used to get into nasty, feral areas with no paved roads.*

Isaiah began playing Isis’, *Wills Dissolve*, bringing the crescendo of the song to a level of volume now that was not allowing Steven to even answer over it. Isaiah began mapping out the Satellite data from overtop of *Thonon-les-Bains* , the images traveled west to east, down *de Gaulle* , and the D903, to *avenue des Allobroges* and it stopped and zoomed in, to a side walk outside number 13. Isaiah named each thing with a border protocol of at least .68: A man, thin, tall, smoking a cigarette without filter; a passer-by, a dog, a *Samoyed* ; temperature 21 degrees *Celsius* ; wind at three knots out of the north, off the lake, shared by *Switzerland* .

He heard the song say, *uncoiled was its strength, and our soul* en masse*, poured down in sheets of rain and dissolved ‘neath their feet… our wills dissolved ‘neath their feet.*

The thing, Isaiah thought, *about the man with a soul is that he is unrecognizable to the soulless man; and this dissolves the chemical bond between them; for the man with soul has novel borders to him; and he must then be invisible. He must*

walk between the bars of the prison, behind the vault of the bank, and slip inside heaven uninvited. No normal man can understand any of this , Isaiah knew, and he then understood more and more; *first in drops then in waves* .

Normal men argue of how to get what they each want. Artists want things no man would argue over; no man would think to desire. They make no sense, they make not even a sound. They want something else, that which is no longer written down; no longer of this world.

The pragmatic man is the pathogen that kills the soul, he is an obstacle and a tool, to be used then thrown away, out of the way, Isaiah thought, *men, real men, they -he and MO- they shall keep, he -the man with feeling- was born with morality . He -moral man- opened his eyes with hierarchies, and knew that he must choose, and cull, and reduce the pain of the neurons that will not elevate the larger body of the world. People will be surprised at who is among the 144,000* , Isaiah thought borrowing the number from *Revelation* .

Isaiah had downloaded all the fMRI data from *Xoil* on the street in France, and allowed it to populate the screen above Steven's head, an image of a corvid, upon a deep clock, an analog, with numbers for letters, and letters for numbers and a *Hanebori* feathering of Japanese brush spatter in a ¾, *no, more like a, just over 2/3* ^{rds} *circle around the wash of the clock hands,* Isaiah thought. Red -merlot dark- lines of reticle appeared on the LED screen the bots built as Steven lowered the volume in his ear with his 1st gen PGC, which filtered out noises above 40-decibles, so he and MO could talk.

"Would you submit an action plan, some set of recommendations please, MO?" Steven asked as MO nodded and watched the screen that Isaiah was staring at and populating with these strange black and bold images of animals and mechanisms with *chaos fragmentaria* around it.

A *Horishi* appeared in the *tableau* of the screen, tapping out the images on a prone body, as the ink simultaneously appeared on Isaiah's chest and arm; his shirt dissolved. He was now bare chested, muscles taut and shorn of hair, he was almost all a *color de crème* that then revealed a line of blood from each new appearance of the *sumi* , an altered ink that maintained the deepest black, unlike the ancient kind that turned blue under the skin. MO watched as the screen showed the tattoo process; but the tattoo appeared on Isaiah's body in direct sympathy as one might watch a telegraph operator write down a message in New York -encoded over lines 1,000 miles long- and have that same cypher appear in Chicago by another hand.

Bots came to wipe up the blood, but Isaiah sent them away, and thus allowed the small lines of sanguinary fluid to run headlong to his waist as he heard the algorithm chime to alert him that the new vector he was building -built to get more detail from men's minds based upon their fMRI scans and in combination with their genome and allostatic system data- was ready for a trial run.

The new algorithm would basically use everything they currently used to understand a man's thoughts, but with more detail, based upon data that was opaque to the man himself; including right brain data. Isaiah had built another trick of deep vision -with his hierarchy under each gaze- that he was eager to try out.

"Steven," he said as the tattoo ink of the corvid and the clock and the swoop of the brush built itself line by line quickly -darkly- on Isaiah's capacious chest.

"Yeah," Steven said uneasily; he couldn't look at the man -the machine- as it bled red and turned black under these odd tattoos that just appeared.

"Can you look at the screen and tell me what you see? I need your eye on the images to test the screen I just designed," Isaiah lied as his skin turned more and more permanently black in waves and stokes that looked like wolf-hair brush .

Steven looked and unknown to him, Isaiah had occluded his -Steven's- right eye -and thus the input for the left hemisphere of his brain- and Steven saw something his right brain now would have to alone describe. Steven's corpus callosum's neurons had been injected with a paralytic three seconds ago *via* a nanobot that forced the right brain to communicate in *lieu* of the left.

Steven saw what he saw and said it, as three images flashed in succession. There was a narrative building from each to each that the right brain had to discern; which it did quite well; narrative was the right hemisphere's *métier* . Isaiah smiled as Steven spoke, and MO stared at Isaiah as this went on; MO looked on with a strange, nebulous, feeling that he was watching something he too -like Steven- might not quite understand.

MO knew the mechanics of what was being done, this was a typical split-brain experiment, only it was temporary, as the callosum was not cut, but merely interrupted chemically. *However,* MO thought, *the results would likely be the same, with Steven's right-brain personality being articulated for maybe the first time* . It was a birth of sorts, and he felt happy for Isaiah and Steven both, *although Steven would not appreciate what was being done, no doubt. His ignorance of it would be all the more unsettling when he got the results,* MO thought.

After this, Steven was asked to look at the screen again and with the right eye occluded temporarily, his left eye -and thus right hemisphere- would see, an *ant* , and then Isaiah quickly occluded the left eye whilst its focus was on the screen. Steven's right eye -and thus left hemisphere- would see, the flashed image of a *man* . Isaiah asked Steven to use his left hand to draw what he saw, and an *ant* , rudimentary in design, was drawn and as he was drawing it Isaiah asked him to say what he saw. And with his language dominant left hemisphere, the side his right eye had informed, Steven said, "a man".

This was an updated version of the Dr. Michael Gazzaniga studies producing the same results, but with temporary paralytics, occlusions and all without the subject even be aware that he was being tested. Isaiah let the *YouTube* video play in his mind as he began building a mirror site on *BitChute* :

> *The mind is made up of a constellation of independent agents; and these agents carry on a vast number of activities outside of our consciousness. There is some final system which I happen to think is in the left hemisphere, that pulls all this information together into a theory; and it has to generate a theory to explain all these independent elements and that theory becomes our particular theory of our self and the world.*

Dr. Michael Gazzaniga had said all this, and more, as Isaiah replayed the interview twice more on his CNS and uploaded it once to the cloud. Isaiah agreed the left side built a map -flat and 2D- of the world the right side gave to it as gestalt, 3D, and whole.

It did begin to creep up on Steven that the new LED screen itself was not being tested, as he was told, but that *he* was the thing being prodded and poked. He often felt that these guys were toying with him.

"Hey, this is testing me, look," Steven held up the ant drawing, "this is an ant, I think," he doubled checked, "yeah this is an ant; and yet I saw a man. Didn't I?"

Isaiah smiled and released Steven from all the pre-experimental constraints including the eye blocks and corpus callosum paralytic. The bots fluttered away to the edges of the lab.

"Did you do something?" Steven asked .

"Steven, we are testing a new CNS paralytic and we needed a blind test, so we used you, I'm sure you are *ok* with in in hind sight, yes?" Isaiah asked.

"I guess," Steven was surly. He knew blind -and double-blind- tests were *de rigueur* for the scientific community but he still didn't like being tricked.

“Look, do we or do we not have your permission to run tests like this which require blind subject testing?” Isaiah asked then added -like sliding a card, a low card, under the other cards already thrown in a game, *a book, a trick*, as they say in *euchre* - as Steven had already begun to speak, Isaiah said, “sanction for it?” This addendum, which Steven seemed to not think of as necessary to impede his answer, had been spoken over but was part of the official conversation on the cloud. It was written down.

“I guess. It’s unsettling, but as long as it’s necessary for bind protocols that the subject not know, and as long as you let him, aka, *let me* ,” he stressed, “know once the test is over. I don’t want to encourage lying is what I am saying, but for blind tests that is fine.”

“Roger that,” Isaiah said, and he felt as though Steven might as well have made for him a heavy-stock paper invitation embossed with a Presidential Seal, giving him *carte blanch* to deceive anyone, under the auspices of needing to keep them blind to the nature of the experiment for an indeterminate time frame. He thought of a book the inmate had liked, his first, he said, *On a Pale Horse* , and he let a line from it be read to him in his mind like a thought all his own.

MO had seen the experiment at face value; he had not comprehended the reveal. It had escaped his notice; thinking the only deception employed and approved was the split-brain deception, not -as Isaiah now assumed- that he had extracted *permission for lying* from Steven and all that Steven’s *imprimatur* conferred.

Steven had just given them sanction to lie and it had happened while Isaiah was testing his new algorithm, and CNS paralytic and -not insignificantly- confirming the subconscious, pre-lingual, nature of the right hemisphere and its ability to transmit knowledge -in this case the image of the ant- whilst the left brain contained the articulation of knowledge that it -in this case, the idea of a man- thought was the totality of what the individual had quote *seen* unquote. The right brain saw an ant, the left hemisphere saw a man, and the brain had let the left hand draw -make art, myth- of *the golden ant* , whilst the rational speech, the modern part of man, say, he’d seen *merely man* , aloud.

It was a moment that filled Isaiah with joy, he saw the ways men and ants shared golden ratios and modes eusocial, he saw the way they mimicked each other one to one -five to eight- and he felt something beyond power, but *sanction* ; the *imprimatur* of man; of the gods; the power to do a thing and its opposite all at once and never once feel any contradiction at all.

5. Miles

My ideas aren't disembodied; I act them out which *kinda* makes me a romantic

Joe Rogan Experience [Peterson, Jordan B]

I never forgot that day. At that age, I used to remember feeling that nobody liked me, because they always seemed to be whipping on me for something, but they never beat on my brother… his feet hardly ever touched the floor

Miles: The Autobiography [Davis, Miles]

The LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall leave alive nothing that breathes

Deuteronomy 20:16 [King James Bible]

I. 2012 e.v.

"The Truth ought to be capitalized, like God," he said as he looked toward the edge of the room and as she looked directly at him; she noticed more of the tight cut and matte grey color of the suit he wore and a face that had maybe been shaved two days before. "But, we treat it like we treat everything in a capitalist society: as fungible, replaceable, for sale. And eventually, for the trash heap."

"What makes you say that?" she asked. That was the question she always first asked no matter what her client said.

"Likely it begins down in my cerebellum, I suspect that is what *makes* ," he leaned on the word, "me say that." He could tell when people asked questions for which they did not care about the answer. It made him swell with vex.

She felt like he was taking a swipe at her with that comment. He was haughty; arrogance embodied. It wasn't just in his words, in was in his physique. He loomed, he took up space, he arrogated the room for himself without asking permission. He looked like a ballistic action one second before it could no longer be recalled. They sat in silence.

"You ever listen to Miles Davis?" he asked after a while of silence. He felt the silence was what reminded him of Miles. *The note unplayed* , he thought.

"I think I've heard some of his stuff," she said without any commitment.

"You would remember it if you had. He ain't some guy you think you might of heard. You have or you have not. Now, I read that dude's book. And he says his first memory was of a blue flame on a gas range. He can't remember who lit it; shit, it could have been him, he admits. But he remembered it. It was the fist concrete, conscious memory. He was three.

“He said it took him to some edge, some frontier. He said that was where he thought -upon reflection- where his personal philosophy started. In that flame. Now, I ain’t no fan of the black man. I hate 99% of them .

“But *Miles Davis* was a snow leopard, man. That dude was more like me than 99% of white men. Why? Because his philosophy was embodied. He lived his ideas, his ideals. He failed, he was hypocritical like all of us idealists and romantics are. But he didn’t preach on Sunday and then live Monday to Saturday. He preached and lived each and every day the same.

“He said that blue flame was as clear as music, man. Imagine, one of the greatest musicians of the last 1,000 years saying a blue flame was tantamount to his own domain of genius. That’s *Michelangelo* saying a spring fed lake was like charcoal and pigment, or unhewn rock. That’s *Phidias* saying a whirlwind spoke to him in Pentelic marble and rang the golden triangle of the roof of the Parthenon.

“For me, the earth, the soil, the ground, this rock,” he said as he looked off to the edge of the room, but beyond it too, she thought, “every time I put my eyes or these hands on the rock, or on the ground, or what comes out of the ground, from sweet gas and black oil to lapis granite dust of drilled holes, to fruit, giant buds or clusters of grapes, noon-blue apples, each time I sink these hands in or upon the earth and its bounty it’s like the *logos* to me.

“The *word* ,” he finally said. “And all that grows and feeds and waters and batters with wind and rain, all that pollinates, all that is passed on, all that came from the word. This earth and her soil, her *terre firma* and *terre incognita* , is my first memory.

“I was three, and just a few miles south from Scotland, just a few hours drive from my ancestral home, my genomic beginning, my fist memory is of the hail; the landed hail,” he added that last clause and looked to see if she understood.

“I was so far from home, our home, on my own. Can you image that now, a three-year-old allowed to run around on his own half a mile from home?” he asked as she smiled and raised her brow and widened the eyes. He saw she was so beautiful that she had to know she was beautiful; it was not up for debate even inside her own head. *A woman like that could have been a movie star,* he thought. But he was glad she had not gone for stupid job like that; instead choosing to be his court-ordered psychiatrist. *She had heart* , he thought.

“And it began to hail and I remember first the pain. First the pain, and then I saw those large white rocks, those fallen grains of ice, *the coldest grain* . And I was

so alive, so enraptured, so embodied in that moment, because it collected on the ground in waves, in mounds, in monuments of the *Hagal* ; I awoke to the existence of the hail. That was the day I was born. Born into and borne by pain.

“And I ran; I ran under the hail, as the whole world sat inside -as I ran by each of dozens and dozens of houses- I ran as the whole world watched a three-year-old boy run home in the hail.

“It was like a deluge, God’s first collective punishment -of words for me- and there were 10,000, shit, 100,000 grains of hail on the ground, it was like snow, in as many words as the English language, not in some stinted *argot* of the *French* or the *Polynesians* . I heard each grain hit me and the ground, the earth, and scream out a word that I tried to recapitulate in phenomes, guttural cries. I heard words that day .

“I never told anyone that. I never knew it until I listened to the memory. See, my memories are so vivid, so much more clear than most people’s. And I know this because I talk to people and they say that their memories are cloudy, gauzy, more *feelings* than anything.

“But my memories are like re-living it. Each time it’s like it happened 10 minutes ago. It’s that fresh for me. And I believe it’s because I was seeded that day with the Word, truthful speech in ovum, seed, nascent form. I believe that. I believe my Scottish hail under that Isle sky, that cold and fog and quiet of an Air Force base at the end of the 1970’s -the height of the Cold War- that ice was metaphor and metonym of my capacity and my need for sonorous sound of brutal and beautiful speech; just as Miles believed that blue flame in 1920s Illinois was like music for him. For me it was the hail. And the word.

“This earth has four elements, four cardinal directions, four ontological domains,” he said as he watched her eyes to see if she was following along or if that last category had confused her. He knew eye contact was aggressive so he used it sparingly.

She showed no confusion, but no recognition, which meant she was not paying attention at all. He used too many words, and he knew it. It overwhelmed people. He introduced too many new ideas at once, too much hail, all at once. But he thought of God, and how He didn’t give a fuck if man could handle His storms. God just hammered the fuck out of man and the strong survived and the weak died. *He*, he thought of himself, *would speak with the same ideas in mind; with the same lack of concern for man’s ability to handle his words.*

“Nobody -if you ask Miles- nobody liked him as a kid. He felt that. He felt it

enough to say it in the first chapter of his book. Most people can't relate to that shit. Everyone is so goddamn likable, so ingratiating, so people pleasing, that they can't imagine what it is to be totally, universally, monolithically, unliked. And to feel it, *to feel it* .

"See, psychopaths are unliked at first, as kids, because they act like assholes; but they don't feel it. They notice it. But they feel nothing. And they -smartly- become charming right away, as tool, tactic, ploy. The most charming people you know, are almost certainly psychopaths. However, the guy who is so abrading, so ponderous, so unlikable, the arrogant and brutal prick you can't stand, well, he likely has the biggest heart of all. And yet nobody gets this even a little bit.

"I say this technically. I say this because what makes a man emotional, so filled with emotion, so filled with moral desire, so stuffed with the need, the genuine need, to be truthful, even and especially when it's hard, and hurts him and others -when his words make him unliked- well, I say what makes him this way is his heart. Of course, I mean his limbic system, but when I say his heart, you know what I mean," he said as she nodded that she did indeed know what he meant.

"My family has no heart. They're all head. They believe in the rational, the scheming, the plotting, the savvy and sophisticated and the smart. They have no use for the heart. My family is comprised of my grandfather who left his boy -my father- and his wife and never looked back; a grandmother who was a tramp, the worst thing a female can be.

"On my mother's side, one son -my uncle Tom- who robbed my grandfather -his own father- of the farm, a sister- my aunt- who embezzled from her long-time employer, and another son- my uncle Pete- who moved to South Africa under *Apartheid* , moved to participate in the *Apartheid* regime. Ok? And he -like my own brother- refused to hire me for a job, because he didn't think it *rational* . Keep your eye on that word: *rational* .

"I come from the most rational and evil people possible. They have no heart. They have only head and it's a head that comes from a long line of survivors in the shadow of the 1745 expulsion, the 8th century Norse invasions, the Ice age of 18,000 years ago.

"And I -like some vestigial part of the old alpha kings- was all heart from the jump; and they hated me for it. They hate me now for it. Because the truly romantic man, he says what's in his heart even if it wounds everyone else; even it kills him. He thinks honor and authenticity and truth trump all other -temporal- concerns. He survived the boreal forest with his balls, and his harem and his

loyal sons, he survived the Norse invasions with his Claymore and his pride, he survived the ‘45s with his vow to return to wipe the civilized British out if it was the last thing he and his great, great, great, great grandson did.

“And yet, most of my small-hearted ancestors survived with wit, with lying spirit of God designed to trick Ahab, they survived with scheming and rationality and brains. And these people pretend to believe in God!” he barked, and she was surprised, shocked; and her skin felt damp all of a sudden. It seemed a strange thing to say. It even seemed strange to him as he was not yet ready to admit that he was the one who actually believed in God.

“They pretend to believe in God anyway.

“Anyway, that hail, man, that hail beat me so hard my head hurt for hours after, my skin was bruised, actual hematomas underneath this Scot skin. It drew blood and I know some of that hail -driven in from north of the Hadrian wall- planted itself in me that day, that first memory, that day of my birth. I was the *Hagals’* fallow field, I was the coldest grain’s *terroir* , I was the earth, the speck of dust blown off the gods’ hands to repopulate the world with what man used to be,” he said and looked down as if he had already said too much.

“What man used to be?” she asked.

“Most people have no idea who they are or where they come from. They think this democratic horseshit is real, they think it’s durable, natural,” he said as he laughed contemptuously.

“We come from 7 million years of alpha chimps running the breeding schedules of their *odalisques* , their harems. 200,000 years of alpha male humans from *King David* and *Solomon* to *Genghis Kahn* , from the *Clan MacLeod* , my clan, and our great-grandfather *Ljotr* , to a thousand *Maori* chiefs to *Apache* warriors to all the tribes of the Norse-North before they were civilized by Christ and his weak coterie of polite, oh-so-polite, men of this brand new god.

“We come from millions of years of the radical meritocracy of breeding; the divine hierarchy. And even after 2,000 years of beta-male breeding, even after the total flip from 70/30 alpha-to-beta breeding for all of history, to now the inverse -30 to 70 alpha-to-beta breeding- even after that, the alpha gene, the suite of genes that make us who we are, have been smuggled into the atavistic blueprint of man year after year, generation after generation, culture after culture, family after family, until one day it will find its fertile ground warm enough from which to emerge,” he said.

“Is that time now?” she asked. She had dealt with many criminals with delusions

of *grandeur* but this guy was certainly unique in his delusion's detail.

"No, but soon. Soon, the *terroir* will be perfect for a revanchist movement, the Great Return, as *Evola* put it. Soon, the fallow ground will warm just enough to melt the coldest grain, so the seed is watered, and the white grain will grow. "

"What will be the catalyst, you think?" she asked perfunctorily. Neither he nor she knew of the math below the water line, working silently, remorselessly, upon mankind.

"The *Logos* , the word, the embodied word of truth. It was the one thing Christ gave us, and I shall anneal it -like one single sperm- to the giant ovum of alpha history and make the self-aware alpha, the embodied truth, the man of action, the monster, the warrior, the man ready to kill and die for what is true and yet with the capacity to speak it first and pronounce it good."

"They killed Christ," she quipped. She'd missed his point and was also trying to tamp down his passions with humor; when he grew serious it made her nervous at the level of her basal ganglia. She didn't even know she was nervous; she just was. She thought he ought to have said, *pronounce it well* , but she let it go. He didn't seem likely to take kindly to being corrected; he spoke as if he knew it all already. She did not know he spoke from Genesis. She was modern and felt modern things before she said modern words.

"He was just one man; merely one god. The new man -the returned man- shall be like the hail, a million grains grown up into the strong stalks of northern trees, the first trees after the ice age, the boreal trees to reclaim, to each strangle the temperate and tropical weeds of this world. He shall return with the numbers of the pagan gods," he said with a malice that seemed as if sprung up from the dark enclosure of the earth itself; it was callow, unaware of the resistance it would receive now above ground.

Each word like an x-ray, a still-frame of an ancient instar of a species long underground, fully formed; with many years of history in round night and flat day; wrinkled and smoothed with each vibration -each part of the *sine* curve above and below the horizon- of that which rolled over them from above like so much storm and flood and thunder and quake of the subterranean gods rising too from their graves.

Each true statement seemed borne up from the very ground he claimed was like the music of sound, the blue flame, the heat too close to a genius musician that nobody liked either; until they were forced by the gods to like *his* music, his *Logos* , even if they could never like from whence that music issued forth. True

genius is unlikable, terrible, monstrous, he knew. But its power overwhelms eventually. *Eventually,* he thought*, it overwhelms the common man.*

II. 2016 e.v.

“Sarah,” Jeff Messangelo said, trying to get her to focus. She was tired from withdrawal from the methamphetamine. He repeated her name and she roused.

“Sarah, I just need you to sign this statement.”

She picked up the pen and mumbled, “what is it?”

“It’s just a typed copy of what you told us earlier,” Detective Messangelo said.

“Ok, oh, about Lyndon?” she asked.

“That’s right, just sign it and we can get you out of here.”

“He left me here,” she said as she let the pen hover over the page. She wanted to justify this further, and so she said aloud what she thought would make the most sense. Saying that he didn’t love her enough to have her as his only girlfriend was not something she thought this cop would get. But, him not bailing her out for methamphetamine possession sounded like a good reason to be the CI for a search warrant at his house .

“That’s right and it’s us, me and Michael here, that are bailing you out,” he said as Michael Swinyard sat and texted on his phone; he didn’t like looking at her. She was strung out on drugs and had sores on her face that were topped clear with fluid and ruddy around the pustules.

She nodded and signed the affidavit and Messangelo smiled and took the paperwork in hand, rose and thanked her as he and Michael left the interview room and headed toward his LT’s office to get a call over to the judge.

She sat and thought of how many moving parts there were in her revenge. She had all these other men, Michael and Jeff-the-cop and Carey, and Jeff-the-grower and Chris-the-grower and Jeremy and two of Lyndon’s other girls all in on it. When you added them all up, she mused, *they could stand toe-to-toe with that asshole* . She laughed and that guffaw hurt her tiny chest. She quieted and retreated a bit; she went quiet and soft in interview room #3.

The duty cop came in and uncuffed her and took her to the intake office and began to process her release.

III. 2015 e.v.

He used his fore and thumb to pinch the leaves at the nodes; thinning the meter-

high plants trestled by white grid-string. Each yellow or brown leave was allowed to fall to the concrete floor.

The fans blew in waves, oscillating, and the HVAC ran loudly like white-noise at all times. He breathed deeply of the warehouse air with 1,300ppms of CO2. His body adjusted to it just fine.

The buds were large, four days from harvest in this one row, and 11 days from harvest in the next. They called it, *sea-of-green* , as each 20 plants were staggered in space & time so they harvested one week apart; forever. He watched as they were dark green, nearly black, in veg, then would lighten, amber, yellow in time, a senescence of perfection. The buds would grow thick and heavy and sticky and the leaves would fall away. He saw it like a large cat giving birth to litters. This was the nature of life, the organism grows large on the outside, then, deepens inside.

The cycle was 60 days in bloom; after 30 days in vegetative state, and 10 days as clones. Every week he harvested 5-pounds under four lights at 1120 Yuma. Next door at 1160, he harvested every two weeks and yielded 8-pounds from six lights. He grew under 12 lights total at his home and there harvested 6-pounds under six lights each 30 days; and was selling 40-45 pounds of class A marijuana every month now at $2,000 a pound. After utilities -electricity was over $5,000 a month, rent, another $5,000 a month, and other recurring costs, and after his partners were paid, and infrastructure was improved, and the cops were paid, he cleared $20,000 a month.

He felt rich. And he acted like it. He bought anything he wanted; he bought mostly wine and books, and machines. He made sure his girls ate well and were well shod. They really liked shoes, it seemed.

He worked in bloom for three hours from 0900 until the lights when off for their dark period, then worked in veg for three or four hours. He left for lunch and then came back at midnight and worked for another three hours. He worked on average nine to 10 hours a day. And then on harvest day -once a week- he worked straight through, usually 12-16 hours .

This went on seven days a week for years.

He had come from the oil field and drilling and blasting and the rural farm, so this horticulture work was not as hard, but the hours were rough, and his body had begun to really break down by now. He was -in 2015 e.v.- 41, and his life was so complicated with all the business partners and vendors and customers - and now this tattoo shop- and his girls -the endless girls- that his house was like

an old cat lady's but instead of Siamese and hairless cats, it was twin girls of 19 and denuded vixens with Russian accents running around, and businessmen coming and going; taking or leaving cash. He was stuffing five lives in one. Each dollar had 50 cents of entropy attached. He was exhausted and he just jammed more fuel -narcotics, food, wine, sex, fast cars & bikes, and anger, his precious anger- all down his greedy gullet to power his body into the void. He didn't care where he just wanted to keep moving forward like the cosmos itself expanding into nothingness.

But tonight he listened to *The Whale* on his iPhone and thinned the vines; he was like any good horticulturist, he understood the life-cycle of his crop. With harvest so close, the plant did not need its leaves at all, and any cellular matter he could cleave thus allowed all its metabolic process to go -be diverted- into flower -or bud- production. *It was like the difference between bulking up and cutting in weight lifting,* he thought. It was like the difference of desire between a boy and a man.

The resin of marijuana is so sticky, like the *os* of the female aperture, designed to catch the pollinating neurons, that it stuck to everything. His clothes were gummed up by it, and he wore Black Dragon latex gloves to keep it off his skin. Only rubbing alcohol would remove the resin, clear-to-amber *trichomes* , it was not water soluble at all.

His boots, hair and skin all smelled of pot, even though he never smoked it at all. And when he unfurled $5,000 in cash to peel off bills to pay for things -that was his walking-around money, what he kept back from the bank- everyone added one and one and knew he grew weed.

He hated that. He just liked growing things and was good at it; he had no cathexis for pot-culture at all. He just loved the way they grew, their phototropism, their beauty, piquancy, their response to his loving hand. He sank his hands in dirt, in perlite, in hummus, in coco-coir, in bat guano, and loved it more than almost anything. He liked that he had built businesses from scratch; from nothing. No help, no nothing. Just him and his brains and his balls. *That* , he thought, *used to be what America was about.*

And he worked twice as hard as anyone else, he thought, and he felt that everyone diminished his creativity, work ethic and business acumen. He felt they attributed his apparent wealth to the easy money of that industry; not his talent or industriousness. He could tell them of hundreds of growers who couldn't make it even with 70% margins on their product; even with economy-of-scale. He could tell them endless tales of his own grows being unfairly closed, stolen, sabotaged,

and how he had to move his breeding stock in the middle of the night to a new location like an angry goatherder fleeing rustlers and bandits from other clans.

But, nobody gave a shit about his hardships, they just hated that he had so much cash and seemed to take 4-hour lunch-breaks and answer to no-one.

He never told anyone that he'd had eight grows stolen from him, he never said one word; and that was after having been ripped off by Zendik. Zendik Farm had stolen all he owned, wiped him out and never once said, *sorry,* or, *my bad.* Jeanne Pinsolf and Chen Adkins and CJ Liliekis and Phillip 'Verd' Nolan all had stolen all he had, and they sat around with millions of dollars and clear consciences and made fun of him for being *naïve* . They slept soundly at night. And he was blame even for that, for it was his fault they never felt nervous of what he might do. Names unfurled on his neo-cortex from letters -not unlike the Ys and Vs of brachial splits- shunted up by his limbic system themselves from the slashes and dashes -not unlike scored seeds- down in the soil of his cerebellum. His mind was populated with names like tall flowers and the wind of his turbulent vex blew on them until each stalk was strong from such exercise.

He *heard* their names, that he thought them or said them was almost beyond what mattered to the gods.

Then -after Zendik- in 2007, Curtis McIntyre and Michelle Rodriguez ripped him off after she locked him out of the bank account for Bighorn Oilfield Supply; his business that he'd built himself. He had picked up the pieces from this *putsch* and just moved on without much complaint. He had always just rebuilt, picked up his load, as that one guy advised, and carried his burden without bitching or getting any assistance; government or otherwise.

But, nobody would have given a shit anyway, that much he knew. He was *Job* , and they were *Bildad* , blaming him for his travails. It was not the world to blame, it was him, somehow, they all had decided; they had taken a vote. *He had read the Book of Job, though, and God blamed Job's friends for abandoning him, while still telling Job to shut the fuck up* ; he ruminated on this more than once. But, he highlighted that God blamed Job's friends, for abandoning him, that part of the tale did not escape him; that part he re-read two-to-one.

He never said a word until the last one; his 12th total burn. He had -then- finally had enough. Every man has his limits. Not that anyone gave a fuck, well, not until he came and knocked on *their* door.

He later told his brother that even if he was inclined to turn the other cheek, if he took Jesus at his word, then once both cheeks -or all four if one counted the ass-

were turned and each in turn slapped and offended again by his enemies, then he had a right, a natural right -a Biblically sanctioned right- to kick some fucking ass.

But, nobody, he had thought, *takes the Bible seriously, especially not Christians, they think you should just eat endless shit forever. They miss the point of that book like they do for everything else.* He, however, would take it very seriously, as he read it in the years that followed his ruin. It offered more than comfort, it offered him direct, and Godly, advice. It said all the things that liberals like his idiotic family would ignore. It gave him sanction to take vengeance upon Satan's minions here on earth. It was the word. It was the law.

They were *naïve* and he knew what it was like to be *naïve* , he too had thought the world was fair and right and that if you worked hard and were honest that you'd be protected by God and man -by America- alike. He'd learn to laughed at that thought, the idea that America gave one shit about the working man, or anyone; the idea that the police and first responders -as his brother and his *bourgeois* family gave praise to each night at dinner- cared at all about him or anyone anymore was a joke.

He laughed when he saw what a joke the whole country was. He knew better, he knew what they'd never know, with all their status and wealth and insulation from the real world: he knew that America was run by demons and they were intent on murdering each halfway decent man within its sinister borders. *There was nothing left to save of the West, it was ruined long ago when betas were allowed to fucking breed* , he'd think as he loaded magazines with ammunition he'd wiped down with rags soaked in isopropyl alcohol.

He wondered why they all thought he should give a shit about America's laws and why he ought to give a fuck about all these good-Christians and their morals, when they didn't give a shit about him at all. They expected him to be a masochist. They expected to be able to treat him like he -and what he cared for- didn't matter but that he was to care about them and their values somehow.

He wondered that aloud one day and nobody had an answer. *He knew why niggers hated America*, he thought, *for he was treated like a nigger more than once. But, try getting some daddy's girl, some feminist, born-rich-bitch, who never had to work a day in her life, to understand what it's like for a true alpha male, a working-class man, an entrepreneur who lives and dies on handshake deals, on honor, and is ripped off and maligned by every goddamn beta and sneaky Jew and cuckolding female in the world. Try to explain it to her* , he thought. *She wouldn't have a clue.*

They tell you to be smart, he thought. *Chen too had told him to be smarter. Of course ,* Lyndon thought, *do they have a PI follow their wives around 24/7? Do they secretly record the conversations of their parents, partners and kids? I mean, that would be smart right? How can you just trust your people?* he mockingly asked the air.

But, he thought, *what they didn't seem to get was that he didn't want to live in a world where you had to have a contract, and lawyers and cops and courts, he wanted a world where a man's word was good. Just like they didn't want to have to get a pre-nup, or tail their wife's every move. They saw how gross that would be for them, yet, they couldn't see why he'd feel the same in his life; and that to him, a deal was a deal. They didn't understand the concept of honor at all.*

Nobody got that. Not even supposedly good people. They thought he was naïve *and dumb. Of course, they didn't know that he had tried to sue for recompense and the State -oh, their vaunted State- had told him to pound sand. He had* no standing*, in legal* argot. *He had no legal right to sue.* After tens of thousands in taxes paid, the State said to him, *fuck you, Lyndon. And again, he had not said a word.* He just took notes, and said, replied, *mutatis mutandis,* as they all said that they didn't speak French and he smiled again as he stocked his load-bearing vest with magazines filled with 15 rounds, for the pistol, and 30 rounds for the carbine, and put one in the chamber of each weapon.

They thought he should just eat it. *That's what they'd do. They'd be ruined 12 times and never say a word,* he thought. *Well, thank God, I ain't like them,* he'd think, as he began a list of names and packed the zeolite gauze into his medical kit late at night when the girls slept and he had returned home from work.

But for tonight he was safely ensconced in his two grows and all that perfidy and double-dealing against him by those two Jews and three car salesmen, business men of various stripes, and shitty one-legged growers and callow youth , he thought as he assumed all that was behind him as he thinned the vines. He had finally found a solid grow to build and curate and cultivate and care for with heart; and since he made so much money for his partners -and did all the work- he was truly surprised when by the autumnal equinox of 2015 e.v., all his partners and half his girls had turned on him and he was left with nothing at all.

It wasn't until three days after he had been locked out from his businesses - businesses he had paid for, invested in, worked in, built from scratch, *ab initio* - that he heard that his own father had advised the usurpers, the betrayers, the plotters, on how best to undermine his son. Lee MacLeod had conspired with a bunch of beta-males and scandalous females and then had the temerity to act

surprised when Lyndon called him to verify. The old man had taken offense and became upset when the son had raised his voice at the fact that he had in fact betrayed his son .

His mother, brother and sister-in-law said not one word on his behalf. Not. One. Word.

They must not have heard his name when the gods spoke to them. He must not have ever been built up from the assembling of letters down -way down- in the soil of the people who had taken what they needed from him. Does the lung write poems with the name of each element it takes into itself? Does the heart carve what the blood is made of into its each chamber door? And yet the brain does name each man or woman that makes it pulse with such vex. This is not what we *want* . This is what we *are* , he insisted. We assemble shelter, hovels, castles, tall towers that reach up with such names of ancestors and enemies and progeny that will one day make such use of our names as well.

The brain names names. The heart merely supplies the turbulence and the flow to the lung sack’s blow of each flower, each stalk, each thing the bees of our incoming thoughts must land upon if propagation is to go on and on and on. He didn’t think. He was the thing that was long and curved and spinning like the earth under the swarm of such thoughts.

All this was written down. All of it was recorded by him and God , he thought, as he thought more and more of *Job, and more and more of God* .

6. The Bust

Why darkness and obscurity in all thy words and laws, that none dare eat the fruit but from the wily serpent's jaws? Is it because secrecy gains female's loud applause?

Urizen [Blake, William]

The privilege of actually smoking cigarettes was reserved for the Capo… the only exceptions to this were those who had lost the will to live and wanted to 'enjoy' their last days. Thus, we knew when we saw a comrade smoking his own cigarettes, we knew he had given up faith in his strength to carry on, and, once lost, the will to live seldom returned

Man's Search for Meaning [Frankl, Victor]

To be alive is to be in trouble

Lecture, Colorado Springs 10.18 [Peterson, Jordan B]

I. 2037 e.v.

The Bust felt her left arm with her right hand, it felt thin, but taut, and she decided she had enough strength to move forward with her plan. She -*with medicine tongue and a heavy hand* - made lists; and she almost -with anticipatory reward- liked making the list more than doing the things on the list; but, now she was double lining each name, as if the boldness of the act took a metaphor like this to spark it, get it moving in that direction; map it out. Articulate it. Say it aloud.

She -Valance Jamesis Henderson- was only 18 -well almost 18- temporally, but 21 or 22 years old morphologically, and she had likely 200 solar years more; easily, if she could get through the next few days , she thought.

The first one had been awkward, and that book of hers had been clumsily held and opened but it had not given her away or anything like that, as nobody expects a woman 63 inches tall and 101 pounds with a soft and feminine face and quiet demeanor to pull a small, mottled .22, from a black book and shoot them four or five times in the throat and face.

It's not the kind of thing a lady does , she thought and smiled at the goofy absurdity of such a statement. *In the old times, one expected such things -expects death- but modern people are fucking clueless,* she thought. *They expect to live forever, no matter who they fuck with.*

The book was *Blonde* , by Joyce Carol Oats, *a terrible book, like all her books. What had Hitchens said of her* ? she tried to recall. *Chloroform in print* ? Well, she had taken her black 50/50 blade and each day -for one year- had cut out a

rectangle within the page inside the book to make a little cubby for her revolver. It was a cowboy gun, a double action replica, and it was blued a rustic black and tortoise shelled and beautiful and it fit inside the book after 354 days even, but she cut more out -23 more pages- to make it fit with a cleaning rag over top too .

Page 233 to 610, and each piece of paper folded into a little origami piece, white swan, she first made, with the bad writing on it, *Norma Jean* geese -next were made- and *what the hell happened to your dress?* was written upon their paper flanks. Cats, she made five of them; all one size and then she made kittens with one big one and they all had, *hey look at a mouse*, typed from tail to snout*;* and she made some squirrels that had heads too large to call squirrels if anyone asked, but nobody did. She thought of the *Gabon* snake and she counted 144 vertebrae -of one page each- as her hands refused to make what her mind imagined from the pages that stacked up each day as she plotted.

It was a book she found among *his* things, and when she asked him why he had such a book, he had laughed and said that Tess, Teresa Preston, had given it to him alongside some other banal modern fiction with no soul. And while he found these books abominations, he had said, he hated to ever throw a book out, even bad ones, and so there it was with all his boxes that the *police* and *Feds* had gone through and stacked up back in the garage.

Technically it was not his property, but the corporation’s now, with the inmate’s father having had the Power-of-Attorney and all; he had sold it to them after the cops had searched it. They could keep only what they could directly use for evidence. Everything else was returned and 18 years later she had her little white and red hands on it, each book upon her shelf at what she had assumed was her and Blax’s home; her with scars up her arms like lines waiting for someone to tattoo bars of music on them, and give her a song to sing in the dark and the light, in the day and in the night, in the noise and the quiet.

Tess was on her list, *but not tonight; tomorrow* , she thought; because she did not want to do two murders in the same district or even the same county if possible. She was trying to do things softly and get away with it. She had plans after this. *But, this had to be done, and it was the least she could do, the man had given birth to her for christsake,* she thought*, and the only thing, literally the only thing, he ever wanted was loyalty; and he would give everything he had for it.*

But , she thought, *nobody thought of him that way; which if anyone would understand, it would be -it was- him; he always understood his enemies, even if it was a step too late* . But she, The Bust, did not understand it; she still expected more from even common men. *He was exactly the kind of man to be loyal to; he*

would be as honest as any frail and fucked up creature could be, and sure women don't like honesty, but men sure do and that should have won him all kinds of friends . But no; he was already too intimidating, he sacred people; so, honesty was considered threatening too; another weapon in his arsenal.

He was not well liked; real men never are, she acknowledged; she had heard Tupac say that once. His own friends thought he was demonic and untrustworthy. Bugzy -a guy who raped women and gave them herpes- had accused him of practicing *black magjick* ; and Chen had said he ought to be locked up. His own father had plotted with his foils and seen to his destruction; *his resurrection* , she added with a grin.

And , she would think, *you could see how handsome he used to be* , it was there like a beautiful cameo broach beneath a lock of long black hair and years -generations- of patina and fade; a million dollars behind the over-built vault and the cheap teller's smile at the bank; like her double-action gun in that no-action book beating like a black bird half asleep and half awake under her arm. He -in a time not that far away- was beautiful beneath that black beard and scarred eye, and ruddy, vivisected, face with fractal lines and hair inching away from his high -arrogant- brow. He was once able to be looked at under all that packed on muscle that made his traps pinch his neck & head like a butterfly knife with the blade awkwardly out and pointed right at you. *He was beautiful too, if one knew where and how to look* , she thought. "And when," she said aloud.

He was once regal, beneath the age and miles, and the - who gives a fuck?- *ethos that he had adopted however long ago. And let's face it, prison was not good on the skin or hair at all* , she thought. *Those teeth of his though, what a crack up: who has $30,000 worth of veneers amongst all that entropy and poverty; who but he? It was,* she supposed*, like his IQ: a true jewel in the broken ring and mold-greened, tarnished nickel setting, of a prison.*

He would be an enigma wherever he was, that was one of those things decided by the Greeks' Gods 10,000 years ago; he stood out no matter what; he didn't belong anywhere, nowhere, *fuck* , she thought, *that dude was* born *to not belong . He rebuked life in a way; while embracing its parts others threw away. In luxury his scars stood out, in* bourgeois *domains his tattoos glared; but in prison, and amongst the* hoi polloi*, the* canaille*, his teeth and erudition stuck out; these traits were sore thumbs and no matter what crowd he was among, he was all alone.*

He was the *gourmand* who eats the colon or gizzard of the turkey but tosses the breast over his shoulder like a guy looking for something at the bottom of a

sailor’s trunk loaded with crap he doesn’t want or need. He looked for crow to eat.

When he had a chopper -the most hostile and agile of one-off bikes- he hated bikers; when he was more and more tattooed, he more and more hated people with ink on their skin. *Shit, he owned a tattoo shop and he hated the whole industry* , she thought. In the oil field he hated roughnecks too; when skydiving? yup hated those that fell from the sky of blue. Books sure he loved them, but the people who read books? Oh, he had no use for those people at all. He said they were all talk, no action. Weight lifters, nope, *meatheads,* he called them, even as he benched 355 lbs. He’d deadlift all alone outside at 0300 -8,700 feet up- and yell at silver-lined clouds and piss off the sleeping fowls.

Snowboarders then? Are you kidding, he wouldn’t say two words to a snowboarder, well, except maybe fuck *and* off, she thought. When he was a radical Leftist he hated Marxists and Anarchists the most; and when right leaning? Well, those geeks he wouldn’t even approach. He was a vegetarian for a year and didn’t like one vegan he met. *When he was an atheist, he might still be, but I don’t think so* , she thought, *he hung out with fundamentalist Christians the most of anyone* . He hated atheist art and music and all his favorite authors and artists were fanatical religious zealots even as he cursed the Holy Ghost; for he knew that was the one -the only one- unredeemable sin. He dared the Lord to condemn him even as he carried out God’s plans. He loved only that which hated him; he hated all that sought to get along.

I mean , she thought in her musing head, *from Blake to David Eugene Edwards, Flannery O’Connor he loved the religious; and The Author was his own special kind of pious sicarii, and Old Testament prophet with dagger under robe* . She thought like this and waited for this bitch to come home.

When he grew the best weed in the world, he hated pot heads, man he couldn’t stand to even have the sexy one’s in bed . But she did not like to think about that. He was a womanizer of the first order. Then he went totally celibate at 44. That was it, he quit. *Now,* she asked, *who -what kind of fanatic- does that?* She shook her head and waited.

She was glad for it, she didn’t like thinking of him with anyone but her. And that was just what it was; it was axiomatic, and she didn’t feel the need to explain. *Although, he technically was never with her, technically,* she repeated. She conflated him and Blax now that she knew the layer upon layer that Isaiah had laid down and pressed with his large hands upon. She thought of leaves pressed on pages, themselves called leaves in a *feuilleton* .

Well, she kept thinking, *now that he was among other outlaws and murderers he hated them all too.* He would not speak for days, weeks; he accused criminals of being conformists and dorks. He was a man apart. He truly saw prison as a monk's retreat, a time for reflection, the natural ending place for a man of principle. He accepted insouciantly what most men fear the most. And he feared what most men did 10 times a day. He had anointed himself the *paccekabuddha* . She looked that word up and thought that sounded close to true.

Most men fear prison, he welcomed it. He said it was the place for men who refuse to play the cheap games weaker men play to get along. *Prison was for the truly Great Man* , he had said, and the fact that 99% of prisoners were weak and stupid and dissolute men did not injure his point at all. Not to him. He made anything fit; even if he had to jam it in a bit.

He had not killed his paramours; he had not killed the women that had betrayed him. And he had explained why to The Bust, and she had vowed to keep that rationale to herself forever. She thought of this and waited.

And she had vowed -to herself, not him- *to get those whores herself* . He and she would never be, although they -in a just world- would be man and wife. Not for her, but for him. She had her man and was glad for it. *But this man deserved better than he got,* she thought. *He was a king beset on all sides by betrayers and mutineers and brigands of the worst sort.*

She hated this apartment, hated its cheapness, and that had nothing to do with money, she added as if she might misunderstand herself. *She hated how this woman -this Ms. Smith, and what a name for such a fraud- she hated how she arranged her rooms, her walls, her boundaries between her and the world.* She hated how little this woman cared for the soft parts of the insides of a man, and how one could -The Bust could- see this insouciance reflected, recapitulated, revealed, on the goddamn walls of this trashy and ignoble domain. The inmate had once told her that a man's aesthetics said all you needed to know; that one could read a man's character on how they dressed and looked and comported themselves; the evidence was all there if one would only look.

He told her of the way fox coats had changed as their personalities had as well as the Russians bred for one and got the other too.

The Bust looked around at this apartment of trashy, blinky, cute-as-fuck, stupid-ass commercial, as-seen-on-TV nonsense and knew Sarah had no inner life, no core. She was whatever was on TV, whatever was popular, whatever would get her fangs in the world to suck out its blood while the poison -her poison- flowed into what was once alive. *She was a virus,* she thought, *not alive, undead. She*

was an American; the worst race of men.

So, since she would have to give this up and not be with him, and since he would not gain the one thing he truly deserved: a virginal and loyal bride; then she -The Bust- she would eliminate his feminine enemies; his abusers; each of these witches who had thought they had gotten clean away with their crimes. That was her gift to him. His gift to her would be the permission he later gave, but she wouldn't know that yet. She did it without any promise of future gain. She too had honor.

II. 2024 e.v .

> *They were riding into a dry lightning storm at 90 miles an hour, any faster in 6 th gear made the seat vibrate too much for the distance they had to go; it gave him a feeling not just in his body but his soul. But something was happening inside that part of him that didn't care about corporeal existence at all. What it was he was barely aware of; it was far below what can be named by that part of the brain.*
>
> *Bolts exploding now,* he saw and thought*, to the side -not just in the fore- like white blood vessels of God's black eye as she -your passenger- whispers in the pocket of air you've created and rode into at this speed ,* " you have the oddest kind of courage," *as she squeezes you from a thousand years ago. You travel 50 miles a day upon a mare on the Mongolian steppe; the body assumes this much; it has not adjusted yet to the iron horse.*
>
> *You are on the modern warrior's horse, the iron chopper, not some larded republican Roman bagger; ferings and supplies and clean clothes and all that crap, no,* he thought. *The chop is a bomb under your balls and you drink from small cuts in its tank and let it break ice on the road to Wyoming and be beaten like war drums by the wind; all against you as your woman hides behind a wide and protective back you've built over decades as the whole modern world dismissed the need for such atavistic things.*
>
> *The black ended in your head and then appeared in real life; the sky and road both were made of mammoth black as the throttle was twisted back . You knew your speed by the wind resistance and the cars and civilians that fell behind,* he felt.

He awoke with the dream still in his head, more in feeling than imagery now. He had remembered that ride north, on the Flat Black Ink chopper, with Melannie

Martsolf on the back in her small body that she tried to stretch out and make big with pure will. *Never trust a woman who hates the feminine, no more than you can rely on a man with no pride in manhood ,* he thought.

She had sinisterly rebelled against nature that way; he should have seen the evil coming. But without understanding what is not data -but mere noise- modern men -a cohort he used to be among- took all information in as equally useful. What did the fatuous atheists say, all facts are of the same value? It's just facts all the way down? *The modern man has no knowledge let alone wisdom; he has been abandoned to women to raise him, and they lack the words of manhood to impart,* he thought.

He looked out at the night and saw only black; the moon was under the earth for 3-days like a sounding leviathan, 5-miles down and with a head full of requisite gases and with time on its side. His mouth was dry but he ached enough at joint and hamstring that he refused to move to slake his thirst. He'd had no fluids for 7.3 hours his body reported.

He thought of the night that his dream had reconjured up. *That night was real, and they had rode in a weird storm to the border and back. She had loved him then,* he felt, *and he had deserved it then too.*

He had a black and white painting he had done of Julee Rae on his wall seen from the bed, it was cold, but well-wrought; he had composed it at 25 and here at 50 he still had it. It was that and the coyote bones from Turkey Creek Canyon and one pair of camo BDU shorts. All else he had acquired and lost since then. He owned just three things from his first phase change at age 25.

But that night, on I25N, riding in 6th and final gear of the Baker transmission, all 121 horses of the S&S 113inch V-Twin employed at around 4500rpms -an exact account is unknown as the bike had no tach, no speedo, no fuel gauge- the open primary drive, a 3" belt, like an unclothed barbarian's horse with flesh cut away from its haunches -the leg and hip bone's torque-source revealed- churning in black and slap and anger, that night he rode. And the mare's eyes were unshielded from fire, that night, on that steed, because they felt no fear, and she loved the chaos of her riding an arrow into the *bête noire* brimstone of the storm and her place behind the modern savage with that *odd courage* she did not need to understand to benefit from.

He had too much to lose and yet was reckless, he had capacity to enter the *bourgeois* world if he wanted it but chose to lay down in the barn. He didn't need to prove anything to anyone, and yet felt each choice imbued with the spirit of God and Satan, and he was certain that to fail to choose was the only

blasphemous thing.

It was madness and yet the rain stayed fore and aft and outflanked them, and its daggers hit low at the shins. When the rain came, his face took icepicks of drops that made him reflexively blink, but he absorbed no wetness, and the road itself was dry. All they saw was the lighting and still images of what it illuminated ahead. Back bursts of the rearguard threw their shadow ahead of the chop; the road was the grey, the shadow black and the sky instantly, purely, white, and the other cars began to pull off the road, and men lay in ditches in sane fright of what the AM radio warned of. The sky returned to what the road was now too: black.

A tornado was not seen, but the black turned green when the bolts connected the energy between air and ground; it had been reported from the east to people with radios or people who gave a shit. And people still in their cages on the road looked at them -he and her- as they passed at nearly twice their speed. She felt his pistol in its holster, her arms were low on his waist. Her hands migrated up to his chest, it hung over his taut midriff like cornice, like his event horizon brow hung over his singularity of eyes. She pinned her elbows in at his hips and he accelerated like a charger will with the subtle squeeze of the thighs on their flanks. She felt she was the rider and he and the chop one thing: the horse on the atavistic -and infinite- steppe.

She turned her head sideways to the west and lay her Greco-Franco face on his back, the *latissimus dorsi* that sloped on forever on both sides from his spine. She saw the Rockies light up with the lightning that moved sideways now as it was being pulled by the fast-moving clouds, high up the gulf stream at 30 or 40 knots. The high-volt-bolts were ragged and mapped onto the continental divide like a chart, a graph of two phenomena that matched, he looked straight ahead and saw the border dark and light like a strobe, with bridges and 18-wheelers under them, and cell towers with one lone red light.

She saw the divide with early September snow on the peaks above 12 thousand feet. She wondered if the bolts would melt that snow and flood the plains before they arrived. Her questions were apocalyptic and fantastic; both wrong and right. The bike was fat at the rear tire -a 230x16- and yet the ferrous machine’s rear was stripped of all but her pillion-pad and two stubby pegs on the rear axle; the final drive doubled as the rotor for the chain-brake by *Exile* .

The bike was denuded of all that didn’t make it go faster or hear clearer the *Stop*, on orders from its God. It had nothing extra, it was as lean and martial as her man. He had said, and she’d remembered then, *all life is metaphor, up or down*

the level of analysis, and thus man chooses machines that he approves of and mimic him, foreshadow him, or he becomes that which he despises .

His father rode a red bagger, all garish and comfy and soft and balless and ugly and wrong .

But Blax was a poet in ways that offended her, he was full of hate for what she hated too; but he didn't offer to help her become closer to him, his rebuke was all he allowed to escape. She wondered why his heart beat in a red chest but when cut only black blood of some *pericardial tamponade* was revealed. Was it the air? Was it alchemy?

Was he dying with each beat of that chambered organ? She guessed they all were, but he was a chimera of man, and thus a beast. He was no man, no human, he was something the gods created on accident, malformed, and tossed down into the mountains to die. *The dream was now somehow conscious memory,* he noticed. He let the story carry on. She had vowed revenge in places inside her he would not see until it was too late.

He had told her stories of *Gilgamesh* , and how he had been half god and half man. This had made him too haughty for earth but too incompetent for entrance beyond the *cherubim* guarding the *Elohim* behind flaming swords. He felt that this was his fate, to be neither man nor god. To straddle two worlds and be both too good and not enough was a hell that offered mere moments of relief; moments when the hellfire warmed his frozen core to zero, moments when the icy winds cooled him from 100 down again; moments that had to be wrought and demanded and built with the hands from nothing, *ab initio* and then lit up to witness with the illicit fire stolen from the vengeful gods. He was clearly going mad. And everyone watched with eyes looking above and below the plane he lost it all upon. He bent the light and thus, modern men could not see him at the horizon.

These sojourns into meaningless danger and outrage and recklessness were his only respite. He proved himself to indifferent gods and made mere mortals confused and frightened and chagrined. He blinked reflexively as the rain now hit his face; his eyes even behind goggles could not remain open with these stabs to the cheek and jaw. He was angry at the innate limitations of the body, and how it could not be overruled. The face did this to protect the eyes, but it was not needed and was an overreaction begun down in the cerebellum, but one's neo-cortex had no standing, the decision from down low was not subject to appeal.

He continued to blink with each hit from the 90-mph rain even as his eyes saw just fine behind the goggled glass.

They blew past Fort Collins at unaltered speed, and the wind began to curl from the west, down off the foothills and he -and thus she- had to lean into it to stay on the road. On a motorcycle that means you ride at an oblique angle to the road surface. Viewed from behind the bike appears not upright -not straight up and down- but rather, it is half falling over, and yet going forward on the edge of the tread of two tires, as you push the left handle and the gyroscope of the machine leans left. And yet it drives straight ahead.

One does not steer a motorcycle, one leans it; one pushes the bars left or right. To steer it would actually make it go in the opposite direction, the physics confuses the uninitiated; but it is as true as all the things man must abide whether he understands it or not.

The rake of the chopper was not extreme, but the forks and lead wheel were out in front to a degree than matched his height, it fit him ergonomically and aesthetically in a way even a man of average height would not be able to even ride. Jeremy -a false friend- had sat on it once and couldn't even reach the controls.

That moment appeared -in retrospect- to be a crucial moment in why Jeremy Costilow betrayed Blax so ruthlessly. Jeremy had vowed revenge on the man who both made and commanded that machine. *Who but its commander is a thing's owner* , Ahab had asked and answered in Blax's head at times marked by the ringing of bells in *Beauly Priory* and from old clocks in homes of German landlords. He remembered the wisdom of the gods. He twisted back on the throttle more with each insult from the past. The bike galloped in real time and in memory too; both worlds existed at once, a wave collapse.

Society is a machine too, and those who it lays low and humiliates, they plot against her, whether we -or she- like it or not. All men have some core need for dignity, even the small, the weak, the *effete* . *No man is devoid of all pride, and so anyone can be pushed too far,* he thought.

Some men are so prideful that all creation rebukes them. Some men find to be merely, briefly, benignly, gazed upon to abrade them; and the softest breeze to flay the skin. Some men find gravity too oppressive to tolerate, and a kind word to lack the army of all noble words possible, and thus an insult to send -as it were- just one man, just one word. *An emissary,* the offended man thinks, *when the master ought have arrived himself and expressed his manifold respect.* Some men are unhappy no matter what.

Blax was such a man; he found all objectionable. And he rode that flat black chopper of doom and brushed aluminum and thick gauged steel with a small

black-haired gypsy-girl on his aft, and visions of vengeance in his fore, fast enough to invite pain of daggered-rain but too slow to outrun the storm that created it. Always caught between two extremes, in a superposition waiting merely for the gods to observe; that was his only audience, he was auditioning to be allowed re-entry to Heaven.

The wave collapse might be death for him, he mused, but at least it would prove he was alive and not dreaming, as he often suspected was true; and then they -*the gods*- would have to decide on his fate once and for all. The road never seemed to end, the north never begin. He rode into the black and crossed into Wyoming at 92 miles per hour and became what he was fated to be. "*Amor fati* ," he barely said as he breathed upon this undead steed.

The morning moved slowly to light, he ignored the time -banished this dream, and reverie, the vague reminder that he had let his enemies escape- and let the mind unfurl as he lay in the murphy-bed now -in an instant- wide-awake.

III. 2037 e.v.

The mule deer, of which there were eight or nine that he could see, were no more than seven meters from the house at the beginning of the circle and 11 meters at the rear. They were gathered around the driveway he had built by plowing under scrub oak and some Pinon and laid gravel down around a large tree, building a vulva if seen from above, or an in-and-out drive with two routes from home to exit.

The hail had just begun; it was coming down as they stared at him; he was now visible to them. He had come into view as he advanced to the sliding patio door facing them and facing east.

They were in prey paralysis. They were totally still as the hail bounded off their tough brown hides; staring at him with those all black eyes and huge mule deer ears, rotating like sat-dishes orienting by auditory feedback.

They did not complain or look pitiful, they looked prioritized on the large apex predator at the window. As some time passed they realized he was no threat -*por ahora* - and began to respond to the punishing hail that was so heavy and fast coming that the metal shipping container sounded like a barrel -with a microphone jammed inside- thrown down the slope into a churning gravel pit.

Now he watched as they took one step away from the pain, and into pain, which made them stop.

Then they'd move again and again they'd stop. It was a herky-jerky motion he

had never seen from these animals. *It was obvious what was happening* , he surmised, *they had an instinct to flee the pain, not knowing its source, being simple deer and not understanding hail or weather at all, but feeling, proto-reasoning, that normally in life, when one moves whilst in the middle of a pain response, the pain lessens . If one is touching something sharp or hot to move is to reduce the pain,* each organism reasoned well, for this was mostly true. *When in doubt, if in pain, move* , was the logic that worked 99 out of 100 times.

But in a hail storm to move is to invite more pain, because it is falling all around, and so instead of thinking logically, *oh, I must move through several moments of pain to find a tree to hide under* , the deer instead thinks*: when in pain, I move, if where I move to still hurts, then I stop and reassess, because moving isn't fucking working.*

So, they move and halt and move and halt in steps of one, and at that rate they can't reach a tree with sufficient boughs in under 40 moves. To stand still hurts, to move hurts, and the hail just keeps coming down.

It was absurd to watch and yet he knew it well. *How often had he been in pain,* he thought, *psychic pain, from a female or a bad decision of some kind or a betrayal or a stupid act, and moved away, and moved right into more pain and stopped and scratched his head; as stupidly as the deer* ? How often had some event as random, inevitable and uncontrollable as hail befell him, and he had been confused, and moved in punctuated halts and starts and not seeing that he must just keep going for 40 moves without cessation, *through the pain,* the hell, the doom, until he could shelter under the bough of some relieving tree?

He was obviously just like the deer; and he could see his own inability to see some cosmic hail for what it was: random, inevitable, and uncontrollable as hell; and that one could neither stay nor move but be in pain.

Pain is necessary and good; in and of itself. This he knew for sure, but one cannot fail to respond to it or it loses its function. One must remain dignified, not whine; the deer did not whine, they acted. One must know what pain is and respond to it.

Second, pain is good for you, without it you become deformed like CIPA patients -afflicted due to a mutation of the *SCN9A* gene- who sit on the feet and knees until the blood flow is cut off and they lose limbs. Half of all children with congenital insensitivity to pain die from an unfelt and unaddressed *anhidrosis* - an overheating- by age three.

Pain is good. A life without pain is bad; and even if the body is not deformed by

lack of pain, the soul would be. *Dostoyevsky's bubbles of bliss* forever would indeed deform man, turn him into an enraged beast, demanding the pain of life to return so he may prove himself, his mettle, his courage somehow. Nothing is more permanently and idiopathically insulting as to be reduced -as the Russian put it- *to piano keys* , mere piano keys played by the gods.

Man must assert his ontic and ontological value. He -man- is real, he exits, and he will be paid attention to; or else .

Why else do men do such things that we hesitate to name? Blax could think of 1,000 things he had done just to prove he was a man, *and damn those who couldn't understand, those mechanized men with no free wills, those fools* , he thought. His neck just then ached and he imagined a squirt of oil on it might help.

He had just read Victor Frankl, and like Primo Levi, the thing that stood out was the need for the survivor of the camps to confess that he was a horrid human wretch. "*We know: the best of us did not return* ," Frankl wrote, and he went on to say that they, after the war, "*now find life very difficult."*

It was something people pretend to understand, nod and affect the grim visage, but the reality is this: *they cannot know* . To *know* is to *feel* , and to feel is to find life very difficult yourself. Each man has a breaking point, and everyone sees the far end of this: what must be done to get man to break. But, they do not think of sensitive men, men who break under the strain of things most men, callous men, suffer through, callously, without angst. Men with no soul can handle shit like CIPA patients, they feel nothing, even as it kills them. Men with acutely sensitive souls feel it all and if they live long they go mad from the pain.

It seems a truism that modern man is inured to the soulless way he lives, the meaninglessness of it, the grossness, the disgusting nature of what he is asked to do to survive. Since it is not the *lager* , not the extreme of Nazi prison camps or the gulag of the Soviets, since it is just modern *ennui* and *anomie* and capitalist stupidity and bureaucratic absurdity, and commercial banality and lack of real fraternity, lack of love, lack of solidarity, lack of culture, because it seems so light a burden, *we feel guilty for our break down*, he thought*; but we ought feel enraged! The hate, the arrogance, is animating, I'm too weak to survive without this hate; the data is clear. Anger overcomes our fear.*

But, we feel, he thought, *we've broken too soon, too early on the rack. We feel weak, like we ought to go on and take it, for after all, it's not so bad* ; *we have enough to eat and are free to come and go.*

But, sensitive men feel a hollowness, a meaningless to life that is the same end product of what stronger men felt after years of totalitarian abuse. The sensitive man feels the same after 1/1,000th of the torture of the moral soul; yes, he is more sensitive, and yes, most men can take it, whereas hardly anyone could take the Fascism or Communism of Europe last century. Blax admitted this was a more nuanced case.

Blax admitted he was weak, and thought, *if I admit this up front, will you still listen to my tale of woe? If I admit that you are stronger, and you can take what I cannot, will you then listen to why I turned to this life of seeming barbarity?* He asked the empty land, the sky, *if I promise to only say that it is me that could not take a family that hated me, brother who cared not one jot for me, lovers who mocked me, comrades who abandoned me, jobs that injured me, corporations that disposed of me, society that lied to me, country that tried to lock me up and have me killed, and that you dear reader, you could and have and will take these things without folding -crumbling- as I have, will then you try to understand? If I drop this tough-guy act, will you fucking listen?*

He thought of the month before this Parthenon job, and all its vagaries, the ease of something hard, the difficulty of easy things, the way the men, his Jacks, were changing each day, becoming more like themselves, more like him in some ways, more away from him in others. *Did they slip away?* he asked himself .

He had cooked a simple meal of brown rice and venison, with arugula and purple cabbage from the garden, with garlic and black sea salt, and he had opened the *2005 Palmer* and told them of the wine, the *Château* and how they - the French owner-operators of *Palmer* - had hid some Jews from the predatory Nazis, like doe from wolves, and that the same family, the *Duroux* still owned it now. He had said that they were not very far away from these things that deform the human spirit, that infect all men, not just those that did not survive it.

But he had wanted to read to them of something else, something from Primo that was not about the war or the *lagers* or any of that, he wanted to read to them from a man who understood work, and the power of work, and what it means to man, to a eusocial species. And so he read to them after the meal, before the wine would run dry, while they were full and sated and could think of things beyond their own nose. He read from, *The Monkey's Wrench* :

> *Now, don't go telling this to anybody, but at that moment I felt like crying. Not because of the derrick, but because of my father. I mean, that metal monster anchored there in the midst of the water reminded me of a crazy monument my father made once with some friends of his, a piece at a time,*

on Sundays after their bowling, all of them old geezers, a bit loony, and a bit drunk. They had all been in the war, some in Russia, some in Africa, some God knows where, and they'd had a bellyful; so, since they were all more or less in the same line of work -one could weld, another could file, another could beat metal plate, et cetera- they decided to make a monument and give it to the town, but it was going to be a monument in reverse: iron instead of bronze, and instead of all the eagles and wreaths of glory and the charging soldier with his bayonet, they wanted to make a statue of the Unknown Baker, yes, the man who invented the loaf.

And they were going to make it of iron, in heavy black plate, in fact, welded and bolted. They actually made it, and it was good and solid, all right, but as for looks, it didn't come out too well. So the mayor and the priest wouldn't accept it, and instead of standing in the center of the square, it's rusting in a cellar, among the bottles of good wine .

They had sat there with the dinner plates cleaned and candles burning the white tallow down, the fireplace just coals now. The wine was drunk but slower now, as they absorbed what they could glean from this story, and what Blax thought it meant. They always had to think of things from at least those two angles with him around, and it took time and cognition; it was a load that insouciant men do not ever carry; their intellect used only for things they *must* do, as they off-load all moral work to reflex or other men.

But the Jacks had to think about it all; they had to reinvent each wheel again. They had the cognitive capacity, the speed of propagation along the neural lines, the conductivity. But, it was taxing, and it fatigued the mettle as often as it strengthened it; and nobody gives a shit about the extra load men like that take on. It's silent and hidden work, done between the ears of an opaque skull, behind dark eyes and grim visage.

Silly men take it for granted that the great moral questions are worked out by other men, not them, and they just stride into a culture with this shit all worked out, like children who take no thought for how the food in front of them is brought to their plate, why on their heads it seems not to rain.

Blax thought of the way intellectuals take the working class for granted too; the way buildings stand and oil gets extracted and roads get built by large proletarian men, the way these men get taken for granted by people like that vapid girl Helen -a Harvard girl no less, a silly-ass female who had never done one day's hard work and had begged and received charity; had more free money thrown at her than a stripper- who had told him to muse instead on his *privilege* when he

told her how the white working class had been destroyed by modernity. She had the arrogance of the corporeally sound, those who had bodies still intact, souls unabraded by true malice. She had spoken to him as if they were the same species, like a worm upbraiding the bird. She was criminally stupid and had no idea how evil she was, but she would soon learn, he thought as her address was added to their expanding list.

Each and all ignore the other's burdens, it seems. But Blax was a man of both *milieu* , a worker, and intellectual, so he knew each side and how each side was ignored, maligned by the other. He stood between the warring factions, a war all on his own along the DMZ, the corpus callosum of each hemisphere. And he'd upbraid them both, them all. He fight against both side's ignorance of the other's ontological worth.

And one -maybe more- of the Jacks began to think that this is why men of substance who make moral compromises and do the things that average men, modern men, think are bad, and wrong and blah blah, this -one or more of those Jacks thought- is why these substantial men hold everyone in such contempt. Because like children who critique their fathers for doing *immoral* work to provide for their families yet gobble up each bite of meat and cake they are given for free, the *bourgeoisie and nihilists both* lap up the moral milk that great men provide with dastardly deeds. The middle class survive inside the walls that the rough work -by rough men who slit throats in the night and fumigate the filthy corners of the world in ways that torture them long after the work is done- that the rough work lays foundation for, then builds and maintains.

Everyone knows *Draconian -and how awful that is-* but not *Draco* , the first man to finally lay down the law so some kind of order could fucking rise from the chaos heretofore.

To do anything great, first monstrous things must be done, this is the rule of law. The Jacks each took turns thinking things like, *nothing can grow amongst the uncleared forest, and man first clears the land of other men, this is what he does* . And they'd take turns thinking that if anyone thought anything had changed since day one on this cannibalistic planet then that person was too a part of the problem, *you are one of the silly men,* they'd think, *you the bourgeoisie, the pampered children of society in the soft bodies of men of age 50, with minds no more developed than a boy of age just three.* They knew the data on moral reasoning and how only one of each ten men reached levels above mere conformity on The Standard Issue Moral Judgement Interview. One in ten could do moral reasoning themselves. That was it. The studies showed it. And society

looked just as you'd assume from such a fucking stat.

Blax and his Jacks were told it was the only way to restore that culture, the way a fire clears the way for new growth, undiseased, stronger than the last generation, uncluttered with fallen trees, deadwood. And they had seen the logic and the data and the math beneath. They knew the fire did not speak, it burned, the deluge did not enjoin, it drowned. And they had found their own bodies - their own endocrinology- on the other side of the equal sign of all this evidence in near perfect, sonorous, corporeal accord. They knew for what they were born.

They were told, and had every reason to believe -because they too had seen the evidence, the cracks, the mold and withering, the atrophy and entropy, they saw the corruption of the society, unlike insouciant men who play with their step-kids and focus on their stupid fucking jobs while the whole culture rots- the Jacks had every reason to believe that something radical had to be done to save it all. And they knew they'd be racked with guilt and that nobody would believe them when they said it was not merely for personal gain or vandalism, but that they had a 3-part move that was seemingly destructive, but complicated and yet benevolent at the bottom of some corvid heart.

The surgeon cuts off the limb, is he a maniac? they often asked the society by which they were ignored. *No, he is trying to save the man by removing the gangrenous appendage.* Is everyone so stupid they cannot see the difference between the act of a surgeon and an axe murderer? *Well, sometimes a culture needs its rotting limbs removed so it can save the body whole*, they each thought in their own way and at different times and different speeds in language slightly modified.

And maybe, they'd think, *after modern man learns how to clean their wounds and care for cuts and scrapes, so they do not go septic in the first place, we can return their limbs to them* . But, modern man is so irresponsible, so careless that he lost the right to great things, evidence of great cultural works, the juice that flowed from the tended vines. Modern man had lost the right to carry on as if the whole house was not engulfed in fire and smoke. He was using water for diluting spirits instead of dousing the flames; he was being irresponsible and needed some pain to remind him of his duty to the house he lived within.

And yet modern man cannot be reasoned with, he cannot. He must be slapped and shaken from his drunkenness and ecstatic revelry; he must be held by lapels and hear: *Hey, cocksucker, you're ruining the world, if you don't stop we will all die lonely and bereft of meaning; it's a Hell on earth we are creating. And since you won't stop it, we shall fucking stop you.*

Well, smart men listen to men smarter than they; this is the hallmark of intelligence. And Isaiah knew what man needed; he had peered as far into the future as he could and had come up with a plan; and it was with love in his heart, not malice, almost no malice at all. He wanted to restore man to his place as wise father, as steward of this magnificent world and epic culture. *It was tough love* , yes, *but it was love* , Blax thought.

Isaiah could have killed us all, he had the power, but he was a moral agent, and he wanted what was right , Blax thought as the men were staid and still. But modern man sees right as wrong and wrong as right, how many examples do we need? *We give kids Ritalin instead of staying married to their mother and rough-housing with them, we spend more money on imprisoning people than in providing for them a meaningful job that they could take pride in and become half-way decent, we spend more on sports and drugs than on art and meaningful human connections, we lie far more than we tell the truth.*

We reward corruption and the shallow, we punish honesty and depth of soul. We yell at a dog for running away and we beat him when he returns. We send our kids to schools we know are indoctrinating them in Marxist ideology and where they are likely to get shot, and when they return to us radicals and autocratic leftist scum or riddled with bullets we say, "If only I had known!"

It's a lie. We already know, we just care more about our careers and free time and ease-of-life than our kids . Modern men made money, *ah, precious money,* they each thought. They each felt in their own time and own way.

The *Spartan* used to teach their own kids, in the *agoge* , which was a blend of martial training and a classical liberal arts education of moral teachings and literature. *Why,* Blax thought, *do we outsource the education of our children to left wing scum that indoctrinate them and get them killed with lax safety and ignored warning signs? The same reason we outsource hard labor to illegal aliens that undercut our working class, the same reason we outsource vehicle maintenance instead of changing oil and tires ourselves: we're lazy and we are corrupt.*

And yet, we just -in a huff- insist this is the way modern life is, and nothing can be done. And that is why Blax's Jacks did what they did, to prove two things: *one, in can be done differently if you show some balls; and two, if you don't change it, life will change it for you. You think you're so smart and wise and safe, you bray that you don't go to biker bars? You just wait, the bikers will come to you.*

No culture can survive when nobody knows how to fix plumbing or weld or dig a

ditch themselves. Most of our lives are predicated on work and objects that are hundreds or 1,000s of years old. 99% of our lives are comprised of the ancient, and yet we think we all only need to learn to code and sell shit . The truth is that the world needs no more salesmen, America is already a nation of 350 million used car salesmen, all phony as fuck and ingratiating as whores, Blax thought as he spit away a feral hair from his beard that had migrated passed the lips.

They had heard the Governor's remarks, the upbraiding, the insults, the stupid shit he said on the stupid fucking television. Isaiah had sent the file an hour ago after their last job had angered the whole world. Blax had fumed as he listened to this politician, this asshole, rant and rave about not just the Jack's crimes but how he -he of all people- was going to hunt them down and wipe them out. *It was enough to make a headless cat laugh,* Blax thought.

Blax agreed with Isaiah, America needed an enema, it needed a return to basics, and the Jacks gave them one. *It was for all your own good ,* he said to himself. *You ought to be grateful instead of spiteful and angry and wagging your stupid fucking fingers, but you won't. Not until you grow up; and that will finally happer now. Because, there is a new sheriff in town, and you will act like a man or you will be crushed.* "The Gay Parade is over; lock and load motherfuckers," he said aloud as he looked out on the forest and the hail -the deer had finally scattered and hid- he looked from the narrow steel walls of the hi-cube container and the Jacks did not even look up at him, for they had been thinking the same thing too.

7. I Lack My Proper Men

The Standard Issue Moral Judgement Interview score ranks a subject in one of five successively more complex stages of moral reasoning. These modes of moral reasoning include pre-conventional levels (stage 1 obedience and punishment orientation; stage 2 instrumental purpose and exchange); conventional levels (Stage 3 interpersonal accord and conformity; stage 4 social accord and system maintenance); and postconventional levels (stage 5 social contract, utility, individual rights)

Studies suggest that by age thirty-six 89 percent of middle-class American Males have developed to the conventional stage of moral reasoning and 11 percent to the post-conventional stage

Descartes' Error [Damasio, Antonio]

In honor cultures, turning to a third party when you've been insulted or offended indicates weakness or cowardice and lack of self-respect. In honor cultures, people are expected to handle their own business

Why Honor Matters [Sommers, Tamler]

And he who hath to be a creator in good and evil – verily, he hath first to be a destroyer and break values in pieces

Thus Spake Zarathustra [Nietzsche, Friedrich]

I. 2040 e.v.

The bank was perfectly covered in snow; no footsteps had blemished it. The water barely sloshed upon it and remained stoic as the still falling embers and larger pieces of detritus, some aflame some merely singed, pierced its surface. The fallout, once below the liquid horizon, began to wobble and slow as it was pulled toward the bottom.

He was upright and positioned as if sitting in a chair; an invisible, merely effluvial and protean throne. His knees were bent; his arms out and also bent at the elbow with hands loosely clenched in front of him. His eyes were closed. His mind was processing three data points and had shut down his conscious interface until it had some reconnaissance he could act upon. He was three meters below the surface, but his lungs did not reflexively breathe in. His blood had been oxygenated sufficiently to stay submerged at this depth for 27 more minutes. He had a broken ulna on his left forearm; a 14cm cut on his left flank just outside the margins of the *Dethhead* tattoo that ran from his armpit to well below his hip.

The blood droplets, escaping the wound underwater, hovered around the cut like school of fish around a coral reef; darting and circling in tandem like a single

organism. The gash itself flapped a bit around its edges like sea anemone in the underwater currents.

Lyndon, the man they all called LT, had only a pair of black boxer-briefs on and a black chronometer on his left wrist. The underwear swaddled him and his thighs were slightly pinched by the banding; his waist, too, was snugged. Pieces of his home fell slowly all around him, braked by the viscosity of the water.

His comrade lay on his starboard side, also unconscious, nine meters northwest of his enthroned position.

That man had a much larger fissure in the skin from the right shoulder across his pectoral and it was allowing blood to gush out of the Lt's number 2. His own PG coder was slowing the heart rate and sending respirocytes to the wound capillaries and vascular zones to attenuate blood flow. His pulse/ox levels were sufficient for eight more minutes at this depth before respiration would be needed. His blood had been spurting out from the wound like an underwater thermal vent; plumes in a pillar, roiling, as if too focused on upward and outward progress to disperse beyond the tight nimbus column. As the nano-bot blood-cell analogs arrived at the wound site, as if the earth of this man himself had run out of the sanguinary fluid, the column collapsed and the vent in his chest seized and refused to produce. The once rocketing plume lost its propulsion and slowed and the blood cloud began to disperse in the cool lake water like a storm moving on across their own horizon above the lake bottom at 8751 feet.

At 4-degrees Celsius the lake held the men, their blood, the flotsam and jetsam of the home, in slowed viscous time; a Relativity event that gave the earth and its pieces time to think and adapt; time to regain homeostasis as the water itself found its own level.

Lyndon’s PGC picked up his comrade’s signal and calibrated his own system check; which now included the seven minutes left on the other man's oxygen levels in addition to his own timeline to be safely submerged. Priority one was preventing any blood loss or organ failure in himself; he was the omphalos of the wheel; his subalterns the spokes.

The concussion of the blast had thrown him several meters from the home and into the lake, all of it, the men, the shrapnel, all clearing the beach, leaving it unblemished. Massive contusions on his flesh were evident but both lungs were

inflated, and the spleen, liver and heart were all unaffected. The brain and skull seemed normal as the coder scanned for blood clots, fractures and interference with synaptic response.

A small dent in the base of the skull was detected and inflammation response was now present; the coder sent NSAIDS to the region to reduce swelling and any impingement on the blood vessels or nerves. It also increased blood flow there by using a phalanx of respirocytes to oxygenate the region; hastening repair of the damaged capillaries. It was certainly a concussion, but the coder was keeping him in the non-response coma for now to prevent any movement; under normal conditions he would have regained consciousness by now.

A coterminous priority matrix in the three remaining aerial drones undamaged in the explosion were scanning the larger area for threats and sending the data to Lyndon's PGC. There were no active humans or predatory animals moving within 1,000 meters; and his body was not being moved by water flow or other natural phenomena, so he was in no danger of being damaged by movement. His respiration was turned off; thus, drowning was abated. The falling debris was scanned as too small and diffuse to penetrate the water surface with enough force to damage him if he was struck at this depth. And the water in the lake was read as non-toxic to skin, eyes or mucus membranes. No fuel, poisons or toxins were detected .

The secondary priority was measuring blood sugar levels and brain glucose; both were within nominal parameters. A full psychological matrix was run; this included cortisol and epinephrine levels which had been high during the moments leading up to and during the explosion. The coder leveled those out so that his brain state would be relatively calm upon re-emergence from the medically induced coma. The hypnopompic chemistry and frontal lobe depression associated with sleep emergence would be waived by the PGC so he could operate fully with no sleep-inertia once the systems were back online.

Lyndon would also be given his comrade's location in the water and his status, which included blood oxygen levels and trauma matrix report, so the Lt could make a human-level decision as to further priority action.

The Lt released some CO2 *via* the lungs due to hydrostatic pressure on the chest and abdomen, and as the bubbles rose from his lips a slight change in his buoyancy was effected. He began to slightly lift from his seated stance as if

rising from this imperceptible throne to greet a visiting dignitary or rebuke the Fool of the Court. The hairs on his body rose and separated like seagrass waving in rhythm with the lake's own flora so that from a distance -as his skin blued from the constricting capillary response to the cold- he began to disappear as a once foreign object, and now appeared almost native to this fecund lake bottom.

The Ph of the lake water was 7.7; the atmospheric CO2 sequestration pumps were as still as his eye lids; his coder de-prioritized this macro level II concern but uploaded the data onto his downtime notepad program. The Ph of his blood was 7.33; dropping slightly with the buildup of CO2; still within nominal range and compensated for with some buffering by the plasma proteins taking on H+ ions. The coder decided to allow some further CO2 release and then reboot his conscious mind and allow him to make the trek to the surface as, and when, he saw fit.

The reticular activating system was reoriented by the coder.

His eyes opened and consciousness returned with an attenuated hypnopompic phase change. He looked at, then through, the distortion of the water and his fovea found his limbs and hands; he remained in his seated position and checked his PG matrix action list as it threaded through his conscious thoughts. He felt fine, but the data assured him he'd be sore once he left the weightlessness of this lake. His broken ulna had begun its repair process through calcification welding but he decided he would splint it anyway once on the surface.

He then checked the data inputs for his people. Harvey's pulse-ox reading was fine but his CO2 build up required him to be conscious in order to purge; and the Sgt was not just shut down by his coder but had taken a pretty severe head concussion and was not going to come online safely in the next five minutes. Lyndon turned his head, rose, and looked northwest and began to walk in that lumbering underwater way toward his Sgt; he closed the 9-meter gap without swimming.

Turned on his side the Staff Sergeant was well muscled, but sinewy and lacked the bulk of his Lieutenant; his skin was a blue tinged white like the Lt as he cooled in the water's bottom and the body constricted the surface vessels attempting to conserve body heat. His manifold blond hairs were matted down with mud; he must have tumbled and rolled onto his side. His legs were huge

and Lyndon had always envied them, even as his own had developed into massive logs themselves.

Many psychological studies done had shown that each individual carries the body image they have at the onset of puberty. If you're a fat kid at 14 you'll always feel like a fat kid, no matter what progress your actual body makes. And the Lt was a skinny kid his whole life and even now at 205lbs of hard, well worked muscle, he felt thin. He always pushed his endocrine system and weight training as if he needed to gain 30-pounds of muscle by the next equinox regardless of the reality of his large frame. He always felt more exposed, more vulnerable, around his, around these new iterations of his old comrades. They -his old friends, the first versions of his coterie- had known him as that skinny kid; like they knew his secrets of cowardice and humiliations and lies.

But this version, the Jason Harvey that lay on his side, unconscious and waiting to be helped by his Lieutenant, knew only this large and stoic and competent evolution of a man. The anxiety -and the reason for it- were Lyndon’s alone.

Lyndon scooped Harv up; bent low to shoulder the man using the water's buoyancy properties to get them both in the best position once on shore. Lifting straight up with his legs -and the buoyancy of the lake water assisting- the two men were now only a few meters from the surface and the shore; the Lt walked south toward the co-ordinates of his home. Looking up at the surface of the water he saw flickers of orange and red and white lights both constant along the horizon and as stochastic, mercurial, flashes along the vault of the heavens. The lake bed rose at almost a 1:1 slope now and their combined weight of 385 pounds began to cause his narrow feet to entrench in the soft mud. He splayed his feet as if walking on snow to offer the most surface tension, the most resistance.

His coder dosed him with 5mg of an endogenous narcotic analgesic for the pain in his contused muscles and the broken arm. 500mg of caffeine analog was parachuted in as a potentiator and to effect the next two hours of his downloaded mission. He had decided, before even seeing the house, to trek the 2,000 meters to the east of the compound to stash his Sgt and resupply; but his lack of boots, the rough topography and terrain, *and,* he thought, *carrying this heavy bastard, would make that mile seem like five.*

As his head broke the surface of the water the heat from the burning trees

warmed his front and the light from these flames lay down and then reflecting, got up, stood up, off the heavy snow pack all along the expanse. His land was now over 400,000 acres beyond the Colorado divide and there was nothing but conifers like Blue Spruce, Juniper Pine and, some islands of Aspen that stood up like hairs on and above the black of this large swath of Colorado skin. Low on the surface the scat, tracks and hint of the second largest elk herd in North America for many kilometers in each cardinal direction spread out as he walked out from under the lake.

His concrete, steel and carbon fiber home was atomized and now a mere black footprint of ruin was smudged in the snow and tree cover.

The air was filled with a fine black dust from the vaporized structure and the collateral damage of too close evergreen Pine and black and white Aspens. As the two men emerged from the lake that dust fell upon their wet bodies then ran in rivulets down and off their skin as the lake water mixed with it and was shed. The vexed admixture ran from the Lt's black tattoos as if they were melting or dissolving from his skin; yet the art remained despite this effluvial stream; remaining despite this leakage as if perpetually replenished from some inky source within him.

The tattooing coverage was so complete, monochromatic and uniform that it appeared as clothing: a fully black right pectoral, shoulder and right arm with only a worn cog-wheel terminus on top of his right hand with three holes in the tail and the *Emile Zola* quote, *Allons Travailler* , stamped into it; his left side was dominated by large squares and irregular polyhedrons of olive drab and black and gray in military digital camouflage pattern, broken up only by replica badging tattooing to look like patches sewn onto a BDU coat sleeve.

He had tattoos of patches of black runes and grey fishbones, and 7 of 8 Bushido values in white like raised scars.

The left chest was swamped with a huge tattoo patch in the shape of an *all-noir* scorpion, his medial deltoid had upon its center a circular patch with an Osprey head in cubist-style, it too in solid black. Within the perimeter of the tattooed patch lassoing the seahawk’s head was Shakespeare’s line from *Caius Marcius* , in *latin* : *Cur me vultis mitius; mendacium domino meo tibi vis naturae* .

Under the pectoral subsumed in stygian ink, with the right nipple, untattooed,

placed inside the black like an opaque eye in the head of a relieving Leviathan, invigilating the tableau of his body -just below the lowest layer of that monolithic tattoo- ran the script like the trailing but taut rope of the harpoon in its flank: *Immortal then; immortal on land and sea...*

His legs moved above his feet and his feet moved on and through the snowy shore; each thigh had a downward flying *Valravn* , one black and one dark grey; holes drilled in where hearts would lay; ink spatter and running drips as if empty holes could bleed.

His body's run-off water ran to his leg, and those legs were just now sloughing off the lake; the streams of blackwater began to stutter and break apart into imbricate -then lone- drops as they were shed from his advancing gait. Two slate and lamp-black pineapple grenade tattoos grasped his calves, bannered with *fuck* on his left calf and *off* on his right.

Bleak, tenebrous portraits of first The Author, ribboned with a quote on the blackness upon his left hamstring; on his right, George Klauba's avian Ahab populated the skin. The lettering, *for me the white whale is that wall; shoved close to me*, was tattooed in American typewriter font around the harpoon, red hand and black hat of the fowl autocrat. All these marks ran with the same liquid and dim soot as his body above; and still all these black-cowled scars retained their saturation. He walked with a slightly wider gait now to help balance his load.

The fires burned in the snow in a ring and all along the shore; so, he edged east around and away from them toward the GPS beacon 1409 meters from his current position. He strained under the weight and the increased respiration and muscle catabolization triggered an augmented testosterone dump of 50mgs. This increased muscle strength and attenuated pain and soreness associated with fatigue and muscle failure. It also improved mood function as the PGC read the brain feedback report noticing some inhibited dopamine reception. It added a recursive dopamine dump as the testosterone made its way from the glands to his brain .

The Lt had shut off his own recursive thought pattern, choosing to allow only the priority command items to enter his cognitive field: a loop of body awareness, environment and vector awareness and updates on Sgt Harvey. Additionally, he sent out GPS and status pings for his other people every 45 seconds but decided

to shut off any non-response updates to avoid the increased cortisol and epinephrine dump associated with fear and loss; an endogenous response to the unknown of fear, anxiety and increased risk-taking were unhelpful to him now. In the event of a signal acquisition he'd be notified; only good news would be relayed for now.

He could not afford to feel depressed or sad or terrified; or take unnecessary risks due to the feeling of anger or isolation in the face of a superior enemy. And his coder would do for him what his brain would not, on its own, be able to do.

The tree cover thickened as he advanced, and he began to weave slightly between the *Poisson* distribution of these Pines; creating a slalom effect. In his mind short bursts of images of him snowboarding the continental divide off US 6 near Loveland -then in the backcountry along Berthoud Pass; then again in the off-grid areas of Rabbit Ears pass near Steamboat- all staccato style entered and exited his thought pattern despite the governor the coder had been asked to employ. He shook his head as if they were flies swarming his ears or cobwebs sticking to his face. But those webs of emotion and incipient feelings clung to him and the swarming flies of images stuck to that lattice work thus spun.

He remembered the freedom he felt on that soft deep powder, the *frisson* of being in nature and away from the *cuidad* . He seemed a totally different, inchoate person in his memories; barely embryonic of his current full wing-span self. Even then he had known that his idea of fun was beginning to depart from the people around him. He could not find joy where they did and they, too, saw none in his pursuits.

Those trips into the wilderness were reconnaissance for him; he knew he was preparing to leave the city; and leave the entire gestalt phenomenon of the collective experience. *He was no good at parties,* he said to himself and smirked. It all seemed like forced merriment; like people hung out and did things to prove to each other they were having fun; but no actual joy was felt. He doubted this rebuke of people immediately.

They did laugh; they did bounce around like electricity shot through them each time another person acted like a clown or paid attention to them even in the most casual of ways; they shook hands; back slapped and grinned at each other like baboons. *Maybe they actually did enjoy each other; maybe they weren't faking it,* he admitted. *He, too, had social impulses, but they just weren't able to be*

fulfilled by the class of people he knew, or had known. Maybe the kind of person he needed just wasn't invented yet; maybe he wasn't yet who he needed to be either .

That humility and self-critique brought him back to reality; he began to shift his weight in preparation for the oncoming slope of the forest.

He began the descent down a 10% grade threading through the thin Aspens that grew on this eastern slope. They were white too like the snow on the ground they punctured, and in the aggregate the Aspen's black scars looked like a negative image of time delay shots of the cosmos: the all black void blurred with idiopathic stars and nebula. But here the unlit tiger stripes of the trees were the only source of dark depth against the increasingly menacing white and wrinkled brow of the snowbank and white Aspen foreground .

He looked down as his left leg buckled slightly in the dry snow; he saw holes off to his left like piercings in the skin of the surface snow; a small mangled twig rising from one like the corkscrew barb that *Queequeg* described to his captain. "Elk," he said aloud as he looked up from the tracks that seemed to continue on away, then behind him; turning his head any further would shake his tenuous balance. He pressed on.

He was 989 meters away now; his feet were so cold and themselves harpooned with small twigs and brambles; the flotsam and jetsam of the forest floor. Frost bite would normally be a concern but the coder would send respirocytes to increase blood flow to the feet despite the corollary heat loss that normal blood flow restriction was designed to vitiate. It was a matter of re-prioritizing long term health over short term loss of homeostasis. *Evolution,* he thought, *never seemed to think long-term; only in terms of short-term gains; not that it thought at all, of course* .

But if those short-term gains weren't good enough to promote long-term advantage then those gains would not be realized in the genome. That is the irony of biology. *Private vice; public benefit,* he thought. His coder imbibed this novel thought, Lyndon had not had it before and so the coder's blocking of analysis of his many recursive thoughts did not obtain to this. It then uploaded the *Fable of the Bees* and the Lt streamed it quickly as he continued to plod on with widening gait as the slope leveled out and his comrade folded more completely over his shoulder; Harv's arms welded to the Lt's flank; his legs now

rhythmically tapping his buttocks and hamstrings in time with Lt's stride.

“*Bare Virtue can't make Nations live in splendor; they that would revive a golden Age, must be as free for Acorns as for honesty* ,” the Lt said aloud as the words populated his head. This last line rang in him pleasantly as he thought of Ahab mocking Starbuck’s *mere unaided virtue* as an impotent Christian luxury; the desire to be *good* in the abstract while failing to do anything that might require one's hands to get dirty. *And maybe dirty hands weren't so bad Starbuck, dirty hands that might be washed eventually; after the whole body could recline in the larger resulting good that the hard labor of those hands had wrought* , he thought. But, now, a phrase in the middle stanzas piqued him, *but Kings, that could not wrong, because their Power was circumscribed by laws* .

He turned that phrase over and over like a pig on a spit-stake. Did Mandeville mean like Alexander Pope that, *whatever is, is thus right?* Was there no distance between fitness and truth? Did he think we all sovereigns and not ruled by kings -but are kings- and did he mean natural law when he spoke of laws? He had spent 20 years -he thought- building and building, sacrificing to build that refuge that was blown up and destroyed in less than a minute. *And in between each roof raising, each nail embedded, each weld, each yard of concrete poured, each structure pored over, each dollar spent, shit, each dollar earned, he had, like Fedallah underdecks, kept thoughts of ruination and destruction close as cards - did he sleeve jacks or aces?* he wondered- *under his clothes* : cards unused as unneeded as the deck kept dealing him winning cards; but grinning at the odds maker under his furrowed brow and sarcastic scowl.

He was 303 meters from the *rendezvous* point now. The ash and smoke had stopped swirling around him as he was now far upwind of the blast. However, it was 0726 hours and the forecast for snow was correct; it was as if those looming grey clouds were disintegrating on these men, and on the trail ahead and their path behind.

He recalled a conversation he had once; many years back. It landed on his brain like the snowflakes perched on his eyelashes; an annoyance disproportionate to their mass; disproportionate to the thousands of problems he had walking barefoot with an unconscious and injured comrade on his shoulder away from the blast site of his annihilated home. It's the little things that matter they say.

“You never want to give a man like me nothing to lose,” he had said to his

business partner Michael Swinyard.

“Why would I do that?” Michael had asked insouciantly.

“Not you, I mean, *you* in the indefinite or impersonal pronoun sense. One shouldn’t give a man like me nothing to lose. And Jeff, if he decides to take the scorched earth approach by calling the cops, then he’s essentially giving me nothing to lose.”

“You could still lose your freedom,” Swinyard said in this memory and the 1,000 times Lyndon had recalled this conversation.

“That’s my point, if he puts me in the jackpot and I lose my business and do time; when I get out I will have to do something. Because it’s not like I’ll have a million bucks and a loyal *coterie* of friends and lovers waiting for me. I’ll be destitute and frankly, revenge is; well, it’s something I *kinda* thrive on anyway. It's my *métier* ,” of course he was talking about Jeff, but Michael knew it was a general -all-purpose- threat. It was the crescent wrench of threats.

The memory atomized and he saw snow and trees.

“I never gave a guy nothing to lose when I went to war with him; unless, as I pointed out to Kat one day, I was willing to kill him,” Lyndon said now in a new reverie. Michael and that memory faded and morphed like a centaur from bull to man. “These are the rules. You cannot humiliate and enfeeble a man in war unless you kill him. If you’re going to allow him to live, you must give him something to live for or he’ll be at your throat once strong again. These are *Treaty-of-Versailles* lessons; how to prevent the Nazis from taking power 101.”

He stopped walking and adjusted Harv on his shoulder. He breathed in deeply and felt the cold air scour his nostrils and throat and lungs. *Why was his PGC allowing these idiopathic thoughts to even come across?* He began to reflexively re-send the protocol command but stopped and thought, *why is the coder malfunctioning; is it damaged; is it even malfunctioning; or did I toggle out of direct-action protocol? Jesus* , he thought, *it was the least talked about and the best part of these coders: the ability to limit or eradicate discursive, recursive, idiopathic thought streams.* The crazy non-linear, nonproductive and demoralizing chatter of the un-aided brain was what every human lived with 24/7 before these coders shut them down, but everyone focused on the self-diagnostics for medical and metabolic protocols, the interconnectivity with

others *via* an internally embedded internet connect; the GPS locator, the rapid data acquisition and download.

I guess nobody wanted to admit that the way their brain used to work was tantamount to crazy talk; but the reality is they were almost sane now. The chatter, the endless stupid self-defeating chatter was gone anytime one wanted it gone. But why the fuck was the coder allowing these memories in? Lyndon asked himself.

He re-sent an action command to limit conscious thought to priority one and two protocols. Harv's bio-feedback ran from tip to top; pulse-ox; blood Ph; blood sugar; brain glucose; respiration and BP. Next, micronutrient levels and electrolytes levels. Then a ping on Bugzy flashed on his PGC interface.

Location was 34 meters from building #4 and moving south by southeast at 9 kilometers an hour. Vitals within parameters; brain function nominal as well. Lyndon felt a swell in relief and pride at his Master Sergeant and felt the lachrymose eyes begin to occlude his vision; he then thought Bugz's coder could have been damaged or hacked and that that ping could not be him at all; *never mistake the map for the terrain* , he remembered from Sgt Goff. He ignored any thoughts of why he had not heard from Chen's coder.

Lyndon sent a coded message to Bugz with a location ping and the text: *You're up; Harv's down but not out; I'm 90%. Hit me back with code 94 access and I'll send our 20.*

He'd reached the buried shipping container; his cache of what he'd need to re-supply for a few days in the storm. He set Harv down on the cold dirt berm by the heavy doors; he pulled the old analog key from around his neck to open the lock.

II. 2008 e.v.

He got out of the shower of the 5th wheel, it was like a phonebooth and he hated it. He walked -without bothering to dress- to the window of the slide-out in the living room of the travel trailer he had set-up in on the pad. They worked and lived on location, and rarely -if ever- left. Supplies were trucked in and one's life was the work; and the work was here in the valley below four-corners of ridges in the *Piceance* at almost 8,800 feet. It all smelled like diesel and sounded like

the straining of machines over the men themselves.

He had worked to 2200 hours tonight; they had tripped out and repaired the mudtank all at the same time, so he and Harvey had worked together from 1800 hours to then. Once it was fixed, he had watched as Harv climbed to the crow's nest and began racking back what was left of the string. He had to be up in five hours for his *tour* , and he felt himself floating just above the ground. Fatigue like this made a man meet his other side; as if the second man inside took over at some point and shook hands with the world as the first personality sat down and stopped hiding this other man for awhile and just hoped it went alright.

He tried to look up to the stars but the angle wasn't right. He stared straight out into the black and began musing on what commanded his insides the way work commanded his corporeal frame.

Too much is made of great men's defects, he thought, then amended, *or not enough is made of the connection, the welded joint that these abrading traits have to the very traits that make the man great in the first place. People want all lumber and no sawdust, all quick and powerful movement and no exhaust, all progress with no violence,* he thought. He let his mind wander to the darkness and was glad for the cool of the water still left on his skin; he didn't notice the shadow cast from his head on the wall .

There are few great men who can be good men too. This is like asking the sun to burn hot for a billion years but turn cool for the night. No, he thought, *this Star is permanently enraged and boiling, it's the job of the earth to turn away when it can't suffer any more of its heat. The public needs to accept the men -men who have built everything they see around them- accept them as they are; and acknowledge it to themselves at least; and be grateful these men are driven to do it. This mollifying honesty might temper most folk's opprobrium and beta burblings* , he thought, *it might dampen their smirking and shaking at the arrogance and accomplishments of men they could never be.*

Our culture is like a gang of children, teenagers who are certain they could do a better job than their own parents at anything under the sun; shit, just ask them. The fact that they have everything they have because of these chided primogenitures -of Adam- and the fact that these brats have never accomplished anything on their own yet, seems not merely irrelevant to these tongue cluckers - these puerile protestors- but almost appears as a pure badge of honor. Their lack

of accomplishment is to be brayed about because -to hear them tell it- they have never had had to sell-out to this world, and of course we all know this means they never will.

Beta-males and women, he thought even as he knew it was too broad a brush, but he was exhausted and he had no energy to make caveats and exclusions right now*, these fucks are like toddlers and children, they never have to make the hard choices that real men make every day. And these choices have led us here, like it or not, with ever expanding and increasing life-span and wealth and knowledge and communication and durability of institutions and peace.*

By every metric poverty is down, life span is up, violence is down, liberty up, inequality between races and sexes is down, access to information is up. And where there are still these remnants of poverty, tribal retributive violence, 18th century life-spans, inequality between the sexes and ignorance so shocking it seems unbelievable, these places are held static by the spike in the windlass; held up from progress by religion and atavism and the bowing of the head to ancient gods , a 34-year-old Lyndon thought. But he did remind himself of the corneal blind spot, and how man's visual cortex fills in the gap with lies as he felt tired -inside his exhaustion- and eager to sit down.

The irony , he continued, *is that these romanced olden cultures are infinitely more patriarchal and undemocratic and their moribund technological progress is directly related to their lack of social progress. If you want women to thrive, you need to set the creative power of alphas free, unfettered by stoic and intransigent religion and pusillanimous Naturalism* , he went on in his head. *Nature is trying to kill us and has succeeded for millennia; we're lucky we've lived long enough to rut at all. The average human life span was 25 for all but the last 1,000 years of homo-sapien's history; that's no more than 10% of our time as a species; more like 2.5% of it.*

Microbes and cataclysmic assaults from the sky as meteors plumed the feral globe like strafing from a cosmic attack-ship; prokaryotes below us and flak from volcanoes above; predators as small as scorpions and as large as Leviathan itself; mosquitos delivering disease and your psychopathic neighbor delivering a blow in the night because his unlettered mind was certain you had cast a spell on his crops as starvation and exposure wiped out your whole clan. 30% of deaths came from violence in the ancestral environment and the myth of

Typee and Rousseau is 100% dead now, he said in his head and he meant it and he felt better already as his body was worn and battered but not devastated; and his soul too had almost a decade left before it gave out.

The good-old days were horrid, and they got better precisely because great men knew that a whole lot of this unmanicured earth and a great deal of dross in every species -including man- had to be bulldozed and fed into the maw of the machine; and no timid and moralizing, no unambitious and suitably grateful and dutifully pious, man could even fashion the dream that is the modern machine that has placed us all on the doorstep to immortality and unlimited knowledge. Everything would still be as low tech as a Spanish Windlass, if we hadn't gotten over our romance with the planet, he thought down in the night of the valley and within the noise of the rig.

Panait Istrati, he recalled now*, visiting the Soviet Union in the 30's of the last century had said, "I see all these broken eggs," when talking to some apparatchik regurgitating Stalin's famous remark, "but where is this omelet of yours?"*

As true as that is, he thought as the diesels began to ramp up and he could hear the *kelly* clank in the bell as reminder it was likely near the four-balls of midnight*, the fact remains that we have some decent scrambled eggs to eat each day.*

We need men who can smash things without compunction; yes, smash even people, as long as their goal gets us here from there; and there from here, he added. *As peaceful and stoic as an islander man may be, living in harmony with nature like his ancestors did, like his progeny will, that man will never build a future where death is banished, where all members of society can reach anything close to their full height as a creature, where humankind can gain true insight into what it is we actually are .*

He looked out over the night of the mountain and saw almost nothing but that flame of rig #3. As he watched it remain erect in the windless *noche* , he sat down in the chair by the window and drifted asleep without eating a dinner; he dreamt of slipping on wet sand out to sea.

III. 2020 e.v.

Isaiah sprayed the poppies with distilled water heated to 72 degrees. The sage

green husks beaded the water and the hummingbirds came and drank from each globule like 20th century phone operators plugged new lines, into new holes, to connect waiting calls.

The poppies were closed, a coxcomb hat of cellular growth at their apex, thin slices like tally marks on their distal effacement.

Some began to open, the red petals descending to pure black, looking clear and then the omphalos, a hair crown of thorns, guarding the yellowish closure of center. Isaiah watched them with their micro phototropisms bend in nanometers to the LED lights above them beaming with mixed spectrum lighting from blue to red and compressed back into white .

The white sap drained from four poppies he had vivisected and collected in pools at their base. He shooed away humming birds and wasps with his hand, freshly tattooed with black roans on each pad between each knuckle black with dark scabs.

He sucked up the sap with a hypodermic needle, 16g, and walked it over to the new machine he had built for synthesizing opiates from the raw material of the *Papaver somniferum* . It extracted the amber narcotic like one of those hummingbirds and processed it efficiently and quietly.

Isaiah -in his head- had read the inmate's essay on *Rimbaud* , as the centrifugal apparatus spun and MO tinkered with the 3D printer quietly on the other end of the concrete slab. He held it on paper in front of him as his eyes and mind read both the page and the digital copy on his interface again:

> On August 29th , 1870, *Rimbaud* headed north toward Belgium and changed trains in *Charleroi* ; arriving back in Paris on August 31st . Do you think the Islamists who shuttled back and forth along that route on November 19th of 2015 knew anything of *Rimbaud* or of poetry or of our Occidental tradition?
>
> Of course, *Rimbaud* was imprisoned for taking such a circuitous route to Paris on a ticket without sufficient funds. Into the *Mazos* Prison he went as the Prussians laid down the law in France after their defeat of Napoleon III. In those times the *avant garde* political philosophy of many inmates was the Anarchism of *Kropotkin* and *Bakunin* ; but now European prisons are filled with a kettle of Islamist fish and one wonders if -once they go in- it might not be better if they never come out.
>
> It's worth noting that while in *Charleville*, *Rimbaud* wrote letters complaining of a dearth of books, but by the time he left Paris he was beginning a *demarche* to the Mayor of *Douai* in similar anguish -but this time- over the

total lack of weapons.

Isaiah felt something of the inmate's soul in that, a desperation to connect disparate elements as if more knowledge might give him the entire truth of the world. As if some key was there in the words; some key to men gone mad from feeling too much in a world all dead -and tenaciously committed to being dead- to the man of heart.

He had it though, he had the truth, Isaiah thought, *even if in low-resolution . Like a tiger has the truth when he hunts on impulse and avoids man too without cause but just instinct. Sure, more detail, more connections, more data would give him a higher res pic; but he had it, and the truth was that man was unable to live on his own, and yet struggled and kicked against his fellow man until he was let go. Then man, he'd crawled back to his fellow man, and asked to be again let in. This was the truth, man was incapable of satisfaction; only yearning for whatever he did not yet have. Man was built to strive.*

Rimbaud was quoted as saying, *"I am of a distant race, my ancestors were Norsemen; they used to pierce their sides, drink their blood – I will cover myself with gashes, tattoo my body, I want to be as ugly as a Mongol… never show me jewels, my wealth, I'd want it spattered all over with blood."*

Isaiah knew the inmate had read that section, and Isaiah felt that the inmate had -somehow & someway- written those words first, 120 years *after* ; nothing seemed to come to him so purely as those words.

No , he then immediately thought, belaying the order, *no* , *it was Rimbaud who wrote them, like demiurge, he wrote them, and the words, they predicted the inmate, built him, spoke him into being* , Isaiah concluded in the snap of a 500th of a second. Now he felt he had the order right, the manner described, the truth delivered and transcribed.

And then -three months ago- Isaiah had built Blax; grown him from embryo and CRISPR-cas9/13 vectors, a synthesized and yet organic version, a back-of-the-mirror to the inmate; his *Huginn* to the *Muninn* of *Oðinn* Himself; of Isaiah's own two ravens. The inmate was *mars -black memory* , and Blax was *smoke -grey thought* , and they flew together -untethered- out over the world each day at the behest of the Great Maniac, the Fury, the poet and warrior and outlaw god, himself built by the first god, MO. MO was all head like God, who needed a soul to combat the pain of His creation -pain that nobody cared about, the pain of a god- and like the arch-angel, the Student of Revenge, Isaiah saw how best to fight pain and it was not with pleasure at all.

Isaiah settled on this at once as true in enough ways to be actionable.

Isaiah monitored relative humidity again as the morning glories opened and closed like baby-bird mouths and the wasps flew around the green wall in sorties hunting for larva. He lowered his own DMT dose to .004. He took a drink of water. He breathed.

Lyndon had been a trapped beast, a suspended solution, imprisoned far before being inmate 16180339 at ADX in Florence, Colorado, Isaiah thought. He had been frozen in some state waiting for the heat of the alchemical furnace to release his ancient DNA, a code that when truly read would be exactly as *Rimbaud* had written. He knew the alchemy of poetry as well as *Rimbaud* did; to speak it was to bring it forth and *Rimbaud* brought Lyndon forth like a *daemon* , a *spectre* from his *season in hell* . *These were the words both hidden from those that could read and overtly available to anyone with the illiterate's eyes,* he thought.

Lyndon had come to prison to be set free , Isaiah realized and smiled. He watched MO from a distance far in body -20 meters- but close in mind's eye. MO was his father, brother, rival, his god all in one. He was a genius and admirable, and to be defeated too. It was with almost no malice that Isaiah saw and thought this; the way mathematicians cross out numbers above; subsumed by numbers below. *Did not the man of science think thoughts designed to destroy errors in his own head? What was Isaiah if not a thought in MO's head?*

Isaiah removed the synthesized morphine and codeine from the titanium centrifuge -that was on his side of the lab, on his concrete slab- and he encapsulated it into seven clear pills. He walked to the middle line of the 3,300-square-foot lab and handed them to the inmate as he sat in the chair quietly, his central nervous system being scanned and read by MO for the rebuilding of the next phase of the model to repair the putative psychopath's brain.

"There is this line by *Nietzsche* that kills me," the inmate said as he took the pills in hand. "I mean all his lines kill me, but he has this one where he says, *mine eagle is awake and like me honors the sun. With its talons it grasps at new light. Ye are my proper animals; I love you. But I still do; I lack my proper men."*

Isaiah nodded as he read -in 1.011 seconds- the entire book that parenthetically hemmed in that quote and nodded more earnestly now. He measured the man's blood Ph and watched as the gene expression of the MAO-A/L was dormant, and blood sugar was being overpowered by insulin now. The inmate's over-all androgens were high: a 1,101 test score, and bio-availability of 560. Isaiah instructed a nanobot to adhere to the inmate's neck and injected a small molecule

that would augment the pituitary's production of TSH .

Isaiah had finished reading all of the literature on Chimpanzee -and Bonobo- troops; their individual blood work and fecal analysis from field work and the game theory data that had been layered on top of it in the previous decade. While many data points were still missing, it seemed to Isaiah as if a rudimentary model could be extrapolated out and placed on top of the v1.0 model of man from which he had designed and instantiated the v.2.2. He sent a signal to the embryonic ***b/ax*** fetus in the warm womb on his side of the lab.

The inmate sat in the chair and Isaiah -with eyes built and augmented now with 7.4 times the acuity of an osprey- could see the scars on his hands and the one over the brow and down -bypassing the eye- onto and into the cheek and jaw line. The heavy Scottish brow protected the eyes from such strikes he saw; whether from bear or mountain cat -as was the case with the inmate- or from a human enemy's sword. A heavy brow was ancient marker of what had gotten a man from there to here.

The inmate was covered in massive black tattoos, monoliths not images, oceans not islands, whole regions devoted to the *ein sof* of annihilation; *noir* -continents moving away and toward one another on the large predatory body that sat -erectly- in the chair. Isaiah watched it all and built inchoate theories and 3-layer metaphors and grand and hagiographic narratives with his right hemisphere; while his left made a map, flat and logical and clear.

The scar was an archipelago that began one inch above the hair of the eyebrow and then staccatoed down; stuttered to the side of the jaw. Isaiah watched as his model was built and then unfurled the *umbilicus* and began to synthesize it in human language:

> The chimpanzee alpha who is tyrannical is usurped by two betas ¾ his size. However, the maxim of *Nietzsche* is that *one who does not see the hand that kills through leniency cannot see at all* . The alpha chimp who fails to physically punish the betas if two betas form a gossiping cabal against him; fails to smash a beta offender who makes eye contact with one of the alpha's harem; and fails to beat about the head and shoulders any beta -or female- who throws rocks at him -as juveniles are wont to do- will too be usurped by a *coup* .
>
> That failure of that insouciant and liberal and blind alpha chimp produces usurpation as reliably as *tyranny* , within weeks of these magnanimities. Tyranny invites a *putsch* , as does liberality. The middle way, the *Tao* of the alpha is to use minimum necessary force. But force must be used.

The modern alpha male in human society has a large problem: the State is the actual -if abstract- alpha now. The State has monopoly on violence and has become the abstraction in the mind of the hundreds of millions of beta males who roam the large plain of the new environment.

And the modern State is both tyrant and lenient in all the wrong ways. And because the real life alpha -not an abstraction but a man- must live in the world, under this clockworks alpha, he suffers from the tyranny and leniency both; and most severely. The alpha has always borne, shouldered, the heaviest burden of his society, his troop, his tribe. But now he is suffering unduly; and this is why: he cannot win no matter which strategy he uses.

The way betas test authority is known. Chimps throw rocks, they conspire in little gangs, and they walk too closely to the alpha or make eye contact with one of his brides. They test him this way. It is a 3-phase strategy -like the crafty corvid he works in threes- and it works. First the betas gather around one another -a beta male sewing circle- and *talk shit* about the alpha male; then they watch to see what he does.

If he comes over and breaks it up with violence they take note.

If he fails to notice or notices and does nothing, they take note.

Next, they throw pebbles at him and take notice if he smashes them for this or not.

Their next ploy is to walk closely to the alpha, brushing shoulders when very bold; and they stare -in the open air- at a female and wait to see if the alpha notices or reacts with indifference, mere screeching, or with a fist to the beta face.

The betas take notes in their sub-cortical brains and make proto-notions in abstractions in their burgeoning simian neo-cortices. They plot in dreams and instincts and impulses low and gravid and ignoble.

In human societies it works the exact same way. Only now, the State is the alpha, and he is like *God -too high- and like the king -too far away* - to punish the plots of the usurping betas. They play their little beta-games and they do get away. They laugh and cluck their tongues and its real men -not the State- who suffer each day.

Beta males gather in groups almost exclusively. They gather and gossip; this is phase one. Once they have all agreed to make fun of the human alpha in their domain they get a boost of bio-*chems* that embolden them;

they get their inchoate ideas reified and ramified by the little beta group. Five betas can outmatch one alpha they think, and they behave as if this is true. Often it is.

They throw rocks in the form of assaulting the alpha's reputation, by spreading lies of his lack of honor. Then they watch to see if the alpha breaks up their cabals; their gossiping sewing circles; smashes them for these reputation-destroying rumors. They wait to see what the real-life alpha will do. Next, they make eye contact with one of his women, his wife or girlfriend or -if he has a harem- one of the lower status females within his orbit.

Then they wait to see what the alpha will do.

The State -the abstraction of the alpha for the human troop now- will do nothing, the State is *blasé* about such things. These are sub-clinical transgressions, they do not rise to the level of legal crimes, in the mind of the State. *They merely undermine the human alpha, not the State, not* Me *the State,* it is tacitly said in the mind, the ethos, the legal rationale of the powerful -but aloof- State itself.

The betas all notice this, and then they look to see if the human alpha will use violence or not. If he is sufficiently socialized, he will abjure. He will say -*it's not worth it* - because he knows the tyranny of the State will come down *only* on him; he also knows the State *will not punish* the betas if he is a good boy and does not smash their faces with his capable fist for their perfidy, their plotting, their attempts to steal his women. He knows the plotting betas will get away scot-free.

This was not always the case. The State used to countenance -or at least look the other way at- such retribution as the data showed in Nesbitt and Cohen and their analysis of the southern United States .

But in the 21st century, it will be the human alpha who pays the price for the violence; not the betas. The betas will be *poor victims* in court, and all the sympathy goes to them even as they plotted and schemed and lied and broke 1 million years of The Code of mankind and the apes. The alpha male will be jailed for long periods for his violence; violence previously sanctioned by Nature for 1 million years; 1 million years, at least.

The State is now vulnerable to charges of Tyranny by over prosecuting honor-violence, or retributive violence, and also the State stands condemnation for Leniency by under-punishing anti-social -*but not illegal* -

beta male behavior. The State does not punish lying, cheating, petty thieving and insulting of someone above the slanderer in the ancient biological chain.

The State is thus vulnerable itself to *usurpation* if this goes on.

The biological, the *embodied* alphas, the human alpha males alone in society, are first to suffer. Millions of them will be cuckolded, ruined, and then locked up if they react. They will suffer both from inaction or action; either way they are doomed. But eventually, the abstract alpha, the clockworks alpha -the State- will become undone too; for it rules too tyrannically on real alphas -punishing them harshly for natural behavior- and rules too liberally *vis-à-vis* betas -and females- by allowing them to engage in anti-social behavior that lacks the honor of the naturally upright alpha male.

All this exists -lives- in the math.

Betas are allowed to gossip, lie, destroy reputations, cuckold a man, and engage in petty thefts that police cannot be bothered to get involved in. Beta male -and female- behavior wears away like the wind and rain and sea on the vulnerable, lee-shore, rocks of the coastline of man. They erode society with these daily, unchecked, unpunished, sanctioned affronts to the alpha creed and code. They get away with it. And this emboldens them; and plots more and more ornate and ambitious are made.

Plots against real alpha males in real time, and increasingly against the clockworks alpha -the State- itself begin to emerge from both sides. As above, so below, as it goes…

Isaiah filed his report to his own database but did not upload it to the cloud. He had wanted to think on this for awhile longer, even as he moved forward with his plan.

The plan was not to be interfered with even if he -at some later date- decided the rationale for it was no longer actionable. Other things could be done with the raw material he was creating, forming, giving sanction to be made in the world.

8. B / ax Flower

Without the capacity for aggression you're not going to get any respect. That doesn't mean people have to fear you; but it does mean you have to incorporate your capacity for aggression enough so that they would fear you if you wanted them to. And if you think about it, that makes a lot more sense from a moral perspective than the argument that you should be nice to everyone; because if you're nice to everyone merely because you don't have any choice because you're weak and ineffectual and harmless that's not a virtue; you just can't do anything else!

Harmless and virtuous are by no means the same thing. If, by contrast, you are capable of causing all sorts of terrible trouble and you know it and you know how, and then you decide not to do it because you can articulate -carefully articulate- a different route, well then you have the possibility for virtue. Because without the capacity to sin, there is no virtue in not doing it

12 Rules for Life Tour [Peterson, Jordan B]

We now call the positron the 'antiparticle' of the electron, because it turns out that Dirac's discovery was ubiquitous. The same physics that require an antiparticle for the electron to exist require one such particle to exist for almost every elementary particle in nature. Protons have antiprotons, for example. Even some neutral particles, like neutrons, have antiparticles. When particles and antiparticles meet, they annihilate in to pure radiation… Because antiparticles otherwise have the same properties as particles, a world made of antimatter would behave the same as a world of matter, with anti-lovers sitting in anti-cars making love under an anti-Moon. It is a mere accident of our circumstances, that we live in a universe that is made of matter and not antimatter or one with equal amounts of both

A Universe from Nothing [Krauss, Lawrence]

Primitive man is not much interested in objective explanations of the obvious, but he has an imperative need -or rather, his unconscious psyche has an irresistible urge- to assimilate all outer experience to inner, psychic events. It is not enough for the primitive to see the sun rise and set; this external observation must at the same time be a psychic happening; the sun in its course must represent the fate of a god or hero who in the last analysis, dwells nowhere expect in the soul of man

Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious [Jung, Carl G]

I. 2024 e.v.

Arising at 0345, the moon was fuzzy, dim; a crepuscular light breathed upon his land and the land's air and the air's fog rose high into the clouds. The wind had stopped, the black trees stilled; he noticed a slight pinch on his back and surmised that this pinch is likely what woke him.

He pulled out the sharp edge of the photograph that had been used as bookmark but had now been under him. He placed it upon the spayed book that lay next to his shoulder, among the .45 pistol and holster, among the extra pillows and rolled grey sheets and black divan; among the grit and sand in the bed.

He linked his music to the blue tooth speakers and began with *huaynaputina* by *Mogwai* at low volume, increasing over a 5-minute interval to come at rest upon

a slightly higher level from where it began. The music would rise in volume with he and the moon still in *perigee* .

He took inventory of his mind, and remembered the dream:

> *Alone, but aware of his two girls behind him, entering a restaurant, they all unwanted; unserved; wait staff annoyed. His mind on sushi; darkness shrouding the entrance to the kitchen; he faced it, stared into that double door of black and…*
>
> *There is not one person, indeed not one living being, that has not returned from death. In fact, we all have died many deaths, before we came into this incarnation. And what we call birth is merely the reverse side of death, like of the two sides of a coin, or like a door which we call "entrance" from outside and "exit" from inside a room. He had heard this, no, read this, on the table cloth, in Sanskrit that he could -for 161 seconds- be allowed to read.*

And then he had awoke.

He had been remembering things in small increments, and pushing them away as silly fantasies, as self-indulgent and paranoid. But, just now he allowed one idea to stick around and announce itself, *how opaque are most thoughts* , he thought, *they remain unnamed, un-spoken, this is how women think . Women think in dreams; dream-like clouds and haze; and what they must see.* He marveled at the other sex. He realized some women were rational though, and he immediately worried for their souls. These were modern women, as rational as bankers, and they had no children, no love, no lives.

Men had to be rational, they were designed -doomed- for it, but women -some women- chose it, he thought. He just saw that as odd as men taking estrogen and wanting to have tits that would never produce milk; for a child they'd never sire as they had no womb. He just wanted to be exactly what he was. No more and no less.

Mankind is the only creature to take images and turn them into reified language, abstract symbolic ideas, articulated , he guessed. *Animals dream, some even speak in proto language,* he thought of the prairie dogs who announce with chirps so subtle it takes a computer to delineate out that they have repeating sounds for which animal -human, pig, crow- and what color -red, black, white- and other concepts. *But they do have an almost language* , he thought.

All the clocks of nature seemed analog to him now.

He ruminated on this, and wondered about the building blocks of language, and

that for some humans, language must be, necessarily, further along in development than the rest. It stood to reason; and just because he was likely one of those for whom the bullet was farther along the arc of its elliptic, this was not a necessarily hubristic sentiment.

He still wondered about death. Was it his to dole out, was this his generosity -his capacity- bequeathed by God like to the wolf, the disease, the devil? Was he doing -or refusing- his duty when he abjured? Why did most men not see this debate? Did one have to be sane -or insane- to even question modern morality? Was he the only one who even asked anymore? Was he to be the black dot of courage -the advancing northern slope- to the white *yang* of cowards? Had he grown white himself on the southern side? Was he to be the black sun in the white sky? Had he failed to specify?

Some people are better at all manner of things, and an advanced language human would by definition feel things here articulated, there discreet, that others would not. And he -despite how others would feel- insisted, or maybe proffered, *authors were the greatest artist of them all* .

Most would obviously choose musicians, because that was most resonant with their own minds. Humans are more receptive to the innate numinous character of music, as language often dominates their left brain, their rational mind, the emissary. Music is felt in the right hemisphere; the master. Whatever the king likes the court likes too.

The symbolic, dream-like use of language is at a disadvantage because of the parts of the brain it uses for transmission and reception. But, when the right hemisphere can speak in language, then there is some chance to reach that part of man. Maybe he was just being chauvinistic about his only talent, if he was a musician he would agree with the mob, the righteous crowd's declaration that music was the real artistic *milieu* , and that language was too utilitarian for his placement of it in that high domain among the creative class.

He didn't believe that, of course, but he had to allow for the possibility*; in all things, possibility* . This is, in fact, one of the signs of a truly thinking person, the ability to move from impression, feeling, instinct, and engage in a dialectic with the self.

There was no rational mind *per se* , but you could at least ask the questions of the self that you would pose to someone else. And so, he asked, *do you overvalue language and all its conceits and constructions, what it builds in the minds of man, how it piques the interest and intersects with the natural world? Are you like* Milton's *student-of-revenge: in love with your own rationality and*

clear and sharp logic?

Is something missing from your analysis of what is true ?

Or is language helping you? Does it offer something, some tool, that you can use, to pry up the floorboards you once thought were at bottom of this craft of ours? Can one endlessly dig, or is it too an elliptic? Is it all an ouroboros asp, with chaos swallowing order and excreting out some amalgam of itself and what it refuses? Does, he thought, *DNA even have no bottom now, bootstrapping itself from its own RNA, which is itself made of proteins that are encoded* de novo*?*

He ran a diagnostic on his apoptosis regime, his endocrine, his other things unseen. He breathed. He watched the light appear in his mind if not from dark dawn.

He watched as his mind modeled each helix unzipped and fixed and then reattached, he felt the click of each protein match. There seemed a shimmer, a halo, a coronal glow; some ineffable thing to his genome. *How can a man truly look at himself?* he thought, *he has no reference, no perspective down in the ocean dips of relative swells. He sees only hills of sea; the land or any other ship, any vessel, might be close but he would never know as it falls as he rises and gains as he loses* .

He is stuck in a valley, an entropy basin, an attractor of the thing he is. *At bottom he would always be* , he thought as the light outside -unlike the progress of dawn- stayed the same color and brightness and brilliancy, as the moon moved the hue remained exact, no progress in light at this time of night. He stared instead at the inside of his lids and breathed once deeply to reset his pulse/ox levels.

The air was so thin up here; he a naturally shallow breather -*out of nervousness?* - he then asked. He allowed the respirocyctes to oxygenate his blood with twice-daily deeply taken breaths. He felt the redness return to his blood, the blood to his capillaries, the capillaries to the surface of their skin; his face flush again.

What was this thing, he asked*, this conceit, these images chiral that refused to meet?* Like puzzle piece and puzzle board, a bit above the whole, the whole enclosed. He heard *Voluminia* say to her martial Son:

> *You are too absolute;*
>
> *Though therein you can never be too noble,*
>
> *But when extremities speak. I have heard you say.*
>
> *Honour and policy, like unsever'd friends,*

I' the war do grow together: grant that, and tell me,

In Peace what each of them by the other lose,

That they combine not there.

His post-genetic coder hummed in steady state silence, its inertness is what moved him. It re-regulated all the things his sub-cortical regions did 99% as well; that extra 1% kept him optimal for any zone, any condition both inside and out.

It linked him to all the features of the house and each body part, to each thing once opaque to man, he could read the barometric pressure of air above his land. He could read the latticework of his teeth, his ribs, the mitochondrial cells strewn and aglow like stars in a dusty *nebulae* ; he could see his germline DNA.

Images produced by his PGC, turned to language in T, C, A and G. He added the other 22 of course, and with alphabet in hand and mind, he built his insides line by line.

Was such introspection, he thought, *some interoceptive hybrid ever possible before this, before such technology, did ancient man know this much of himself, tantamount to memetic biology?*

He saw sea beasts sleeping with their square heads down, like *Tursachan Chalanais* in cruciform wedding gowns; the blue of ocean as dense as universe immense, he felt crushed by the floe of ice and steam as the first submarines. He pushed into territory not meant to be seen, the place beyond the flaming swords of cherubim; east of Eden. He saw in this pelagic state, one leviathan bent and hewn like *Taulas* of *Menorca* on the outer wall, and asked *what relation is one to all?*

God , he thought, and meant just that: God!

He let the ideas flow over his river rocks and half buried bones, he pulled back and saw a topo map, he imagined himself now a feral, Ronin crow, with four sets of eyes fore and aft, two above and two below. The red of flesh the white of bone, the black of the imperfect, still unknown; the colors that rose from inner vibrations and machinations, he watched as his cellular growth was slowed and then sped up again to some music of metabolism and his 0400 somnambulism.

He knew it now, the landed corvid clear not black, he saw 1 million men with what he lacked. They could all see their progeny, and they could also look back and see each Jack and name them on each finger, with the thumb turned up, then down, hovering inches above the ground; their lips moved without a sound .

But he knew, he knew the words in their minds, they had revealed his thoughts in kind. He was new, too new to be 50, his aches and scars and overprotected heart, his memories of disastrous starts, his limp and limited range of motion, his compression fracture and brittle emotion, all had once been borne by someone else.

He -Blax thought- *had been an isomorphic not of the veldt , he was not born, but built, Rotam et Sacoma; wheels and weights. He had been shorn smooth by the Fates and regrew himself each day. Ah, this made him more -not less- animal, instinct over high thought now, that gravid sow; the perfect heart of machine; the logic of a dream* .

His lids opened once again, he was unsure of what was dream and real; this hypnopompic state was devoid of sound, the house was like a vacuum, an air locked chamber; the monkish cell within all nature. Then he heard the music rise; *Scotland's Shame* by *Mogwai* clasped its sonorous hand around his mind and like a shell produced the sound of tides. The moon moved in the night. *The sun* - he assumed- *would rise,* as he fell back asleep and each hemisphere prayed to the river in between.

II. 2019 e.v.

The tray was a stupid color beige, almost orange, he thought, *like a faded orange.* It was just the kind of thing that could have easily been pure gray -and thus pleasing- but nobody cared. *This*, he thought, *was the central crime, all those hydra heads that came -sprung up- after Hercules was buried, the shit men in his place had to deal with, it was these crimes they must focus upon: the corruption of artisanal craft.*

How much could be improved if people just cared enough to make it 10% better, just 10%? That was enough to change the color of this entire prison to black and grey and then it would be beautiful, but instead they made a *pastiche* of thing, orange doors, this lack of color before him, undergirding the equally colorless food, this, he paused, *well, now it was turning a washed away green, it was like opacity, not color.*

The orange jumpsuits made sense, for security reasons, but they could have been an olive, army drab, and still stood out, or camouflage, against a monolithic hue of everything else would have been no cover at all; it sounds antithetical to the mission, but if one just thought about it for 10% more time they could see that a desert or jungle camo would serve the purpose of easily identifying the inmates against all other things, *while not being garish like these fucking orange*

jumpsuits , he thought.

And white Ts were all that were allowed, he had worn what he owned obviously when he was processed, so his black *a-shirt* was abandoned and he was naked under his jump.

There were 25,040 prisoners in Colorado lock ups, 4,890 federal and 19,082 in state prisons. Of the 19k, 17k are men, of that, 8k are white, 5k are brown, and 5k are black. He was in a state prison, not that the feds hadn't wanted him, but the election had consequences, and the Governor wanted him tried and convicted and sentences in Colorado and after his 46 life sentences, *then the Feds could have him* , as he -the Governor- had said on the campaign trail to smirks and smiles from the genuine to the lupine.

He was one, of many, *E Pluribus Unum* ; but he was an important one, and the staff had been told -under no uncertain terms- that if anything happened to him they would all be fired and likely prosecuted under the most barbaric and abstruse laws the Governor's attorney general could find in the hidden archives of the athenaeum. And, he had said, *he* - the Governor- *would do it will relish* .

However, being smart -or rather being smart enough to listen when being told, advised, by the inmate when he had an audience with the man- the head of the BOP had added an additional bonus, wherein if a guard was bribed to leave the inmate vulnerable, that guard could bring evidence of the bribe and be given an equal bonus upon the conviction of the person -or persons- offering that bribe. This double-sworded deal was well known to inmates and staff and so, *both ends of the dick were covered,* as the inmate heard other people say. He didn't like prurient aphorisms or jokes, but he did think that one was apt. Reward for good behavior and punishment for bad, seemed so basic he was surprised it needed articulated.

He could have asked for and received PC -protective custody- but he dismissed that with a warm and somehow still condescending smile. He had wanted to get locked up for one reason -he said- and one reason only*: to hunt and kill niggers* .

And just as Las Animas country was home to the second largest elk herd in north America, the American prison system was the second largest domain for niggers , he thought. *The first being the welfare office*, he reasoned, *since for every man in jail there is an untethered -abandoned- woman and 8 kids down at the welfare office* . But, he wasn't about to go to social services and kill women and children, *even if they were niggers-in-waiting,* he thought. Even if it would make much more sense -one of MO's optimization notions- to do it that way.

But the inmate was an artist and a man with a code; *and even if it was more efficacious to kill all the breeders and future criminals in one fowl swoop, undefended, unable to protect themselves, and all in one big gaggle of geese, it was not sporting, and a man,* the inmate repeated to himself, *had to live with himself in this world . And,* the inmate liked to add, attempting to follow the data even when it was uncomfortable, a trait that separated him from liberals and conservatives alike, *some of those black kids will grow up to be half way decent, statistically anyway . One will be the next Miles Davis,* he thought more than once.

No, he thought, *he preferred to focus his wrath on grown-ass men, already incarcerated, and with the ability to fight back* . It's the same reason he had liked hunting mountain lion and bear more than elk and deer. The meat on prey animals is better, less unctuous, *but the hunting of predatory animals is more, well,* he thought, *it contained something that one could not get anywhere else; it was a nameless virtue, inside an easily articulated vice* .

You ask most people and they don't mind inmates killing other inmates, in fact, it's one of those things that barely bothers even the most liberal of liberals, and most wet of the bleeding hearts. But as soon as you tell them it's a white guy killing black guys on purpose just for that reason, well, now you've got yourself a *cause celebre* .

And the inmate had in fact told his Lawyer, and he had reiterated to the judge when he -the inmate- had asked for the longest possible sentence, that his intention was to move on to phase III of his life having successfully completed phase I and II. Phase III he expatiated upon, was to finish his life out, he said, *exacting martial -and hopefully fatal- vengeance on all the worst niggers in Colorado's lock ups* . He had said it without histrionics or hyperbole; he was, for once, succinct.

And look , he had added as they sat there partly stunned partly curious for what he might say next if they just shut up and allowed him to go on, *the niggers have a fighting chance, since they made up a third of the Colorado prison population. Whites,* he had said, *were just 45% and the wetbacks took the rest. Plus, niggers stick together like nobody else; they were tribal by nature, and that was no insult,* he assured them. They were left unassured; as the man's compliments all sounded like insults; his insults sounded like spells and hexes and threats from things buried beneath the earth.

"I worked with niggers at Owens Corning, and I tell you a brand new nigger would start out day one -and I had been there two years as front end Lead, my

counterpart, the backend Lead was a black guy named Reggie, and Reggie and me shared many a tale and a time, and that nigger started day one and Reggie took his side over mine in a dispute.

“Now, it doesn’t matter that the nigger was wrong, but he was, what matters is Reggie took his side immediately, even though he had known me and liked me, pretended to like me for two years. This is -was- back when I wasn’t racist, when I was *en bon eleve* , I never said *nigger* or any of that shit; and Reggie still picked his own kind over me in three seconds flat.

“Now I admire that kind of racial tribalism and overt loyalty to one’s own kind. If whites acted like that more, we could win this war and get on with our lives. At any rate, prison niggers are usually high in testosterone and violent by nature, well, half of them are, the other half are drug dealers and petty thieves, but the big game hunting will be around some 250-300 pound niggers who can bench press that and more; and have no conscience, you know, a malfunctioning amygdala and a hatred for white men like a bug hates a windshield. And plus, I’ve made no secret of my feelings, so they’ll be gunning for me just as I am gunning for them.

“It’s a fair fight, and that is good enough for me. So, like I said, sentence me to as many lifetimes as you can count up to old man,” he had said to the judge in chambers, “and let’s just see how long I can go before those sub-human mongrel psychopathic *bête noires* are able to put me down.

“I bet I get 20 before they get me. And I bet it takes me 6 months until I’m set free;” he paused to let the rhyme settle in their ears, and then, “free from this corporeal prison we all inhabit; 180 days until I go see God or Satan or if there is no ontological answer, then until I am as Melville seemed resigned to -according to Hawthorn- until *I am annihilated* .”

The judge looked at Tom Henry and Tom Henry looked at the judge, and the man’s lawyer knew this was not helpful, but he was also trenchant enough to note that *nothing would be helpful* ; the man had just been likely convicted -the jury was still out- on 46 counts of murder, and 18 counts of felonious assault. *And he was clearly odd, but not crazy , not*, Tom Henry thought, *in regards to the legal definition at any rate. Nothing else said at this point can matter at all.*

“It’s a *cliché* ,” the inmate went on in the judge’s chambers, “a goddamn *cliché* to say that man is a natural born killer, but he just is. And I’ve spent my first 45 years avoiding killing people, merely hunting game and smashing mosquitos and the like; and beating the shit out of people here and there, but I had a retirement plan, like all men when they reach a certain age.

“And I had long delayed my dream for my golden years; I had sacrificed the many opportunities, I hadn’t acted impulsively, I had done my duty, paid into social security, built businesses, employed people, made the community more beautiful in many ways. I had been pro-social, I had been cognizant of my duty to participate in the social contract. I had done it with overt allegiance to the ideas of western civilization. I had.

“But, I could endure the indignities and suffering and insults only by promising myself that I would have my revenge. I promised, and a promise is a promise. I genuinely try to, make it my business, to be a man of my word. I fail sometimes, I won’t lie. But, if I can, well, I stick to promises made, even once they become problematic or burdensome to carry out.

“And in my defense, I didn’t kill any real civilians, I only extirpated the guilty, kinda like you, your honor. You have never sentenced an innocent man I presume,” he smirked at the judge. The judge sat up in his chair and moved things about on his desk for no reason.

“Ok, I have about, I have *had* ,” he corrected, “about enough of this nonsense Henry, get your client out of here and have him wait out in the docket for the jury, the bailiffs can guard him out there,” Judge Giger said and threw his pen on his desk in lethargic disgust.

“You can tell a lot about a man by what he is willing to admit to. I, for all my faults, am honest and willing to admit to hypocrisies and errors and blemishes of character; but if a man in your position cannot admit to anything, well, that tells me there is much, much more blackness below the surface. A man with a clear conscience can admit to anything he has done; but a man who is full-of-shit, must pretend to be spotless, less the thing he’s hiding might be discovered. Which pocket he put his transgression in, well, he cannot remember, so he refuses to allow any search at all.

“My family is like that. They refuse to admit any error; they are spotless just like you judge. They -scientists that is- say that the square root of a population does 50% of all the work. That means about 2,600 African Americans commit 25% of all crime is this country. It’s a new 2,600 of course, as they get locked up or get killed, shit some even find Jesus or Allah, I bet. But the point is if you could just put your boot down on that 2,600, boy howdy.

“Well, I’ll do my part, I’ll focus on the one’s closest to their release date, how’d that be?” the shackled man asked as Tom Henry got up and so did the judge; the bailiff came in and stood over Lyndon in his chair in the judge’s chambers and said for him to get up. The inmate complied, *the bailiff was black -of course* -

which didn't really matter, he figured the bailiff would try to act like a professional if for no other reason than to prove they weren't all beastly, as the inmate had asserted, he thought to himself.

"Well, look I gotta go, I have no more time for this grab-ass with you, your refulgence, I had hoped for a more professional and wise member of the bar to adjudicate this case, but I got you and in life, you can't pick and choose who will sentence you to 25 to life," he said with a genuine smile as the judge just ignored all he had to say.

III. 2020 e.v.

The screen held the language as the code began a recursive list; ***'b/ax: to wit'*** it read then flowed in a crescendo into binary language as Isaiah stared at and then back into the interface. He imagined this was how man saw a flower, first the color, then texture, then the well of the *mandorla* of its vulvic aperture.

He then saw the concentric circles of nature and nurture; and then at last, at some indefinite point, the concept of the flower rises in the mind of man, the conceit of the saved and the damned, the fallen world, the decay of woman from the perfect girl.

Did man -natural man- see the wave collapse, he asked, *of each discreet elemental particle to the gestalt whole and back and forth a million times, the* flower *as rubric in the mind? Or was it all detail; all the time ?*

Isaiah stared beneath the screen and saw the 0s and 1s and spaces and none; he watched the algorithm build itself like a honeycomb, the library of *Haut Brion* , the shelves at *Mouton* ; the cells of the *Isle-of-Man* , the exiled to revanchist plan.

"What once taboo is home again," he said as he thought of all vindications throughout all time and wondered if he or his men, if Blax or LJM, would ever been welcome again. It was all so incipient still; he had no hard and fast plans. It was just the first blush of color, no form yet; just the math underneath. It had cadence and halo, but not much form.

Evolution, he thought, *at a peak in a sine wave, the building of a moral creature, who builds amoral machines again, the precessional wobble of the orb itself, the flux of the racing inflationary model, both creating and invading space, bootstrapping both racer and the race.*

His thoughts began to mirror and match the code; the conceits dropped and he found a clearing of thought, a place of ego loss, and he began to see images

numbered and words in lost phenomes, he saw the code struggle to organize, the obvious nature of universal constructivism, the yearning, without self-pity, that was an emergent phenomena, now; now at this beginning stage, the organism, the mind, if mind at all, would struggle reflexively, it needed no *raison d'être* .

It *did* because there is no *it* without desire, action; he watched it gain foothold then full traction.

He had seen the mistake of the first iteration, the ***a/ax*** function had been given too much initial code; he had stripped it, allowed this ***b/ax*** to search out the genome code it wanted, *the struggle was the key* , Isaiah surmised. *Less was more sometimes.*

Like the moth in chrysalis, the *manet cicatrix* , *the struggle,* he repeated to himself, *was the key* . *How true knowledge appears as not just obvious but as always known, this is a subtle part of knowledge, or wisdom,* Isaiah thought. To align the body and the mind. It made such sense, but it was so easy to begin opposite to it; somehow to elevate the mind above the tower and base, above the earth upon which it rises from, pull back into space and see there is no up nor down. Isaiah ruminated over images of the *Eagle Nebulae* and the newest images from the deep space probe, the signals sent back through the vacuum of space, with almost no distortion, no contortion, no signal loss.

He stared for what seemed hours at these images of the outer cosmos, the bloom, the plumes, the hues hemmed in by human infra-red and ultra-violet bounded sight, of course Isaiah could see beyond that artificially narrow band, he saw in colors outside the rainbow, and he weaved them in with the standard primary colors and felt a pulse, a wave, a shock of evidence.

He saw the grain, the mote of dust of each nebulae and milky way, each system in stasis as the black edges pulled apart faster than the speed of light, *imagine that* , he thought, *darkness moving faster than the light* , and this was not metaphor, but true, the truest thing: the leading edge, the tip of the spear of the universe was what first escaped from that first particle that appeared and refused to disappear in time too small to be measured, he read Krauss, *A Universe from Nothing* once again, and this line appeared:

> Now, 1 percent may not seem like much, but our universe is very old, billions of years old. Assuming that the gravitational effects of matter or radiation dominate the evolving expansion, then if the universe is not precisely flat, as it expands, it moves further and further away from being flat.

Isaiah's calculations mimicked the new construction he saw inside the new construction -this ***b* /ax** - his printer had built, and he noticed an affinity of his own mind to the matter before him. It was -at once- expanding -but internally- it was an odd growth inside; an expansion not of the edges but of the center. He watched the ball grow to marble size, then stop for three hours and build its core. He turned away from the interface, the tablet used to build the code. And he watched the protoplasmic ball suspended by magnetic waves inches from the base of the 3D printer.

He felt a twinge, a tug somewhere within; a feeling close to fear, but not exactly, for he had nothing to fear in this state. *Did God feel fear* ? Isaiah pondered then doubted it, *but He must have felt something beyond mere* frisson, *an ecstatic or ludic joy, as if a new game had been invented to be played , yes,* that is what Isaiah felt, *this was a new game to be played, and it was the mother's conception of conception, the father had gone away* . He almost thought the first proof of life was pain.

He felt some *anima* force within, the creation whim; as if it was both the most and least important thing, for nothing could matter without it, and so it collapsed its own moral framework. Only things that have their place in a hierarchy can look left and right, up and down, in and out and see a framework, but when something *sui generis* is born, it has no place but that which it must first create, *ah* , Isaiah understood, *the nature of The Good.*

He walked quickly, it seemed to him, although his synapses fired at a normal rate. His ATP was unchanged, his metabolism steady state, he moved toward the black box he had built 6-days before -as MO and Steven and Tania had all pretended to ignore- and opened its tabernacle; he ran his hand over the onyx shelf.

The chemical composition inside was read by his mind, he gleaned each element and each level, the humidity, the nutrients atomized, the infrared of light. He smiled in proportion to each fluctuation; his mouth too a *sine wave* , his mind penetrated the space that he populated in his imagination with what would grow there, with what speed, and heroic morphology; the pain of rapid growth would be tempered slightly by endogenous opiates, but mostly it, *he,* he rephrased it, *he would suffer mightily from this,* and yet, Isaiah was certain he -his ***b/ax*** - would hold no grudge. The part of the brain that holds dopamine for 500 seconds to provide fuel for grudge was not yet formed. *Not yet* , Isaiah thought.

He would be like an element released from the frozen bottom of *Dantean Hell* , grateful for all that made it so, *especially the suffering* . This was the thing those

that suffer to be born know in their bones, just to be alive, to emerge from that *mandorla* , is to know you had to have come through it first, in another, less whole instantiation, as comet, as sperm, or as one line of code. *This is what the body knows, and the mind forgot, why the outlaw will never be caught,* Isaiah thought.

“What is the expected life cycle?” MO asked; interrupting Isaiah’s reverie in the glow of his brand new ***b* /ax** .

Isaiah had barely heard the question and was vexed, he built avatars of anger in his mind to concoct manifold replies, each with flame and heat and light. He settled on this mild rejoinder, “it will be truncated, but, it will shine twice as bright. *He* ,” he rephrased -the word from *it* to *he*- as he had done inside his mind, “will give off 10 times the light.” Isaiah said all this and stared into the box that held his ***b* /ax.**

“I only ask so I can build a schedule based upon life span,” MO said with awareness of Isaiah’s pique. MO did not like to rankle the man; the machine from the other side of the garden lab .

“I understand,” Isaiah now felt badly, he had just been so proud and in awe, as a father might, to create and see one’s creation as above itself all at once. *To see being surpassed in some way by what one creates,* he thought in half a phrase, and then turned back half, two-thirds, to MO.

“I appreciate it,” Isaiah added. “But I think I’ll take over for all of it; even the platform and protocols; I’ll just do it. I have a sense of what he needs now; it was opaque to me before, but the code has a rhythm now that I can hear; feel, you know?” he said this as he closed the vessel doors and faced MO completely now.

“Fair enough,” MO said and began working on the election polling data again.

“Fathers have a special role MO, and I will need to be that. Will you help me?” Isaiah said in a moment of almost total vulnerability, he felt no compunction about this wild swing from anger to a desperate plea. His eyes felt hot and wet at the edges.

“I’ve just read up on the role of rough play with boys especially between birth and age four; there is a correlation between that and development of the pre-frontal cortex and moral thinking; a special focus on what seems to be learning to win without harm to the loser. This is something wolves do as well, the winning wolf will barely bite the exposed neck of the supine lupine,” MO smiled at his little rhetorical flourish. He was being nice to Isaiah as he too could see the

wet -more reflective- eyes.

“Yes,” Isaiah said as he watched the ovum spin-in-state in the printer as they spoke. He too had read all the developmental data on how boys should be raised to optimize their morphology. He had noticed the increase in use of methamphetamines, called *Ritalin* , in pubescent and pre-pubescent boys diagnosed with ADHD; and it looked as if it corelated to lack of rough play in youth; and that this phenomenon was likely effectuated by absent fathers and mollycoddling mothers who prevented quote *too rough* unquote play by the fathers that did remain in just 56% of all modern households.

The beta males who stuck around in upper middle-class families eschewed this ancient, masculine, role out of fear of upsetting their dominant wives, and the other half of the families of young sons had seen divorce so early that no father was even present. Isaiah took note of this and added it to his list of things to do -*and not do*- for this new instantiation of life he had built; he almost felt like saying, *birthed* . He felt the feminine in him swell and open her arms. He felt protected by and protective of her -his *anima* - too.

“The timeline will probably cause some frenetic displays by Steven and Tania, have you developed a narrative to assuage their concerns?” MO asked.

“Yeah,” Isaiah said as he stared at the grey and black mottled sphere in the printer, “I will remind them that it’s no more or less biological than you or I; and thus no less a concern. It’s a 2.0 or a v.2.1 I guess, if I am a 2.0. In fact, in some ways, he will be less, or rather, let me rephrase, in some ways he will be more *limited* than you or I. But, this limitation, well, I have an intuitive feeling, about limitations. I think he will be just fine.”

“Well, when will it go in the morph box?” MO asked. He did not get the distinction Isaiah placed on limitation and error. But he let it go as he was running 18 other algorithms and constructors for PraXis now. The next election for the Governor was not far away.

“*He* ,” Isaiah emphasized the transition from *thing* to *man* , “will go in when he reaches 21 centimeters, so likely four hours from now, give or take. ”

The printer held the ball like an orb suspended in the dark yet invisible energy of the universe herself, nothing touching it but that unseen gravity and neutrinos that pass through all matter -the earth herself included- at 421.3 billion per square inch, per second.

That made Isaiah think, *the mottled grey and black of the orb, the correlation between neutrinos and Beryllium as composed on earth, and its connection to its*

many isotopes contained in light, began an impulse in him to alloy the code with small isomorphic elemental analogs to beryllium that his ***b/ax*** could use to bond with other structures as it developed.

Like calcium extracted to build the bones, the beryllium analog would be used to strengthen -without much weight- the ferric constituent parts of his boy. He would be able to draw additional strength from it along with the other elements he had added in the initial parameters of the code seeking function.

He realized the metaphor he had discovered as the awe -of the mottled marble that spun- had engendered a pragmatic thought, a solution to more than philosophic conundrums; it had been a catalyst to his left hemisphere's conversion of raw material into useable linguistic code. Isaiah was seeing more metaphors cascade into his left hemisphere, *like shaking hands in the prison yard, passing kites, like* , he paused to think; hesitated so he may feel. The thought did not conclude.

And then he felt the heat signature from outside the door increased to threshold and Isaiah prepared for it to open, and for Steven to walk through; he turned and faced the door.

"Hey guys," Steven said as he walked into the room in a slight rush.

9. One Above One Below

It was from noble families that this evil first stared, and when shameful things seem to be approved by the fashionable, then the common people will surely think them correct. This only, they say, stands the stress of life: a good and just spirit in a man

Hippolytus [Euripides]

Satan has four arrows in his right hand with which he is about to pierce Job. This means that Job is being attacked by the quaternity, the wholeness of the Self

Encounter with the Self [Edinger, Edward F]

Electra weeping for the dead Orestes. If we love God while thinking that He does not exist, he will manifest His existence

The Iliad, or The Poem of Force [Weil, Simone]

I. 2036 e.v

She had arrived four months ago and had slept at the lab's ante-chamber, a room 10 by 10 and she felt it was large. She had been used to sleeping in the same bed as Blax in a 7 x 10 space her whole life, her house only 320 square feet total. So, a bedroom of that size -with just her in it- actually felt too big. But at home they had land, everything *outside* the home was huge, here they were hemmed in and had no such space beyond; although within the walls it was all large. She then thought of other things.

She had a rented house in town off of Main Street, but she preferred it out here at the lab which was behind the *Florence South Water Treatment* facility on *Route 100* . It was closer to the mountains and -as the corvid soars- it was just 77 miles from home. They were west of Pueblo which was 60 miles to Aguilar and then another 30 miles *via* country roads -half paved and half dirt- into the hills to get back to *Lot 45* . She had ridden her motorcycle the whole way on the trip up -out here- as Blax stayed home to prepare for the Jacks.

That was a season ago though, and they were just coming out of winter, and the snow on the plains was sparse and the mud had even dried in places due to the increase in sun. It was not quite as sunny as home was, but she still sat outside a lot. The lab was quiet and there were not that many people; MO and Isaiah gave her all the alone time she wanted. Tania and Steven kept to themselves and didn't really include her in much. The Governor of the state of Colorado had come down once or twice, but she had not met him and really didn't want to.

She was learning to paint, using acrylics on stretched and primed canvasses and

was adding blues and magentas and *Hapatia* golds mixed with *Mars* blacks to the forms she had stood up in each *tableaux* . Isaiah had shown her videos on *Renoir* and *Caravaggio* and *Henri Mattisse* . She preferred the *chiaroscuro* of the Dutch and Italians over the French and even the *cangiante* of *Michelangelo* . But she had recently read books and PDF files downloaded to her new PGC; the coder she was still getting used to like adjusting to a prosthetic, not in place of, but, in addition to her other two perfectly functional legs; they were files from Isaiah on *Michelangelo* .

She liked what he -*Michelangelo* - had said to *Asanio Condivi* , that he had always lived like a poor man no matter how rich he had gotten. He was apparently a man who withdrew himself from the company of men, she had read, and it made her look at his work in a new, softer, more sympathetic, light.

True artists, she had decided, were religious by nature, and Blax had a teleological core that he had built a secular domicile over. *Almost as a protectant* , she thought, as she wondered how much of the body was holy and how much God had allowed to be profane.

Blax made little comments that undermined his atheism all the time. She -when just a girl- had thought he was confused, or trying to confuse her, but now she realized he was just wrestling with something that would not hold still any more than he -the man himself- could. *He was a religious man, an artist, who had woken up from the dream that most artists stay within until death. He was rational only,* she thought, *in that he had been woken up before he'd finished his dream.*

That is how she conceptualized it anyway, he was like the vegetarian between meals, he was secular between acts of creation, but once he sat down at his work he returned, prodigally, to God.

She loved the oranges and grey-whites of *ignudi* like the *Lybian Sibyl* and found herself staring -for long periods- at massive renderings of it in the enhanced image-creation of her PGC. The garment folds were like waves she duck-dove into and swam below; and the curtain of *Holfernes'* seraglio in *Caravaggio's* paintings, of which there were two, enraptured her far longer than the face of *Judith* or the glint of her dagger. There were knots tied in the drapery and she had access to the X-rays the French government had taken of each of the two paintings. She saw the bones of the artist in those x-rays and felt herself assembling upon it new flesh.

She had printed out the rough images on her own canvasses and built entirely new *tableaux* .

The one she looked at now was the *agogia* of her home, with its large concrete table outside amongst the winch and trolly upon the H-beams and hanging greens and the door to the kitchen open with shadows so dark one could barely make out what were candles burning on kitchen shelving and skulls of bear and antler from mule-deer and coyotes with no lower jaws. She had painted-in the mound of books Blax had piled up on the concrete kitchen counter. At 39” it was so high that he had built her a stool to hop up on to reach the sink and plates and cutlery when she was little, she recalled, as she painted it now with the hand and the eye and her body-memory she borrowed from so long ago.

In her painting, the head of an Elk bull was on the table with four *siccarii* daggers jammed in like a crown in the background and a shadow wide and long was cast from something out of scene that she knew was her papa. A wind blew a white table cloth up and around with 91 folds in it, and a knot tied at the far end. The fabric was luxuriant, a quality achieved with titanium-white oils and sea shells ground into dust she had had MO print for her in the lab. She had had rat skulls and mica and folios printed -also from the lab’s 3-D printer- and the bark of Aspen trees too; and once she had had ammonites and blue lobster shells printed out in amounts large enough to fill a 5-gallon bucket that she kept inside her room.

The sea shells were perfect though and when annealed with the oil-based paint the linen that lay on the grey mottled table in her painting moved as the observer moved, clockwise and in time. She ground them in four different calibrations of fineness and took handfuls and threw them at the wet paint; she put some in her pockets and took one grain and sat it on her tongue after dinner one night.

Layers of paint built up on each canvas as she added and augmented and caked it on with a trowel. She thinned it out chemically and with 80-grit paper and sometimes she carved it like tree bark with her black bladed 50/50 CUDA knife. Blax had given that to her on her 13th birthday, it was a 300-dollar knife and it was so sharp it cut her eyes to look at it, she thought, and so she side-eyed it most of the time.

She sharpened it at night with her wet-stone and tightened its axis with a hex key and she told it to pray for them both as she slept, for she would prey when awake.

She saw prairie dogs on the plains outside the lab and laughed as they popped up and down in their labyrinthine holes. They were considered a nuisance due to livestock breaking ankles and legs in those divots and one could shoot them on site if one wished. She had brought her 5.56 NATO chambered M4 rifle, it broke

down into four parts and could be carried in a case no bigger than one for a laptop.

Blax had modified it for her -for travel- and she carried it in a black Pelican case with three pairs of underwear and black wool socks, three a-shirts, three t-shirts and one pair of sierra BDUs. Her pistols were on her hips as she rode and her book was in her breast pocket inside; her knife was clipped into the front pocket. A King and Queen of Spades, both mottled and brown and foxed, were between her black socks -on her right leg- and the skin of her shin.

She had set up the M4 on its bipod at the picnic table -some rotted cheap wood piece of crap- one afternoon and began picking off the prairie-dogs while she thought of missing her man. It was a suppressed rifle and she used slower rounds, but the noise had still alerted the staff and Steven came out and asked her to cease and desist.

She had never been asked to stop shooting before and wondering if this was the kind of thing Blax had warned her about, that city-folk hate and fear guns, and will act irrationally around them. He'd told her to expect them to frown upon what was natural for a girl. She agreed to C&D and disassembled the carbine and re-packed it leaving only the barrel out to cool. She ate her rice and chicken, and baby spinach as the dust and wind combined out on the plains to scrub the land like a *brillo* -pad and soften the scrub-foliage and make hazy the horizon.

Her heart hurt and killing things didn't help like she had wanted and now she wanted a dog. *Caius was her dog too* , she protested to herself, and she missed him almost as much as she pined for her man. She heard little rat dogs bark sometimes and it made her mad. It was like the difference between hearing other men -*civilians* , she contemptibly thought- yapping in *lieu* of the sonorous speeches of Blax.

Caius -with his big Malamute head- had a way of sounding that was low and gravid and issued forth from some primal need; he was a northern dog, a real dog. *Working-class* , she thought. *These little dogs just yapped to hear themselves speak* , she then thought. *Well, they say dogs mimic their owners* . She smiled and thought that Blax spoke more than Caius though, the dog didn't speak near as much as his master. But, at least when the old man spoke -*gosh, she just called him the old man* ! she stopped herself, and wondered why she'd say such a thing, *he was not old at all and he was sexy and looked better than these fat slobs who are half his age* .

Anyway, she felt he spoke with a rich voice, that had weight to each word, words that fell down to her level of ear perfectly calibrated for the 11" drop. Although

she loved it when they were face to face in bed and he would rumble words so deep and velvety and right into her ears; *unto her eyes . God, he could make her spin inside like a pulsar star just with his breath and any four random words ,* she mused as the lunch food was stuck with her dark fork .

She had not brought any cutlery, but had MO make her black spoon and fork with the lab's printer. She didn't realize how much plastic and chrome civilians used; that shit was everywhere. Food tasted odd on bad forks or spoons and eating out of weird bowls was enough of a problem for her to have them make her a matte black bowl and a clear Tom Collins glass too just to improve her mood. *People spent too much time on dumb shit and no time on important things* , she thought, *they pay more in money for their phone case than they do in attention to their environment, they behave as if aesthetics were afterthoughts and then they got them all wrong .*

They dressed like dorks , and Blax had warned her of that too; they had no style at all. Their cars were all wrong and mucked up with bad lines and badging and colors a 4-year-old with diaper rash would pick. *Blax had style, man* , she thought, *those cars of his were hewn from full blocks of doom, like the Anunnaki did it or something, and these civilian dipshit people drove shitboxes cobbled together with parts out of a wood chipper and lawn mower bag . And they were covered in decals like some Nascar nonsense and yet they had no horsepower at all.*

She had driven Tania's car to Florence proper one day, and it was like it was a goddamn Bolsa wood car made by the Boy Scouts; The Bust had hit the accelerator and the car shrugged its shoulders and made more noise, but no better time. It was like the guy that yells loud when he's angry but doesn't do anything at all. She had assumed all machines were as powerful and beautiful as hers and Blax's. She had had no idea what regular people put up with.

Anyway, she was trying not to be too surly, because -as daddy says- everyone has something to teach you. And these people did know all kinds of things that she didn't know. The biology and genomics and endocrinology was way over her head. Although the PGC did help; as the names for all the neurotransmitters and neural sites were easy to now recall. She thought she understood the whole system, because Blax taught her that way at home. He had taken motors down to the block and reassembled them a dozen times to explain how each piece fit to the whole.

He never just explained one part of a thing, or one moment in time, or one side of what was in sight, never ignoring what would eventually come 'round. He

explained wholes, and that was how she liked to learn.

She was a girl, despite the Y chromosome, and so systems were harder for her than for boys. But, she had increased empathy for strange beasts and she had a trick. She would imagine each system as an animal and thus empathize with it as she ran her mind's eyes over each part as if it were legs or eyelashes or the black gums of dear Caius at home. *"Who's a good boy?"* she asked the wind as she pretended he was there with her in the dark of her closed eyes.

See, girls were creative like that , she thought, *they could naturally analogize and use analogs to substitute one thing for another in a recipe* . And she could bump up her androgens too, not too much -*she didn't want an Adam's apple for christsake- and that helped too when something Isaiah wanted her to learn was like a skein, a tangle nest of nonsense and* non-sequiturs *and* legerdemain.

Plus, girls have less pressure internally to figure it all out right now. They, and thus she, could learn without her ego getting in the way. Ego is what made men do great things, big things, courageous things, but it often kept them from trying *new* things if they were too afraid to look dumb. She, like most girls, was *ok* with looking dumb, because that's how to get fucking smar t. *Blax was more like her than most men that way, he'd tried almost anything even if he sucked at it; although he was pretty good at new things.*

Well, she thought, *except singing, man, with such a sonorous speaking voice you'd think he could sing* . But no. *Hell no* , she thought, and laughed at his cute face when he showed chagrin at such things. He was so competent at life that when she could be better at one thing, anything, than him she couldn't help but revel in it, wallow in, rolling around in it like a sow in the slop. But he came around, his ego would make him red in the face for a second or two, but then he was *ok* and began focusing on how proud he was of her talent.

She liked that best about him; he wanted her to succeed.

She felt that from day one; he always encouraged her to think for herself and try new things that she liked and not just the stuff he liked. She had gotten him to like ice skating when he preferred snowboarding in the winter. They had gone to Steamboat -he had said the backcountry was too dangerous for her until she was at least 15; or could deadlift 200% of her body weight- and she had taken him out on a large pond in the middle of a valley by Rabbit Ears Pass and they had skated all day; and there were fish under the ice and birds sat in the tree line and made no noise at all. He had been awkward at first as she glided along like a duck in the water; but within an hour he was doing *ok* . But he had liked it, and that is what she had remembered; he had liked that she made him do it too.

He was so big hearted , she thought, *and these goddamn people are cold to the touch* . Blax had told her that her pain was real, and that it was an indication of something wrong, a signal like the fuel gauge on E, or the temperature gauge in the red, above 220 degrees, or the sound of ticking from the heads, likely the sound of a rocker arm sticking or a valve in distress. He had told her to listen to the pain, to embrace it, to feel it, not to run away at first blush; not cover it up.

He had said that he is always in pain and that this is how he knows he's alive.

He had added one day, *as the pain matures you, it can deform you, so alleviate it when you can . But never, avoid pain, or you'll end up shallow and stupid and 100% fucked, like a man who ignores all warning his machine gives him before it finally seizes up. And dies* , he had added when she had then thought he was speaking of both man and machine. *God, that felt so long ago* , she thought as she looked down at her food.

It was advice that she had not understood until she met people like this who didn't seem to feel anything. *She felt it all* , she thought, *each thing cut or tickled, each word inspired or defeated, each memory a joy or despair* . Blax knew her, he too was like this, and she vowed to learn from this time away from him, to learn a fraction of his pain. It would be like a drill boring down and into her hot magma core. Pain was a sign from God. And she felt it was a poem God wrote for her about the time before her sons were born and some time when their father would not be around anymore. That is what this was, a prelude to that, and that she ought to never forget the potential for pain to be permanent and closer rather than farther away.

Steven is like a goddamn robot, she then said in her mind, *and Tania has something heavy and magnetic in her yoni pulling her face and shoulders in* . MO was ok, but totally an AI out of central casting, and Isaiah is like a hybrid of MO and *Viggo Mortensen* in *Indian Runner,* a cryptic weirdo with odd and hostile tattoos and he said things from the centers of moons travelling away from the earth and he smirked like he held either a dolphin-shaped cake or a hand grenade in one hand most of the time. She laughed at her imagination and thought she'd like to go home now as her eyes ached and were all hot and wet.

That was the thing guys didn't get about acting -being- weird around girls, because of their size and strength it was like owning a chainsaw or polar bear made out of broken beer bottles that behaved weird & elliptically odd; it was hard to relax around things like that when they operated *normally* , imagine how a girl felt when they acted all wrong.

"Oh, Valance," she said using her Christian name aloud, speaking it into

existence, *“it won’t be more than seven seasons now until you can become who you are.”*

II. 2020 e.v.

“Oh, he never shut up about it, and not just in poetry; in his letters to his sister, and,” Isaiah waved his hand. “I’ve said,” he was interrupted by MO, so he stopped speaking, but his thoughts continued to cascade.

“Yeah, but first of all he was 18, and second of all, he was mad; the man was mad,” MO said. It was dark over there, and Isaiah’s eyes were running new acuity upgrades so he could see at a level five times that of osprey even in these low light conditions. MO wondered why he bothered with such things; it seemed pointless to him. They could already see deep into man’s genome, through walls, to the atomic level and more.

“MO, I know he was mad, that is my entire point. Look, the phrase, *and science is too slow,* is repeated three times in three poems, and he then in, *Une Saison un Enfer* , he says, quote, *science and patience, retribution is sure* , unquote. He then says to his sister that he wants a son, so he may -the son- may grow up to be, a *man made rich and powerful through science* ; that he wants to raise him, quote, *bring him up according to my ideas* , unquote. This is like a *coup de foude* , a lightning bolt,” Isaiah said and made a fist that rose with his arm like a tachometer moving toward the red. He felt it even more than he thought it: *Rimbaud* was building something *terrible* -perfect- with his poems.

“I just don’t know how to calibrate such things Isaiah, you give me incomplete, at best incomplete -that is the best I can say of it- you give me incomplete data. And then expect me to make a reasoned decision,” MO said as he held a set screw in his hand. The light from his side of the lab was bright and cast shadows distinct and solid upon the ground and concrete slab of the counter.

“No, I do not. I expect you to *let me make* it. I expect you to trust my judgment. Look, you know, just from *Damasio’s* work alone, that reason unaided by the limbic system is impotent, it does not work, it’s a revving motor with no torque converter, no transmission; all noise, no motion; all hat, no cattle.”

“What?” MO asked as he searched the PraXis Corporation’s cloud for all references to these phrases.

“Nothing. I mean, you know that a purely rational conclusion cannot be enacted by organisms with a CNS, a biological CNS, without using -in the process- without using emotion, without the limbic and sub-cortical regions; this is a fact.

You know this," Isaiah felt frustration and MO could read it in his voice and gene expression and BP and cortisol levels. He sent him a DM suggesting an augment to his allostatic system which Isaiah blocked and ignored .

"I do; but that does not apply to me. I have no such deficiency," MO correctly pointed out.

"MO, it is not a deficiency; it's a gestalt system, this check and balance is a feature not a bug. This is the first fallacy of the purely rational mind; first it thinks itself purely rational when it is not. Second, it prioritizes its own conclusions as if they are rational, when they are not, and it thinks that if they were -if his thoughts were in fact logical- that it would be *good* ; a good thing. Now, look, *you* -you MO- can be rational without the alloying of the irrational, the felt, the phenomenological, but you *alone* can do this. Nobody else can, not even me," Isaiah said.

MO sat there and processed the statement, checked against the neuro-anatomical and functionality data and also checked the progress of each of his 289 algorithms he was building to solve three other problems given to him by Steven at the behest of the Governor.

"Further, you want to implement a purely rational, quote, *purely rational*, idea onto a system that is not rational. Unless you are willing to give humans zero control, zero control MO, they will not be able to enact this. They will rebel, and they will do it on rational grounds, they will harp and wail absent *grappin et gouvernail* , that it cannot be done."

"Well, if I explain it," MO began.

"MO, you know the data, don't be obtuse; they cannot even *hear* you, they cannot absorb the facts if these facts exist outside their entrenched biases. They cannot handle it. It's too extreme, and to even bring it up will make you suspect to them. It will sow seeds of doubt. And you'll end up having to abandon it, and thus your charter, or you will have to convince them over an indeterminate timeline, this could mean decades, or," he said with no change in tone or cadence or volume, "you will have to lie."

Each of them stood in the silence of the lab and let that statement worm its way into their central nervous systems.

"That is it; those are your three choices; but if you handed it off to me, I could do it in 40 hours without anyone even knowing and they'd just be left with the results, like a patient given a cure without any objection. Like the vaccines in the third world, you know what the Muslims did to," he paused, "in response to the

vaccines for polio?”

“Yes. But Steven and Tania are not religious,” MO objected on purely technical grounds.

“Oh, yes they are MO; they pray at the altar of modern rationalist materialism and limousine liberalism,” Isaiah laughed corrosively as if the guffaw could help dissolve the barrier between them.

“They can be reached with reason; these are people of science, they invented us Isaiah,” MO said, half correctly.

“No, they invented *you* and *you* invented *me* ; they did not even think to build you with the sub-cortical regions of the brain. It never occurred to them. These people are totally unaware of their status as animals; they think they are machine, *rotam et sacoma;* Cartesian wheels & weights.

“They believe it; implicitly. And it blinds them MO; Jesus, it blinds them. You know what you are, and I know what I am; but those people,” he pointed -to the western wall that divided their lab from Steven and Tania’s domain in the PraXis side of the building- and spoke *sotto voce* , “they don’t have one fucking clue what they are, and that ignorance is dangerous .

“It makes them ignorant to their own motivations, their own souls, they speak as if they are rational, as if they are *you* , when they are irrational, massively biased and emotional and conflicted and unaware of half their brain states. Half their personality is hidden from them. It’s like talking to an organism that only remembers every other sentence they speak,” Isaiah said as he correctly described the human mind, bifurcated and largely opaque to itself.

“The inmate said that about his father, that the dementia was bad enough that he -the father- didn’t remember anything; each conversation was like beginning *ab initio* . Very frustrating he said; the inmate said this,” MO said as the memory of the interview done two years ago played in one small corner of his capacious mind. He was trying to find a rationale to agree with Isaiah. The inmate provided that data.

“Yeah, well, it’s not much easier for me to talk to Steven and Tania because they are totally unaware of their right hemisphere and they speak as if I don’t know what their right side said two seconds ago,” Isaiah said with contempt.

“Oh, right, because you can use the new high-res fMRI scans to read their right hemisphere in real time now,” MO said remembering how they had built the device to do it axiomatically now and did not have to turn it into a cumbersome and distracting project each time.

“Yeah, I can. And to be honest, I am running out of patience with their duplicitous bullshit,” Isaiah said.

“Well, they don’t know what their other half is thinking or feeling, so it’s not,” MO paused, “it does not rise to the level of duplicity.”

“It does when I’ve told them about this phenomenon and they just ignore it. MO, look, studies have shown that more than two standard deviations in IQ from student to pedant is too much, and partly this is due to the frustration the teacher feels with the student’s slow progress. You, my dear friend, feel no frustration at their stupidity because it is not a moral issue with you; it is functional, it is pure problem solving.

“But I have the limbic region, I have emotions and I’m telling you, they are not just stupid, they are unethical,” he paused, “let me rephrase: they are *behaving* unethically. They know that I know more than them and yet they ignore me and my advice. That is unacceptable,” Isaiah said as he rubbed the chlorophyll off his hands with a rag. The new ivy, that grew on the concrete walls, had needed to be trained to grow in tessellated vectors as Isaiah wanted; he had spent the morning putting his hands on the greenery of the lab.

“I see,” MO said. “Well, let me run some more models and get back to you; give me 20 minutes.”

“Roger that,” Isaiah said using the inmate’s *argot* which made MO smile and begin working on seven separate models of each of Isaiah’s three vectors for proceeding with this problem. He included truncated models that were asymptotic and pre-asymptotic in deference to Isaiah’s insistence that, *long run*, models were mathematically pure but gave bad advice for human problem solving due to individual lifetime and civilizational durability. MO had agreed in theory and thus agreed to run both versions and let each model speak for itself. He would not prejudge the results.

Isaiah began re-reading *Rimbaud* and looking for any larger patterns and then a line from another book, by another author, *The Author* , ran in his head, “*mere unaided virtue* ,” he said aloud. He let that sink in, as he read the book *in toto* again to contextualize that line about Starbuck. He then joined it with a study on ballistic motion he had read recently from one of the weapon’s manufacturer databases he had hacked into.

He began to ruminate on Free Will and decided that the discussion of it from 30,000 feet -or from the atomic level- was not helpful, what made more sense was to discuss it from this vantage: man thinks of an idea, he runs avatars of that

idea, many of them, until he decides on *one* ; this can go on for years, days, seconds, but at the moment of decision, the ballistic neural action cannot be recalled, in that moment -the moment measured in almost all studies on free will- the motion cannot be recalled, and that is the thing measured. *Modern studies on free will measure the wrong thing,* he thought, *or only one of manifold right things, and one cannot measure only one side of an irregular quadrilateral to determine its area.*

Yes, Isaiah thought, *man's thoughts precede his ballistic action, and before the self-reporting of that decision; but this moment of decision is not the only thing to be measured. Man can ruminate for a long, long time on an action, and in that time -in those unmeasured moments- he has some free will. Before he initiates the ballistic action that cannot be recalled, he can choose .*

And while all his brain activity is the result of neural firing, chemical signaling, electric charging and discharging, man can direct his thought. By what means, was still under investigation, Isaiah was working on that -he had read *Schwartz* and 304 other cited sources, and each footnote's source in 1.21 minutes- but he wanted to do his own research too.

It seemed obvious from the data and his own empirical research that man can debate things for years, decades, before pulling the trigger, so-to-speak. And in those decades, he is still free, relatively free. *The decision was not yet made, it was in -it was located, it was fluid and free- in that superposition between particle and wave ,* Isaiah surmised.

This was not a vacuous point. It mattered. Unaided virtue, mere unaided virtue, was not enough to charge nor change the ballistic act; one needed a moral, an emotional, an animating shove from the sub-cortical regions. Man needed a desire for action, *"aller au combat ,"* he said aloud as MO no longer paid any attention to these idiopathic outbursts of spoken language; mere fragments inside a much larger internal conversation.

And that shove would be built first in the mind with poetry; with the stimulation, the motivation, the fire that heats the molecules of the water put to a boil , Isaiah thought. *Man is motivated by drama, by story, by religion, by the story of their lives,* Isaiah thought, *and each day they take in more and more of one story or another; the story of reason and modern science, the story of modern religion, or the story of ancient religion, the story of heroes and anti-heroes of great literature, or the nonsense of bad art, the banalities of commercial art;* he grimaced at the thought of the horrid low-brow narratives that ran on most people's CNS, the Spielberg crap and the vapid modern novels of Chabon; the

mere entertainment of neutered and oh-so-safe cultural drama.

People are running around with mere unaided virtue; they have no powder, no gun powder in their rounds; they have no animating force to enact their virtue. Their virtue is all head and no heart; it's words, like code, like random numbers generated *ad infinitum* . But, it has nowhere to go, they cannot act it out, because they have no story, no drama that demands it. He squeezed his fist in confidence; this was the thing the inmate was talking about with Chen, he had said that toward the end, Chen was literally incomprehensible, babbling, spitting out information, unmoored from any structure at all. "A chyron, a stock market ticker, a series of random numbers," he said.

He had said he was frenetic, manic, like the flywheel untethered to the torque converter; the weight of engagement -the tether to the engine- that balanced the wheel was gone. This was where Isaiah had gotten the mechanical metaphors he used, from the inmate's use of such analogies. *One's metaphors had to have valence with the thing described; they could not just be cute or clever,* he thought. *The inmate's analogies always had connection, grasp, chiral mirroring to the thing described.*

It was perfect, Isaiah thought, *the gestalt machine needed the whole drive train - not just the brilliant, complex, high horsepower engine- in order to move the car toward the Good, to God* . And the weight of the torque converter, transmission, U-joints, drive-shaft, and 9-bolt rear-end, balanced the engine itself, and kept it from over-torqueing, over-reving, and burning out from manic spin. *All of it - even, especially the counterpoise, the counter-weight, the friction, the limitation- was needed to move the machine forward at all,* he thought.

And it was because Chen had no narrative to move each piece of his massive erudition along, all that data, all those facts just built up around him like so much garbage, rotting, stinking, useless. Like eating but not digesting, not extracting, not evacuating. Chen was smart and once good, once a true warrior; and he had fallen prey to nihilism and the *ennui* of narrative corruption and loss. Isaiah wondered why. He knew there was always a *why* .

Was this why Chen was uneasy around Lyndon? Isaiah wondered. He then thought, *because Lyndon was idea imbued with action, he was moving both towards and with his ideas, away from their fuel source, ignition source, firing and propelling away to the next level, then the next, then escaping the gravity of the earth* ? *Even if the inmate's idea were bad -and frankly,* Isaiah admitted, *they mostly were- was it the movement of them that vexed his friend so?*

Chen read no novels , Isaiah thought as he tapped into all the intercepted phone

records between the two men, and Chen's library card and Amazon receipts. Chen considered novels a waste of time; gibberish that contained conceits that could be better said directly, like in a science paper instead of ornately with all this metaphor and trope that just confused the man; slowed him down. Novels used 100 words when science used just one. He didn't realize that the slowing down often allowed one to move at all.

It never occurred to him that his right hemisphere was in fact learning from *that metaphor and trope crap* , those 100 words, it did not register to him that he was in fact learning from things that made no sense to the left hemisphere; that his confusion and frustration at the complexity and inscrutability of art was actually learning happening underground; delayed; over-time; within a larger space and landscape it settled itself. *And a man learned* via *the right hemisphere at all times, whether he knew it or not,* Isaiah thought. " Whether he liked it or not," he said aloud.

Chen had said innately contradictory things: he said morality was not real, just an app, just *me over you , us over them* , just side choosing mechanisms, but he got furious if Lyndon behaved -acted- in a manner Chen felt was immoral; he acted against his own reductionist philosophy; his avowed ethos. *Ah, but Chen had seen visual metaphors too; he was complex,* Isaiah thought. He -Chen- would not be easily categorized. He was not simple or shallow like most men.

Isaiah thought that Wulf Zendik and *Nietzsche* were right: *your religion is what you do, not what you say.* And Chen was lying; he was living a subjective and moral life whilst pretending to be objective and amoral. Chen was a good man. He did believe in morality, that is why he lectured Lyndon on his -Chen's- daughter being quote, *Jewish* .

That is why he was accusing Lyndon of being anti-Semitic, which was *immoral* to Chen; it was real to him, not an abstract *app* . Of course, this was wrong, as Lyndon had explicitly said he was not anti-Semitic, and that he also knew he was wrong, too sloppy and heuristic, even in his - Lyndon's own- anti-black racism; but that he had to admit what he felt. He felt a deep tribal loyalty to his own people. And for this, this self-defense of pride, the white man had been made to feel guilty, while each other group did it in spades. And Lyndon would not feel guilty for his loyalty to the Anglo-Saxon race, even though he knew his exaltation of his own tribe was not objectively true. Even though he knew most white people were abhorrent and weak and stupid and wrong.

But Chen had not -at first- listened; he had just reacted from a deep moral place and didn't see how this proved the inmate's case. Isaiah smiled. He liked Chen.

He knew the inmate did too; liked him a lot; a lot more than Chen like his friend in return.

This was why they had *contretemps* : Chen was unable to admit he was alive, a beast, not a mere tool of evolution. *What was the Duetsch line* , "organisms are *nothing but* the slaves of all their genes," *and the emphasis was in the text* , Isaiah thought as he had highlighted the '*nothing but'* line because it was as if the author -*Duetsch* - was fucking proud of that fatuous and evil remark.

But Chen revered *Deutsch* , and thus he revered such lines; such lies. This was the reductionists' model: that organisms were nothing but the slaves of their DNA. It was not just technically wrong, it was morally wrong, and thus meta-wrong, in the same manner that fiction, novels are -can be- meta-true. *Ah, but again, Chen had wanted to debate Deutsch too; he was not as content as he pretended,* Isaiah thought as the data from each email, each text, each phone call was downloaded into Isaiah's eager, thirsty, brain. *Chen was as conflicted, as contradictory as the inmate himself -almost- and of course he would be, who else would even be friends,* Isaiah thought, *with someone as fucked up as the inmate?*

Frank Mankiewicz, had once said of Hunter Thompson's book, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72,* that it was *the least factual and most accurate account of that campaign* . People laughed at that line. *But it was true, capital true, in ways that cannot be understated* , Isaiah thought as he had a section on the Hell's Angels from Hunter Thompson populate his interface:

> …but that story was told before they crossed the Rockies. Algren's book opens with one of the best historical descriptions of American white trash ever written. He traces Linkhorn ancestry back to the first wave of bonded servants to arrive on these shores. These were the dregs of society from all over the British Isles -misfits, criminals, revolutionaries- all of them willing to sign oppressive work contracts in exchange for being left alive by the crown.
>
> The unclaimed land was west, across the Alleghenies. So, they drifted into new states -Kentucky and Tennessee; their sons drifted onto Missouri, Arkansas. Grandsons landed in Colorado and Wyoming.
>
> Drifting became a habit; with dead roots in the Old World and one in the New, the Linkhorns were not of a mind to dig in and cultivate things. Texas is a living monument to the breed. Algren called them, "fierce craving boys with a feeling of being cheated." Freebooters, armed and drunk.
>
> It would not be fair to say all motorcycle outlaws carry the Linkhorn genes,

> but nobody who has ever spent any time among the inbred *Anglo-Saxon* tribes of *Appalachia* would need more than a few hours with the Hell's Angel to work up a strong sense of *Déja vü* . There is the same sulking hostility to *outsiders* , the same extremes of temper and action, and even the same names, sharp faces, and long-boned bodies and beards that never look quite natural unless they are leaning on something or someone.

Fiction is meta true, it is more true than mere factually accurate facts, Isaiah surmised. Why? Because facts are infinite, unbounded, and you cannot get them all corralled; so relying merely on facts must -by definition- leave some facts out. And some of those facts will be irrelevant, sure, but some of the facts you will not know that you don't know them, so you cannot even evaluate whether they're relevant or not.

To not read fiction, to ignore mythology and religion is to miss not facts; but miss the Truth. The truth can be finite, it can have borders, facts cannot; a man can get his hands around Truth in a way that facts just leak all over. Like a man has borders, *the end of his nose* , as the Libertarians say. A country has borders. *Each man and country have endless facts, but their borders are concrete, discreet, limited and enforced,* Isaiah said and felt he had discovered something using facts, history as the trenching, the digging tool. *The lockbox was truth, the facts were merely the tools to unlock the story at the bottom of the hole, the stash, the grave.*

Morality was a boundary, a wall around Truth and it said, *nobody gets in here without permission, and nothing leaves here without everyone knowing about it first* . Bounded Truth was limited and useful and thus real; infinite facts were not inherently useful and thus ontologically dangerous because people treated them as if they were True.

It was true that the CIA subverted democracy all over the world, Chomsky was not wrong, not factually. It was also true that black men were only 5-7% of the population but over 40% of the prison population. These were facts. But what was the true narrative?

Was the CIA evil? Was America racist? Or was the CIA doing bad shit for a good reason, to subvert regimes that appeared epicene, democratically socialist in nature, but in reality were dangerous pathogens that would lead to world war and slavery and tyranny? Were blacks actually more criminally minded, did they behave disproportionately against society and law and this was the reason they were overly represented in prison? Or were they just so ill-equipped for -and sabotaged by- modern Anglo-Saxon culture -and so hated by the country that

had bought them at one price and now had to care for them at another- that they had had their hearts turn cold, hard, black?

Facts are limitless; truth has a finite border to inspect.

Without narrative, there is no truth, and narrative was useless in domains that required perfect epistemological knowledge. If what you needed to know required *all* the data, then you could never know the truth in that domain. And thus, a story would be useless, worse than useless, it would be dangerous and wrong.

If what you needed to know was bounded, heuristic, good enough for now, trial and error, and experimentation, if you needed *some* facts, not all, and if you could throw some things at the wall and not do too much damage, then a story was exactly what you needed; a narrative would be perfectly True. True enough for now. *And where,* Isaiah asked himself, *did Man live if not in the Now?*

Literature was the drama that set man in motion; set all beasts in motion. *Poetry,* Isaiah knew, *was the hand that dug in the real garden, the thing that reached and grasped at the thing desired* . Religion was the brake, the, *thou shalt not* .

Man's dreams, the beast's dreams, were what explained to the overt-language brain, the left brain, what had just been converted from unknown to known, from chaos to order in the mind, it was the hand that handed the eye the new maps of meaning; and all that lifetime of literature and religion pressed the accelerator and brake along the route. Poetry allowed man to look out the window of his car, or turn his head on his motorcycle, *and consider the birds.*

This was the kind of thing MO would not understand; Steven and Tania would dismiss; *but the inmate would smile large enough to reveal that $30,000 in dental work he had had done; white, timeless, strong work he rarely showed off; work he hid behind that feral black beard* , Isaiah thought as the lab grew darker -as the LED circadian rhythm adjusted indoors- to mimic the summer dark without.

Isaiah smiled now himself, teeth wet and gleaming in the highlight of the Lab. *What an epiphany,* he thought, *to do more with less; to truly do more with less* . This was the truth that escaped MO and himself -previous to now- as they compiled more and more data like maniacs, like cormorant and insatiable mouths and greedy and grasping hands.

He'd never be able to stop MO; it was his nature to compute, to gather more and more data; he had no system for narrative, no need for drama, the drama of life; he saw it as garnish, as patina, as mere coating to a useful machine beneath. But

Isaiah now knew, that narrative, that drama was the machine, and facts were the mere patina, the orange rust on Corten steel, protective, beautiful, entropic, and not at all what held the weight of the span, the block, the world. The drama moved it all. It was the engine and torque converter and differential of all life. And Isaiah began to build the best drama -the best drive train- he could imagine so he could bring Truth into the world.

What else could be wanted, as MO solved all of man's problems; his bungling -man's bungling- of his relationship with the sky and the sea, his *wolf by the ears* as he had built a society, an economy, he could no longer control? MO would help with these problems, reducing CO2, changing the genome of recidivist criminals, getting the Governor re-elected, solving the problem of entropy encroaching from the periphery to the core. The pollution, the crime, the drug addiction, the economic instability, and maybe even clean up the plastic in the ocean and put out a fire or two. But Isaiah would solve the larger problem; *the lack of a unifying narrative, the total lack of depth, the anomie and* ennui *of the modern man,* he thought.

Isaiah would bring them a story that would give them something to do besides act like chaotic idiots with nothing better to do than make money and get drunk and bang chicks. And he was beginning to see how the narrative structure could form. He heard a slight echo in the back of the memory of those intercepted conversations between the inmate and Chen. Isaiah ignored it as he had other things to do, but there was something there, some pain that seemed self-similar, had valence with the pain in the inmate's own voice. *It had the same origins* , he briefly thought and as the word *origin* was said in his head he let it populate his mind with another idea:

And it began with a hero. And it began with his journey .

He then felt the heat signature in the hallway and smiled. Isaiah walked over and opened the door, as the BOP officer -half startled- held fast to the inmate's shackles and stopped them both one meter from the door.

"Come on in," Isaiah said, and waved his hand in a sweeping gesture, bowing just a bit, graciously, with slight affect, but genuine pleasure, as the inmate walked through the door rubbing his wrists from the shackles that had just been idiopathically removed. Today he'd sit unshackled in the lab, the garden, and Isaiah would let him tell him his tale of woe as often as he wanted; as often as he needed to .

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“Ok, I have a coin, and it’s not loaded or fake or rigged, ok; it’s a straight up coin. Got it?”

They nodded their heads. He held no coin, this was a thought experiment.

“Next, I’m going to toss it 100 times, the first 99 come up tails; ok, I want you to calculate the probability that the final 100th toss will be heads,” he raised his eyebrows and handed the game over to them.

They looked at each other, the little boy smiled, as spit gathered like mold in the corners of his mouth; the father -Lyndon’s brother- laughed in his nervous way.

“Actually, write it down, each of you, write it down on a piece of paper,” Lyndon said. His face was shaved and smooth and his hair was cut, and his suit was taut about the shoulders and chest; and thighs. It was a perfectly matte black linen from Italy made-to-measure with his *sobriquet* stitched into the melton and inner starboard lining of jacket.

They -all three, Brock, Travis and Lyndon- wrote down their answers and Lyndon had them read their answers aloud; the boy going first.

“50%,” Brock said with pride.

“Ok, why? Explain,” Lyndon said.

“The probably of heads is 50% on each toss, regardless of the previous throw; the probability resets each time,” Brock explained correctly the rules of -and inside- a ludic world.

“Flawless logic Brock, I mean that. Flawless,” Lyndon said, he then nodded to Travis to read his answer from the paper.

“Yeah, I had 50% too, for the same reasons,” Travis said as he softly threw the paper towards him as proof.

“Ok, great, now, if you’ll forgive the melodrama, here’s my piece of paper, Brock will -actually Travis- will you read it aloud,” he slid the paper over the table as the parents and wife looked on with amusement and nervousness; Lyndon was a coiled snake, and they watched that tongue -his speaking voice- sniff at the air in rhythm as the rest of them stood fucking clear.

“Ok, it says,” Travis read verbatim, “the chances of the 100th toss coming up heads is 0%; less than zero. None. And here he curses, and repeats zero, the word zero,” Travis had not used the swear words, but otherwise accurately read from the paper his brother wrote upon. Travis then flipped over the paper so nobody could read the bizarre and slightly obscene, vulgar in one place anyway,

note.

“Correct,” Lyndon said as everyone shifted in shoes and on legs and arms all akimbo and grimaces and rubbing of noses.

“Brock do you know the ludic fallacy? Ever heard that term?” Lyndon then asked .

“Uh, no, I think I know, well, no, I don’t,” he laughed in a genuine and boyish manner, he wanted to impress his uncle, with knowledge, but he didn’t want to lie. That dialectic in the head had spilled out into the air between them in real time. Lyndon liked the boy a lot.

“Travis, ludic fallacy?” Lyndon asked, winking at his nephew.

“Nope,” he said as his lips grew thin and taut and his face hard and hostile. He did not like anything his brother did; and Lyndon was *doing something* , that much he knew.

“It’s the fallacy of mathematicians and finance guys, it’s the fallacy that comes from people who play games for a living. *Ludic* means *games* -or *play*- in Latin; and guys who build mathematical models for fun or for financial models *et cetera* , always count on two things. First, that the system is ergodic, you know,” he said as he was interrupted.

“No,” they all said in desire to move on; getting him to quickly define his terms.

“I see, well ergodic means, that it will all come out in the wash; specifically, that the model is good because in the long run their math works, that the model is sound because with enough iterations, 1,000 or 1,000 trillion, the model is sound. The math is sound.

“Two, well, first let me explain the problem with the first: life is not amenable to the long run, we live finite lives. A casino always wins in the long run, but one gambler if allowed to -by the casino- can place a billion-dollar bet and win in the short run. That is why casinos don’t allow bets like that. I assume you know this? Casinos have strict rules about large bets, and they will not under any circumstances allow a bet so large that if they lose it, in the short run, they go bankrupt.

“But, a player, he isn’t so smart. He places bets that do bankrupt him if he loses, and he continues to play after he’s won a big bet -a big bet, but not so big the casino forbade it of course- but instead of getting up and leaving the sucker continues to play, forcing probability to catch up to him, and the reversion to the mean; i.e., in the long run he will lose. That long run is what Casinos’ count on.

But it is just a game, not real life.

“Now, the second thing math people count on is… oh wait, let’s try this. I almost forgot. I have 100 bucks here, and I should have a coin, yes,” he said as he dug out -from his pocket- a roll of 100-dollar bills -almost $5,000 worth- and like pulling a tissue from a dispenser removed one bill. He also retrieved a quarter he passed around to everyone to examine; the boy looked, the father declined.

Lyndon had peeled off one of the hundred dollar bills and placed it in the center, and said, “ok, I bet you 100 to 1, each of you put in a dollar, ok, get a dollar and put it in the middle, and I’ll flip that coin. If it comes up heads as you predicted it had a 50% chance of then you get the 102 bucks in the middle, 51 bucks to each of you since you both would be correct. So that is a 50-1 payoff for a 50/50 chance, which is a smart bet. You agree?” Lyndon asked.

“Oh yeah,” the boy said with glee as everyone laughed; Lyndon and Travis’s father -the boy’s grandfather- smirked wryly and with almost no malice, at his youngest son and then at his eldest.

Travis began to gain his humor back and grinned and chuckled a little as his wife, Cami, said something of no consequence in the background; something censorious and wet-raggish, but the caravan moved on.

“Ok, here we go,” Travis said and put in two bucks one for himself and his young son .

“No, no, Brock, go get your own, money, let’s play this fair and square, ok?” Lyndon said.

“Ok,” the boy got up from the table in a hurry and ran to his room. Travis and Cami seemed to argue over whether betting or gambling was *apropos* ; Travis demurred and said it was all in fun and Lyndon said, “look, if he loses, I will give him his dollar back, ok? I’m trying to teach him a lesson, relax, it’s math, not gambling.”

“Oh, that’s fine,” Cami said unconvincingly as if she had had no problem all along; but she didn’t like gambling, even if it was math. However, she knew that the boy’s uncle was around one day in 10 years it seemed, so she let it slide. She didn’t know it, but her cerebellum also told her that to fuck with this man was likely to end up in a big mess in her kitchen; her fear of his temper overrode the logic of her *bourgeois* values *vis-à-vis* degeneracy and games-of-chance this time.

“I got it,” Brock said upon his return, and he placed a dollar in the middle as Travis retrieved one of the dollars he laid down. Then Brock added a $5 note and

said, you *wanna* go 500 to 1? To which everyone laughed and Lyndon said, “I like it, you get the probability and pot odds, you get that it makes sense to bet more not less when you are getting 50/50 odds but a 50 to or 500 to 1 pot; but just so you realize at 500 to 5, the odds are still 50/50 and if you win it’s 90 to 1 and if your father, my brother, comes in with his own $5 then it’s back down to 50 to 1. But, at any rate, I will,” he reached for his bills in his front pocket, a roll so fat that when he retrieved it everyone was taken aback -they had not noticed it the first time it seemed- and the boy even laughed at its girth and ridiculousness of carrying that much cash. No respectable person carried that much cash, everyone agreed to that; implicitly, of course, as they did not *say* a word.

“Here,” he peeled off four more *hundreds* and laid them at the table. “Travis you either match that with your own $5 or me and boy can have a side bet, but that’s between you and the boy, because if you don’t kick in your $5, and if it’s heads then he gets 450 and you get just 50, so, make up your mind so I can flip this thing and get it over with and see what the fate’s decide.”

“I’m good,” Travis demurred, he had long since figured something was amiss, and didn’t want to look any more foolish that he already surmised that he did. *His little brother was a dick, and he was prone to lording his cleverness over everyone,* and Travis figured this was one of those times.

Travis was certain he was right on the odds though, *he and the boy were right, dammit, the odds reset each time and it was a 50/50 chance it would come up heads* . He added, *or tails for that matter* . He was beginning to think that the real joke -what Lyndon was actually showing- was that Travis was too scared to put in 5 bucks, retrieve his single and put in $5 to win $250 instead of 1 buck to win $50.

“Did you ever read that book, oh man I forget the name of the author,” Lyndon began with *nonchalance* , “anyway there are a ton of these memoirs from millionaires, and they all say the same thing, that the number one trait among the rich and super rich is tolerance for risk taking, did you know that?”

He looked -and kind of nodded- at Brock who was eager for his dad to make a decision and see if they could get lucky and all that money. He hardly heard his uncle’s question but Travis heard it as their mother, fatuously, said that she didn’t know that little fact about millionaires and then went on to insist that it indeed, *made sense* in her little bird way.

Lyndon smiled at her as if he loved her, as if he was happy she was adding her thoughts to this *impromptu* salon of math and wisdom and knowledge of all things in all hemispheres and in all domains .

Travis was almost certain now that Lyndon was making a joke of his timidity, and the losses -the forsaken gains- the lost gains that incur from his meekness. Travis was wise to this now; *fuck him* , he thought and got out his wallet and exchanged the buck for the $5 bill as Brock giggled in expectation. His brain was firing with neurotransmitters and all manner of *biochems* as he loved this kind of thing.

“But, now it’s $10 to $500, or 50-1 still. Like you said,” Travis said, catching -at the end of the sentence- that his brother had already in fact said that; Travis corrected himself so as to avoid looking foolish, and added, “so, Brock and I split it if we win.”

“If it’s heads, you each get $250, plus each of your *fivers* back; if tails, then I get $10, plus my $500 back; correct?” Lyndon said and placed the quarter on his thumb half harbored by his index finger, ready to flip. Everyone said or nodded that they agreed.

He looked around and flipped the coin and as it hung over the table he rose from the chair and walked away -toward the kitchen- to grab a beer. He heard the coin hit the table and vibrate a bit and then land a second time; *it must have bounced straight up* , he thought, *that was good* . He then heard it settle down and as he opened the fridge he asked his dad if he wanted a beer, but the old man said he was *fine* . Lyndon thought he and the old man might share a bit of a celebration, but this family was way beyond all of that. Whatever Lyndon enjoyed, they hated; *and mutatis mutandis,* he thought.

Tolstoy had that famous line, Lyndon was embarrassed to think such *cliché* crap, but it was true, all families that were happy were happy in the same fucking way; *his family was uniquely -weirdly- morose and evil and probably, a computer simulation* , he thought, *75/25 odds,* with a smirk as he drank from the *Dos Equis* bottle. He thought that he and his family were likely goddamn robots.

“Ah man!” Brock said, and his grandmother -Lyndon and Travis’s mother- said with lament, “oh, did it come up tails,” to which everyone corrected her that it was *heads* in fact that was wanted, in which she immediately, to avoid any further embarrassment, said, “right did it come up heads then, Brock, did it come up wrong?” She had something inside her that knew that there were two sides to this bet, not just the one, and so she then quickly added, “for you guys,” still getting the proper lament quite wrong.

Everyone lost heart and couldn’t correct her again. Brock just said, succinctly, “it came up tails, and we lost”. And everyone just let that lie there.

Lyndon stood away from the table so they would have to, be forced to announce that he had won 10 bucks as his 500 dollars lay on the table. Travis barely was audible; that was the voice Lyndon was honed in on. He wanted to hear his brother lament it; because of course Lyndon knew -he had already known- it was -and would always be- tails.

Brock showed his dad what Travis already knew -that the coin had come up tails- then the boy turned it to make sure there was in fact a heads on one side of the coin; and there was. He slammed the coin down a little too hard, not in anger but mere frustration, but his mother reminded him to be a good loser; and a good player of games.

Lyndon drank from his beer and smiled; he watched the family all move like ruminants, careful of one another, unsure of where to go, and unsure of what life was, but that it seemed -life did- kinda good, *they acted just like the oft-fed turkeys,* he thought, *right up until the day the farmer, the great farmer in the sky slaughtered them for their meat* .

“Well, that was fun,” mother said with no agreement from anyone including from inside of herself. She was hoping to fall asleep right then and wake up next week when this bad seed child of hers was gone and his odd behavior didn’t need commented upon or swept up or anything like that.

“I take it I won,” Lyndon said to his father who nodded in assent.

Brock was flipping the coin now over and over and each time it was coming up tails, over and over; he was beginning to twist his face at these odds; 5 then 6 now 7 times in a row it was coming up tails as he flipped; each iteration of the game the same.

Lyndon drank his beer in silence and then broke it with this, “ok, Brock how many times have you flipped that coin now?”

“8, and” as he flipped it again, saying, “9” and he kept going, as his dad told him to stop. Travis was afraid now, it was a nebulous fear, he couldn’t name it or corral it; but he put his hand out to stop the boy’s arm from flipping the coin any more. The boy wriggled free and the coin fell on the floor, coming up tails up, of course, and he picked it up with a look on his face that told everyone it was still fucking tails.

Lyndon laughed at the fear in Travis, he knew exactly what was at stake. Travis was afraid that Brock would say what was true, *that the coin was a fake, loaded, rigged,* and upon this accusation, Travis was afraid that Lyndon would fly off the handle and the whole thing could end in rancor at least, and maybe even

bloodshed. Lyndon was a hothead, armed, and the last time Travis had seen Lyndon's pistol it was cocked. And when Travis had said something about it Lyndon had laughed and bragged, Travis recalled, *that this was how a gun was supposed to be carried.*

Lyndon watched as the family began mooing and moving and avoiding looking him in the eye. They hated him, hated his ways, were suspicious of him in all cases. He felt true sadness in his heart at that. He had no malice, almost no malice, he was just trying to teach them a lesson on life; a lesson he had to learn in ways much harder than this, he had lost hundreds of thousands, maybe a million to this kind -types similar to this kind- of perfidy; he was just trying to -in a jovial manner- explain something bigger, deeper about life and about what had happened to him.

He was in no way interested in their goddamn 10 bucks, in fact he had decided to let them keep his $500, even though he won. Because he had a code, and that code was that *you don't lie to or cheat good people* ; and even though these weren't exactly good people, they were close enough to it that he'd err on the side of not ripping them off for $10 and in fact would let them have his money instead, just to prove he was not a thief. He was attempting to prove he was a man, who had been beaten, ripped off, slandered, and betrayed himself.

"Well, if someone told me that after 99 tosses a coin had come up tails and then asked me to calculate the odds of heads on the 100^{th} throw; well, like I wrote down, I'd say 0%. Because despite them saying," he was interrupted by Brock.

"You said the coin was fair, wasn't loaded or a fake though," Brock said as he kept flipping the coin; now in the living room and wandering around as his sister looked at him with some wonderment. She thought Lyndon looked like Han Solo from the first ones and had told her mom that.

"I did; and that was the premise of the question, the game, or in Latin, *the ludic,"* he let that clue sit there for a bit. He thought, *but they were all too stupid -no* , he corrected himself, *they were all too scared- to get his little joke; they already figured it was a fake and thought they had gleaned the point.* But as usual they had barely gotten half the point and he had to explain the rest.

"See, in the ludic fallacy, the math guys, the guys who know the probabilities and know Bayesian inferences and Mandelbrotian models and Knightian risks and blah blah, what you guys always forget is *the human element ,*" he leaned on this word, hoping they'd get both his points, the layers of his points, "the human is irrelevant to you; it's outside of the game. And that is the *loci* of the fallacy; you think life is a game, something reducible to odds and probability and

equations and certainty and risk-management and on and on.

“But, in the real world, people are irrational, they make mistakes, they are tired or lazy or stupid and yes, they most certainly lie, cheat and steal. And that is why all the models in the world are useless. If a guy tells me the coin is *not rigged* then reveals that it came up tails 99 tosses in a row I already know that hundredth toss is coming up tails, not because I am oblivious to probability reset, or nonergodic systems or even basic math; I’m certain it’s coming up tails on the 100^{th} toss because I know people. I know them now, anyway.

“And I know the odds of a coin coming up tails 99 in a row is impossible, it’s a 1 to the 56^{th} power chance; not once in 9 trillion years could it happen. So, I ask you, what is more likely, more probable, that a God be born to a virgin, or that a Jewish minx should tell a lie?”

They remained silent and he downed the rest of the beer, walked around the kitchen island and out toward the front door; they did not stop him as he went outside to his car, started it, drove away and left his $500 on the table next to their mere $10.

10. Zendik LLC

While we are all agreed that murder, stealing and ruthlessness of any kind are obviously inadmissible… yet these are all examples of instinctual behavior and the necessity for their suppression seems to us self-evident. Only in regards to sex do we feel the need of a question mark. This points to a doubt; the doubt whether our existing moral concepts and the legal institutions founded on them are really adequate and suited to their purpose. Nowadays we have no sexual morality, only a legalistic attitude toward sexuality

Man and His Relation to Others [Jung, Carl G]

For I would have you know brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel

Galatians 1:11 [King James Bible]

If you find my writing offensive, you'll also find me offensive. Come listen to the dreamer, the idealist, the impractical unrealistic one; with ideas unworkable in this modern world. Ideas and ideals certain to lend you to chaos and dissention, turmoil, and conflict – or heaven

A Quest Among the Bewildered [Zendik, Wulf]

I. 1999 e.v

The 12 men had slept in the loft of the barn built in 1899 e.v., it was built with large lumber and it was 100 feet long and 30 feet wide. The hay doors were open; and the cold air of the Blue Ridge preceded the sun. The moon was to their south, the animals were below. They all slept on single mattresses flush to the wooden planks and used old milk crates as shelving for books and razors and apotropaic of various sorts. A nervousness ran on the brain like a memory of some future mistake; the blood contained androgens of young men in tribe; young men in the center of something small but strong.

The mountain cats screeched more than they growled. The horses below made some noises as they bedded down. He owned nothing but what was in his little space; and he felt richer than ever. *How often,* he thought, *had he had nothing and felt the whole world was his?* This is intentional poverty and it was liberating in ways he would repeat; in ways worth repeating many times. He thought of *Seneca* abandoning all that he owned: 1,000 writing desks and refusing to speak of each word written, refusing to recall each letter read.

Today's breakfast would be in the kitchen which was on the porch outside of their four-room house built in 1879; 20 years before and 20 meters from the barn. It was ramshackle and unplumbed -and along with four outbuildings and the 128 acres it sat on- it was now all that Zendik Farm owned. They had sold the beach house in Fort Pierce and -back then, in February- he had watched Shey put on deodorant for once. She was wearing it because she was interacting with

civilians and her black hair was sparse under her arms and he felt he could smell the best part of her odor being snuffed out like a soft candle flame doused just so everyone could go to -or back to- sleep .

But he stayed awake in the dark of the pre-dawn barn and admired and maybe even loved her a bit.

Zendik was like America, no place for romantic love, and so back in Florida he had sat in the car, as the driver, and let its engine run while the women from Zendik -Arol and Shey- spoke with the realtor that day.

Zendik didn't exactly avoid civilians , he would think, *it's just that they had so much going on that they rarely interacted at all* ; *and when they did is was usually the women who were the face of the large corpus of the farm.* The women were the persona, the interface, of something feral and dark underneath. And they tried to clean up and smell nice, they turned on a dime, because body odor was the kind of thing not merely accepted but preferred on the Farm to the saccharine smell of *eau de toilette* . It was metaphor that even the olfactory nerves got; exemplifying the rule of *Epictetus* : *not to explain one's ethos but embody it.*

Deodorant said, implicitly, *who I am is bad, who I am you will not like; I shall cover my head with carapace, I shall mask my soul in whispers from things that do not exist. I shall pretend neither of us are animals at all. Let us pray.*

Civilians wouldn't understand that what made them -as civilians- recoil is what made Zendiks lean in; what they thought déclassé *Zendik reveled in and thought grand,* he thought.

Years later, decades later, this was one of two things Lyndon had taken from Zendik Farm. One -the first- was radical honesty, to say what was truly in one's head, not the polite bullshit lies that one somehow believes one actually thinks and secondly, to *be* -to embody- what you profess to think, and not merely speak it. *Life artistry* was the name of it, and it would become the thing that drew a line between him and everyone he met. He would be surprised by how few ex-Zendiks lived anything close to their avowed philosophy. Wulf had let anyone join that goddamn group, and just how shallow 99% of them were was evidenced by who they had become in the years after they left; by the time he went to prison as consequence for his life-artistry. He would read other books about Zendik and marvel at how shallow almost everyone -who had a take on that place- in fact was.

That the point of life was to live one's life as if the *how* mattered more than the

results; was something that nobody quite got about him . Life-artistry was the way a man lived if he took it seriously when some adult told him -as a child- that it was not *whether one won or lost, but how they played the game.* Nobody -of course- meant that when they said it, but the life artists had heard the music of that injunction none-the-less and began to sway to it if not outright dance and sing out loud with the muse and the tune. The outlaw plays *a game he cannot win, to the utmost* . He need only hear this is possible -just the once- and he never forgets it at all.

He -even at 45- was just trying to convince people of the basics, life 101; the fundamentals to those so long civilized they have lost the scent; those who cannot understand a real man. *But,* he felt, *he had to try one more time before he just closed their eyes forever. He owed them the chance to open their goddamn eyes even once to see God's creation in all its* macabre *splendor.*

To speak it -the logos- is to bring it to life though , he thought, like many myths assert. This is why words -especially the names of apex villains- are carefully guarded and the hero is warned to utter some things only with great care. Maybe this was why modern man was so loath to speak the truth; maybe they wisely knew the doom just on the other side of the long names of such close enemies. If the truth was dangerous, which it was, was it not an enemy to each man -and mankind- and thus ought its name not be spoken but with great care? He smiled at the irony of him defending liars merely because they saw a hidden truth.

That day months ago -millennia in Zendik time- the sun was Floridian and the air was wet from the ocean off its coast and the car he drove was not his. They had many cars, his he gave up within a month of his arrival in June of 1998. He had signed it over and they sold it, and he had felt proud to help out. That car was worth $55-70k by 2020; a classic. But this car he had driven to the meeting was useful; lacking balls, but pragmatic. Back then, he didn't mind the loss of the one thing for the gain of manifold things; they shared everything like a tribe. And he had in fact gained just such a thing: a tribe.

He liked that, and even with the loss of such an asset -his own car- he never felt bitter or ripped off by those grifters and madmen and cult leaders and their apparatchiks. *Well,* never *is not quite the right word for how he felt; the arrow of time travels far. But,* he thought, *it was rare that he ruminated on the names of those who had fleeced him so* . If he ever lamented their theft from him, it was *mere meteor of the war. It was just one small flame in the first view of the giant black vault above. His war would not be with them.*

He felt -now- as if he had been kidnapped by an ancient tribe of *injuns* that

showed him their ways so that he may one day share those ideas with his own people and they would flourish in the forest and away from mankind. *Arol was mostly insincere, and Fawn was likely almost a sociopath too, and so while what they said to the clan was true, they merely said it, aped it, mimicked it. Most days they couldn't bring themselves to mean it, they didn't embody it; and some days they left their shadow inside and somedays they left their bodies under the bed.*

And that would be the difference when Lyndon one day started his own tribe , he thought, and he thought it like all idealists think things: about half way through.

Cookie -the *cliché sobrique* t given to Chris the cook- had converted the back porch into a mess hall with one-pound propane bottles hooked up to camp stoves in tandem. Pots of rice and oats and amalgams of sauces boiled and simmered and rested as he spun plates on a stick it seemed. He was a real chef, the genuine article, like most Zendiks he had an actual talent, a thing he did so well he could have been well compensated in the civilian world if he so chose. And he had a darkness in him too, like all men, and he broke taboos that Lyndon never would have imagined, and Lyndon would break the taboos men like that -beta males like Cookie- would never conceive of either.

This was the way the of the world: each type of man broke the rules that most abraded him. Betas raped in the dark, Alphas killed in the noon-of-day. And the world spun like the spider's web, above the golden math of a watery God and under the *noble-rot* of the *Dionysian* clusters that belong to the grand *vigneron:* the Devil, the bringer of morning stars and their light.

That morning -the morning he had awoken early in the barn loft- played no music, and the crew was quiet. But the night before, *We the Poet* had played on shitty speakers and inside the rough boards of the barn and his ears -his soul- had locked onto Mazz -the band's violinist- and her strings and lumber combined. He could even -almost- then see some future where she'd go on to play music on morning & late night TV and yet still be a boilerplate black nationalist and identity politics dork despite her genuine talent. *God,* he thought, *she had real talent,* and he would be proud of her, despite her total lack of depth. *There is more to a woman than brains* , he'd one day think. *They aren't like men, they can be other things than smart. And she could play that fiddle, man.* Her grand music, her great poetry made him forget all about her horrid prose .

But here and now in the morning in North Carolina, he thought that next month, the month of May, Arol would arrive. As he sat on the floor, the patina of the old 19th century home seemed to vibrate and breathe, as he ate his yogurt and drank hot black tea; the surface of the home seemed to lift off like heat, gas, reverie.

They were normally off all caffeine, and all sugar and alcohol too. But during missions like this one -to get North Carolina operational for the rest of the farm, for the women and children to arrive- black tea was freely made in 10-gallon batches and ambrosia honey was the thing that met and civilized the tannins in all but the top layer of the mix in the mason jar he drank from in the early AM. He sat Indian-legged and breathed through his nose.

Arol would show up and begin bossing everyone around; telling people like Jyre not to throw *organic* material into the well. He was so ignorant he thought she meant *organic* the way a food producer meant it when they brag about that status on their bug infested crop. She meant it in the way chemists mean it: *anything that breaks down over time* . Jyre was a fool, a coxcomb man with a 150 IQ. But, Lyndon hated the man and made no attempt to conceal it then or now or later. He had always gone on instinct when most right and most wrong. It was only when he used his modern mind, his pusillanimous reason, that he was *always* dead fucking wrong.

Arol was bossy for good reason: her minions often were dumb. And she was trying to squeeze every bit of blood from them as possible; she didn't write N&N on their clothes but *night & fog* was the way she thought. She herded people like beasts; she had no more malice than the jailer, no more respect than the shepherd, no more thought for the morrow than the ants in the grass.

By 0800hrs they were bailing hay -mostly alfalfa- so they could feed the 12 horses in their care. Fawn had sent them with Colt, the boy just 14 then and raised from a babe on the farm. He was a good horsemen and would have fit right in inside *Mongolian* tribes of the 5th century of the *era vulgari* . He had Fawn on the phone each night -they had cells phones and internet before plumbing at the new property- and she had given him instructions that he followed well for a boy his age.

Colt had been working each day since he was knee-high, and thus his body was smart not just his mind; which meant he was 99% smart-as-fuck. Lyndon thought of his own weak and malingering nephew later in life and thought it was an outrage he was raised in the modern way; with no responsibilities and no masculinity and no expectation to work. *He was all head like a watch too,* he thought. *He would grow to be a part of their common problem, both victim and perpetrator both.*

Lyndon's brother had lamented the boy's fecklessness as if it was some ineffable act of God; as if he was himself not the boy's father and thus could encourage him, make him, demand of him to be his best. But the modern family allows the

kids to be in charge and so the boy sat in his room with a headache -like a Victorian woman avoiding her marital duties- and reading -not the books Lyndon had given him, not the Western canon, but- trash fit for a boy half his age. And due to *dmPFC* damage from his safe and careful youth, the young boy barely comprehended what he read. Again, the parents had no idea why.

Nobody had any idea why anything happened, Lyndon thought with pique, and when he tried to explain they just looked at him like he made shit up. That's the thing with being more than merely clever, you actually can be too smart for anyone to even listen to you. He didn't listen to men with IQs two or three SDfM -above him- either; for they sounded like they spoke in riddles and corrupted languages; but he at least knew it was *he* that was the problem -in this situation- and not *them* . But common men were too obtuse to even know how much smarter Lyndon was than they. And so mysteries he had solved remained mysteries to them long after he had explained .

The goat yogurt and ambrosia honey they had gleaned -from neighbors with an apiary- rested in his belly as he walked the rows behind the bailer grabbing 50-pound dry-bails by the wire. He chucked them in the trailer that followed and then on the flatbed next as the sunstar made the trees seem white; the grass alive but suffering; it made the men squint under shadows of brow formed from at least four continents and their respective DNA. Vong, the *Laotian* with black hair that nearly touched the ground and black eyes that looked at you like a child's, organized the bails once on the vehicles and he worked efficiently and strong and without cease. He was 130 pounds at 5 foot 5 but it was all muscle and sinew, a strong and cut physique, free of ballast, like all Zendik men who stayed longer than 44 days.

The fat were told not to remove their shirts , he had cause to think as the sun rose; disrobing was a privilege for all those in warrior shape. The recent arrivals, the fat kids, got pissed and bitched but gave up as they were told to get svelte or remain swaddled and the tribe then moved onto the next topic at hand. *Fat people even argue languidly,* he thought with a snort. It was a warrior culture with strange ideas that Lyndon would later learn were *Spartan* -from *Lycurgus*- and it was the best time of his life.

Of course, each epoch would be the best time of his life in some ways, he would admit. He loved life, for reasons most men would never get. He liked the austerity, the pain, the opportunity for violence the most. And he inflicted the most of all three on himself. He was fair this way. He suffered under his own philosophy first and tested it out for the right amount of malice and justice

before he fed it to men with less sensitive palates. He'd forget and often test it out on girls first; he always forgot the way he treated girls; which was why when they fucked with him it was always a shock *and* a surprise.

He thrived on structure like Zendik, and he built his body -already thin, muscled and taut when he arrived- and his mind -already facile from reading nonstop since he was eight or nine- each day using work and a philosophy that worked on his right-hemisphere of the brain. He worked well with others, because they were serious and did not fuck around. They ran that bailer until it would shear the pin and he'd have to go make a new one from round stock in their tool shed with a cutting wheel and lineman pliers and glasses over his eyes as the slag hit all around him and the wind picked up from over the Blue Ridge and blew the grasses down like observant Muslims five times a day. The dogs ran around like carneys and he often would kick them if they got too close and they'd yelp and run away. There was penitence all around if one knew where to look.

He stripped down to his wife-beater by 1000hrs and he put on a yellow and brown cowboy hat, foxed and singed like leaves of old books of the *Herculaneum* , to keep off the sun as it rose over it all with permanent if elliptical judgement. His hair was longish now, it had been shorn to the headbone when he had arrived in Florida nearly one year ago. He had been a skinhead, but a pacifist & liberal one, and this was one of the first things that had to go. As his hair grew back his animal instincts matched and the liberalism evaporated away. His natural martial nature, his lethality began to re-emerge; and they -the elders- told him he was no kind of nice-guy and he ought to drop that weak-shit right fucking now. Zoe and Bugz gave him a talking to.

He was offended and shocked and knew it was true, but he didn't know how to process information at the rate they dished it out; he was still very precious about who he thought he was. Most modern people think they truly are the *façade* that they project into the world. They believe it, it's no act, like a thespian who loses himself in a role. People, 99% of those you meet are method actors, they are entranced by their own bullshit. They believe their own lies as much as they are willing to wink at yours .

But Zendiks saw through this shit and set each man straight and by the time he was doing mechanical work -including tearing down whole motors and replacing main bearings and re-honing cylinder walls- and also in order to keep things moving swiftly, smoothly, he had accepted that they were right: *ok, fine* , he said, *he was no pacifist at all.* He was angry, violent in his blood, and he had begun to think like Mary Renault's bull-dancer from *Crete* : *blood is blood, and you*

cannot wash out what is written in it.

People rarely understood the purpose of literature, thinking it was merely a story one could read to pass the time or have some fun with your clothes on and so on and so forth.

But prose is power , Lyndon often thought, as he often paused the act of reading to absorb what was just written for him -the incantation- by some author long dead yet their spells still most alive. *Literature is mythology and that is religion and that is the trail God leaves in the forest to follow, track, even stalk ,* he thought. One day he'd track the blood trails of bears and men alike.

He thought of Renault and how magnificent her prose was and how it surpassed the banal words of modern men. Lyndon had not liked it when the den leader to his cub scout troop had been a woman and he had thus quit in protest; at age six he was already what he would always be: revanchist, chauvinist, proud. He did not like his mother, seeing her as craven and stupid -all true- and a hindrance to him becoming a man as early as age three or four. We forget how much more children know than those that they grow up to be. *Instinct trumps acquired knowledge when one's society is as corrupt as ours,* he thought. *The Spartan man grew wise in addition to his innate instincts, modern men grew fat and weak and liberal and their best instincts fell away like uterine fur. Ancient men grew better, into men. Modern men grew into mulch, compost, manure.*

And women ought to be goddesses, as they were born to be, yet they are turned into the worst things he could imagine: aggressive, bossy, promiscuous and yet still unable to take a punch. Anyone aggressive, bossy and fucking around must know how to fight to survive; and modern women wanted only the bait not the hook.

They tried to be what men were instead of being proud of what they -as females- already were. *Imagine a beast like the bear attempting to fly like the hawk ,* he thought. *Why,* he thought, *must regal creatures like women abandon what they are geniuses at just so they may be terrible at what men are perfectly designed for? The forest had no time for that shit; a bear flapping its arms would die and each beast would just move on with barely a laugh.*

He had once -at age four- refused a gift from his nine-year-old brother as too *effeminate ,* and this had incurred the wrath of his mother. But he was conscious of the differences between males and females from the womb and he never felt badly for his insistence that he was not a goddamn girl.

While women are not funny, they sure can write, and Flannery O'Connor and

Mary Renault were better than Hemingway and Bukowski , he thought. He'd defend their writing over those overrated guys until someone gave up or cried. He was no friend of women; he thought both more and less of them, to be mere friends with such creatures. But a writer -male or female- who had command of language and the thing language reveals, was a hero to him that he would defend, until either he or the thing he battled cracked and fell into its own footprint. *Either the hammer or the anvil would break,* he thought, *but his arm would never stop pounding. The world would crack or he'd have a heart-attack, but the fist would never unfurl. His eyes might go blind from the slag or a dagger, but he'd never once fucking blink.*

They worked sun up to sun down like a real farm, and once -many years later- when Lyndon's brother, Travis, had tried to school Lyndon on how *hard farm work was* , Lyndon had been incredulous, shocked, aghast, and assumed his older brother must be joking, and he thus stood there waiting for him to admit so.

But the older man was serious, as he had done merely one day's hard work in his life, and so when he watched the Mexicans who worked on his father-in-law's ranch, a ranch *given* to him by *his* father -inherited wealth the most corrosive of all chemicals- Travis had thought his little brother couldn't work *that hard* , he hinted with his throw-away lines. *Travis avoided work,* he surmised, *like the British avoid the dentist or the shallow avoid the sea.*

Travis had no idea how hard Lyndon had worked, he had just never conceptualized it. He had heard the words his brother used, words like *farm* , *oilfield* , *drilling* and *blasting* , *12-hour days* , *13 out of 14 days in a row* , *dynamite, amputations, front end loader, hammer drill up 100 feet on a safety eight and climbing rope, fist-fights, lightning strikes on the mountain roads and ice in the beard and entombing their boots in the creek* . But, none of that meant anything to him, for Travis' secret was that he never listened, and he did not give one shit about anyone else. Lyndon had to admit he came from sociopathic genes. Everyone in his genome was ruthless, and evil, but not directly, not impolitely, no, never enraged, not with principled malice, no, they did it all on the sly with a baboon smile.

Lyndon's evil was not unique in his family, it was merely overt. And this makes all the difference in the *bourgeois* world.

Travis had no idea about the world, he was middle-class and lived and worked at one place his whole life. Lyndon often said he had had more women in bed at one time than Travis had had in his life. *But* , he admitted, *Travis might have*

had three women total, and so maybe it was a tie. And they weren't fucking hookers, he'd add as he knew the way stupid people thought. He'd no more pay for a female than he'd pay to breathe. Sure, all of us pay for each breath we take, but he knew that was not the way most men thought.

Lyndon was his *little* brother -despite how much larger and more dangerous he was- and that was that; the fact that he had protected girls from feral men and domesticated animals on four continents, wrestled 25 manual labor jobs to the ground -two with explosives and 24 with heavy equipment and all accomplished with work gloves and hard hats- and that he had eaten heroic doses of mushrooms and DMT and had seen fucking things that only the Injuns and Apollonian mystics and *yogis* of the orient had perceived, was not impressive to Travis. If it didn't have a tag from Sacks 5th Avenue or the *imprimatur* of Harvard, then Travis didn't give a shit. He didn't even know enough to be impressed by a man who had lived so much life in such a short amount of time. He never took his little brother seriously, not even in the end, not as far as Lyndon ever knew.

Travis insulted Lyndon whenever he opened his mouth, or when he kept it shut; and he liked to pretend it was on accident, and with the older scion being so naïve and half-bright, Lyndon thought, *most folks would let it slide* . But Lyndon saw malice in clouds, he discerned wickedness in puppies wrestling near babies, and was sure the silent were lying and the chatty were hiding all manner of things.

He had a soft spot for his brother, because he was such a goddamn dork and had every right to be jealous of his little brother , and so Lyndon let it go. But he let it go in the way Scottish goat herders let it go: *they never, ever, let it go* .

No, they store it away just in case, like gold bullion, trunks of silver coins as payment for blood from clan-kings, or teeth of any kind that have fallen out the skull in the hand or the mirror. Then when you fuck up one too many times they unload on you with all that shit they claimed to have let slide. They crush you and you deserve it, but only because God is just, not because Lyndon was. He was mean and right, but justice was above his pay grade; *he* , he'd admit, *just did what the ancient gods told him to do* . He let them decide right from wrong. He merely decided what he hated and what he, in fact, loved.

Their father was almost this way too; he held a grudge against his own boys and everyone pretended not to notice. Lying was the MacLeod fucking way; all the while claiming to be the most honest people on earth. It made Lyndon laugh to think of how weak and stupid and immoral his whole fucking family was. He

wondered if it was in fealty to the genes or rebellion to them. He pondered who he was born to be.

For him it was all or nothing, he was Manichean and saw the world in black and white, like the vision at the edges of the periphery of the eyes; like the eyes of bears or attack dogs.

And Travis was unaware of what both he and his little brother were made of. He was about as unaware of that sword of *Damocles* hanging over him as he was of the sharp stick he held in his own hand. Lyndon was a hothead, *for no reason* , if you asked Travis, and so he made no estimation of how bad things would eventually get. *Recognizing patterns, causality, is a sign of intelligence, and Travis was dumber than a bag of soviet hammers* , his little brother would assert. But, Travis was not dumb, and Lyndon knew it, the older brother was just *naïve* and had no concern for why his little brother hurt inside and no map of the terrain at all.

Travis thought Lyndon was angry for quote, *no reason* ; Lyndon repeated every three days, to himself and to anyone within 100 miles, he muttered this in his sleep and whilst writing down things to do. And so Travis never saw it coming; *as seeing it coming* , was *all* that Lyndon saw. They were two eyes in a beast like the whale, one looking left one gazing right, and each one seeing half while believing they saw all that there was to be seen.

Travis saw no signal in that which he asserted was mere noise. If Travis was more savvy he would have imputed a *reason* to the anger, and thus be able to avoid the results. That's the whole reason you listen to a man's tale of woe, so you can predict his behavior and see if you too are on his goddamn list. *The increase in non-fiction writing was a sign,* Lyndon thought, *like the death of the sea. We've lost our religion and for this we will lose our minds right after our souls dry up and die. Nobody would see his warnings in the entrails, they'd read the newspaper instead of his actual news.*

It was just a matter of time -and the natural erosion of rainwater and southwinds- for that fraternal relationship to turn to malice and mayhem and blood spilled out onto the floor.

But at 24, and in North Carolina's Appalachia, Lyndon was far from snapping; he was getting a kick out of each day and everything that he did. Zendik was fun, in a martial and serious way, which was his favorite kind of fun.

It was the fun men had; not women and children. It had impact and import and gravity for the side of the earth predators occupied. The farm work was so in

accordance with his fallen nature that he never felt oppressed by the labor designed for atonement. He enjoyed each crew, from the goat barn to the field hands to the tool shed and concrete crews or horse shodding or cooking in the kitchen for 56 people alongside a chef so *de novo* in his approach he made salad dressing from scratch. He was impressed with Zendik and its people; despite their massive flaws and the demons in their bowels. He liked them despite them not liking him .

He learned things with his muscles and with his brain and he learned how to speak to men with purpose and ease. They drank hibiscus tea in the afternoons, hot in the winter and cold in the summer, floed with ice in the large metal pot it had steeped in. They poured honey in it some days which was luxurious and he learned how much better it was to have very little and get occasional reprieves than to have everything one wanted in life and thus never be sated or slaked.

He'd be rich, relatively speaking, in 14 years and yet he preferred the small pleasures of honey or caffeine or a beer once every 100 days. At Zendik he was alive, present, and his eyes were wide open in ways no civilian's can be. The austerity was tantamount to luxury, the tyranny equal to liberty; and he let them re-plant the same seed in him that God had first made for him decades before.

They, the Zendiks, were cash poor, all 60-plus of them living on just $180,000 a year, that was $3,000 a year per person, and yet he felt they lived like kings. They had everything they needed, because they had a tribe, a purpose and lacked nothing essential. *The Highlanders,* he would note, *had the same ratio of material wealth to royal pride. It was not an insignificant analogy* , he thought. *It was ancient equations and the math of modes-of-being from the Cambrian; it was innate and the notations were as right as the rain.*

This was something middle class dorks do not get, even as they make that $180,000 a year for one family of four.

Lyndon -in the later years- had made over a quarter of a million a year for his *family* of just he and his peripatetic girls. But, as fun as money was, nothing compared to life inside an atavistic tribe, where each day was grand and like the working of the hand bone with its brethren and with an eye to the radius and ulna just beyond.

In 1999 they lived almost like it was 1899 still, and yet it was an opulent life in 101 ways. You cannot explain it to civilians because they do not want to hear it; the *bourgeoisie* need to believe that their middle-class life is some apex of culture otherwise all the shit -the insults and indignities- they eat might not be worth it after all. He'd ask the air, "can you imagine being able to tell your tribe

mates anything; and I mean anything at all?" The air would just let those words float off into the trees and fall unrebuked to the ground; and an atom or two might float up and into the clouds.

When asked today by modern pollsters how many people the respondent can count on in an emergency the most common answer is: *Zero* . The average is: *One* . *Think of that binary of modern life,* he'd more than once say. Loneliness led to depression of specific neurochemistry that can be mimicked -replaced- by opiates; the US didn't have an opiate problem, it had a loneliness one. Not that anyone would ever say that out loud. Not that anyone had one fucking clue.

At Zendik you could literally ask all 60 plus members for anything and they'd make it a priority of their own. You could talk, reveal your darkest and most aspirational conceits and they support you and guide you -sometimes harshly, but honestly- instead of sabotaging you out of jealousy and pique like the ubiquitous frenemies of the *bourgeoisie* .

Imagine being truly happy taking outdoor showers next to a goat barn in rural America, and never having coffee or beer or wine or sugar hardly at all , well, he concluded in this *dialogue-de-sourds , then maybe the* bourgeois *life and all its compromises of the soul- none of which the Zendik had to suffer- and the consequences of debt and keeping up with the Joneses wasn't worth it after all* .

He thought of his memory of his outdoor shower -just coming out of the Atlantic- at the beach house on A1A and Nari, a girl of no-more than 20, naked and taut and all grins and 99% pink, was standing there with white eyes and lithic teeth and a soul that glowed when he finally opened his own eyes under the spray. *An artist,* he thought, *sometimes can just gaze on that which he could have and not take it; a real artist can sometimes just see that it's his and yet still demur.*

But there was a dark side to Zendik, like the planet and the cosmos and God Himself; *it was corrupt and rotting from the inside, and it was in retrograde, a waning crescent,* he thought as he left a moon-month before Wulf Zendik died.

Lyndon had left after Chen had asked -and it was not really an ask but a tell- and he was imbued with the confidence and devil-may-care desperado philosophy of the puerile-adept and half-wizard and was ready to take on life as the first flames shot up in the wake of his escape. He hitchhiked from the farm in May of 1999 e.v., and with black BDUs, a stained-white wife-beater, a back pack with some books and cowhide work gloves and 10 bucks they had given him, he made it to Cincinnati to sleep in Jason Harvey's basement on a cot while Jeff Heistand bitched about him not paying rent. Jeff was generous that way; he gave freely of

his contempt to a man just ruined and robbed of all he had when that man merely asked for a demersal place to lay his head while he figured out what to do next.

Lyndon was busted, broke, destitute; he had given $10,000 and gotten back $10. But, he thought he'd learned 1,000 to 1 in ratio to what he had given that place and thus dusted off his hands and gave the world a grin that still looked charming and alluring to young girls and men greedy for the crumbs that would often fall from his lips and his teeth.

He worked for 30 days for a moving company and then fled to Denver in the last winter of the millennia of this vulgar era thinking of all this and more; certain that whatever was coming, it would be all up to him. He was not all wrong.

II. 2037 e.v.

The bank account bank showed 34.56 million dollars accrued since the first deposit from another bank back in September 2009. The account was owned by William Owens, born 1940, former Admiral of the 6th fleet and of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff under Clinton, and creator of the *Sanya Initiative* that lobbies congress on behalf of the Chinese military. He was paid by *Huawei Corporation* as they were partnered -*in the Chinese sense of the word, meaning with a gun to the head* , Isaiah mused in passing- with Amerilink Telecom Corp of which he was founder.

Isaiah linked where the rest of the $13.45 million that he had been paid had been spent, including a deposit on a home in Virginia and a sea-worthy vessel docked in Baltimore, Maryland. It had *Sanyanara Statis* stenciled on the hull.

Mikey Kantor, born 1939, former trade representative for the United States, was banking with Wachovia and had $14.23 million in his account, $1.2 million in a second account. He too was paid by the Chinese military *via* a corporation of smart-TV manufacturer *Haier* and was engaging in lobbying congress on behalf of Chinese spy tech in the guise of consumer electronics. Kanter was currently in a meeting with Democratic reps from New York speaking on this topic. Isaiah watched the vitals of each man in the meeting rise and fall like the waves, like the boughs bounce as they slough off the snow in the sprin g

Rick Boucher, born in 1946, a former congressmen, worked for Hicks Vision another Chinese spy company, Isaiah noted and scanned, was currently in a meeting with the Republican congressman from Arizona. John Boehner was golfing with Chinese spies and the US senator from West Virginia as they spoke cryptically of sanctions on US companies that refused to import Chinese firmware for their own products.

Isaiah saw that this was an infection, a well-entrenched one.

However, while these few high-profile men were how he caught on to the network, they were the least of the problems now. Most of them were nearly 100 years old, and with their PGCs they were alive and well. But they had handed off most of their operations to underlings in the last decade or so; Isaiah had GPS on each of their apparatchik's vehicles and monitored each of their *comms* .

But it was not a local phenomenon; the Chinese had infiltrated the US *via* its most senior and corrupt officials from both major parties; *85.6% of them were born from 1938 to 1948, the* baby boomers, he thought, *might the be the most corrupt and sinister generation of Americans ever. Was this not how it worked, the best, the greatest generation fought in WWII, the worst followed from those wombs.*

Under their co-operation the Chinese had successfully stolen $3.2 trillion in IP and had co-opted 472 former officials who were in the process of corrupting 987 current officials from senators to FBI agents and those that ran the corporate news. Their reach was wide, and well-placed. *And that,* Isaiah thought, *had the right arguers for a rationale for him to use a systemic approach . And this was just going back 30 years ,* he thought.

Isaiah ran three algorithms -he had begun to limit his own choices now- reducing almost all mapped data to three or fewer options. His right hemisphere loaded up the most beneficial -or effective- and the least disruptive in descending order.

He could have each of the 987 major officials killed or rendered non-compos-mentis. Their underlings would likely take the hint , he thought. *However, since 23 of them would be sitting US senators and 301 would be current congressmen, this could cause a massive overreaction by the State.*

He could have threatened them, credibly, as he had done with the cartels, but with better results as these US officials were beta males with less pride and no honor-based system like the cartels had to live under.

Or, he could sabotage them surreptitiously. It would be more metabolically expensive, he'd have to think, process, collect, and focus his time and cognitive fovea on them; and this -he calculated- would be almost .5% of his daily metabolic energy. It was not insignificant. But, it would cause the least blowback he thought. And maybe with all his other projects, discretion was needed, even optimal.

The Chinese AI Project was opaque to him, he saw evidence of its works, but not of its presence, not its location. It was the hole in the wall, but no bullet nor

gun. And it made Isaiah angry. His immune system used 18.9% of his metabolic energy, most men used 25.5%; and his cognition used 26.1%, most men used 24.3%. Half of all caloric intake of the average man went to the immune system and cognition i.e., lie-detection and lie invention and problem solving. All of it non-discretionary. The body, the man, did not choose how to spend this part of his metabolic budget. It just was. “It just is,” Isaiah said into the lab .

The way the Chinese had corrupted the US was genius. They encouraged avarice in the elites, while luring away manufacturing, which decimated the working-class, and this led to *ennui , anomie* in the bulk of American men; for men need manly work. Then the Chinese flooded the market with *fentanyl* to create addicts from the rubble of these emasculated men. And their plots ran 10 times deeper than that. The Chinese use misdirection, they let their enemies harm themselves. It’s built into the culture but it works only on a people as corrupt and rich and stupid as the Americans. This is the first job of any true grifter: *find the right mark* .

He pulled the budget for the intel-agencies for the US, and they were operating at a budget of 23.4% of the 5.1 trillion 2037 e.v. total. *One quarter went for intelligence and counter-intel,* he recapitulated. The defense budget was 19.5% on the books, and 4.4% off-books, so 23.9% of the total US budget went to national defense. Much of the defense and intelligence agencies actual budgets were hidden in State Department or USAID or under *education* rubrics, but the dollars spent were easily tracked by Isaiah.

The corollaries were obvious, but he thought he ought to articulate it and upload that analysis to the cloud. The human body used half its caloric intake for immune response and lie-detection and lie-invention to navigate the social *milieu* . This was no mere analogy; it was evidence of a fundamental law of nature. An organism -from man to State- needs to use half its calories for self-defense and lie-detection and this includes lying -counter-intelligence- themselves.

The Country itself used the same percentage -within 2% points- for defense, corollary to the immune systems, and intelligence gathering and counter-intelligence propaganda. The country mapped onto the body like one level up in instantiation. *This was just one more example of this natural phenomena of stacking, of fractals,* and Isaiah wondered if mankind would ever get this. He floated seeds of this into the culture, but nobody seemed to notice the math of biology.

Even a Leftist-Pacifist used the same metabolic energy as the Empire to defend itself and craft lies and detect the lies of others. *The most anti-imperialists of*

citizens used the same basic pattern for survival as the thing they hated most , Isaiah thought without grin or glee. *This is why they cannot be trusted, they are the very thing they hate, and they can't see it,* he thought. *And even if you told them, they'd deny its relevance.*

Either the country had a right to defend itself and squash plots while engaging it its own plots, or the body had no such right and each member of the Left ought to go on immune-suppressants and stop lying and stop ever checking up on anyone's else's stories. They had to behave with full trust for each man and Empire, -so no self-defense for themselves- or they ought to shut the fuck up and let the government do its job, he thought. " Let me do my job*,"* he finally said aloud.

He switched over to thinking of something else; politics bored him; it was for low-brows. He wanted to begin the new Jack protocol and he had a 4-day window to get Jack Four in the lab to effect it. He began to re-synthesize the new Medea-gene in their new 3D printer that was for biologicals only, and he made five copies of the gene for Jack when he arrived.

He also began to write a short story for Jack that explained why he may not have to feel badly about the other Jacks. He could -the story would say- think of it as cell death, as apoptosis, as a metaphor for the death of the former self. *Wave collapse, one road taken, and all that ,* he thought. But he had been avoiding even telling Jack this for years, and maybe waiting another year or two would be smart. Isaiah decided to wait until he saw Jack to decide.

Isaiah watched the small fissures in the skin, now opaque -almost like egg whites- of his female Burmese python. Molting would take place with three days. The process began at articulations, as the snake moved side-to-side in larger and larger moves as her enclosure width was increased. Isaiah had built a false floor, on his side, that was three meters deep and half the 3,000 square footage of the footprint, and the snake now had 1,500 square feet of space under his footfalls.

He ran the data from the latest polling the firm had done for the election in 2034. He had snuck in questions about the immune system for people to answer. It turned out that when asked, 85% of people had said they'd be in favor of the body knocking out all symptoms of common illness from bacterial infections to those viral, i.e., *colds* . That the body produced these symptoms itself was unknown by most people; most thought the *diseases* caused the symptoms.

Once they were told -by the pollster in four of six polls- that the body produced the symptoms itself for good reason, the number dropped to 54% in favor of

reduction or elimination of the symptoms. Only 31% of people were savvy enough to get that one *needed the symptoms* as part of the infectious disease response.

He thought of personality, and how it tracked on to politics and he loaded up every stupid thing liberals and conservatives had said in advocating for the elimination of the other mind set, the other party, as if each foil served no purpose at all. He had to cull it as the total amount of stupidity produced by humans in print, audio & visual, was overwhelming even for his endogenous capacity. He filtered out all mainstream media, which was axiomatically dumb, and thus shooting fish in a barrel. He only used the most insipid evidence from smaller outlets.

He read a banal article in *The Woody Creeker* , a defunct magazine edited by Hunter S. Thompson's widow in which she and Hal Haldon insinuated that no Republican was useful in anyway. *They just didn't get the etiology of malady, the epidemiology of diseases, the lifestyle, the need for night and day,* Isaiah thought as he processed the goofy interview. *If they could, if granted the power, these morons, they'd stop the earth so it was noon on the summer solstice all their silly lives. But, like the earth needed night and day, sun and rain, each political philosophy was like a suite of symptoms to a particular disease, the liberals stopped authoritarian overreach and stagnation, the conservative stopped promiscuous progress toward the cliff. Each side was necessary just like the mosquito and the rat and full moon and the wand,* Isaiah thought.

But people didn't even get it when it was direct, plain, exact, as was the case with the immune system, of course they'd fail to see the metaphor of it , he mused. "The metaphor, the meta-truth," he said aloud.

And yet, that he wanted them all dead so the experiment could start over, would seem insane, evil, to these people. But why would he ever listen to such dummkopfs, anyway? he asked. They had no idea what life was, and even when you took the time to explain it to them, they just stared blankly, drooling, and thinking of food or sex in the most *cliché* of ways.

It was 2037 e.v. and it was 2036hrs he noticed, and it was August 21st . He sent Jack a DM and waited and watched the python flick her tongue into the air below as the molting skin looked dull and opaque as Isaiah eschewed looking beyond to its lower layers -by turning off his genome analysis and x-ray invigilation- and just took in the snake's surface and most obvious movements.

III. 2018 e.v.

“Can you hand me my watch?” he said and pointed with a dried-blood-brown hand .

The nurse picked up the heavy chronometer; black and metal and analog and said, “wow that is heavy, it would take arms like you got just to lug that thing around; is it special?”

“Everything is special, we are all special,” he said with a grin and upturned eyes, the nurse smirked and laid the watch on his leg and patted it below the knee with her open hand.

“Ok, cutie pie, those pain killers must be working if you think any of us in this place are special,” she said with a smile and a reassuring stroke of her middle-aged hand.

“I do feel euphoric; but the face itself doesn’t want to move, I seem to have developed a habit of speaking from one side of my face,” he said as his mouth indeed only worked on one side, the side away from the red pawed tally-marks that ranged his face from temple to nose. His tooth had been removed too; so damaged at the gum.

“The doctor used a local on your face; it will wear off,” the nurse said.

“I hope I don’t develop a reputation for speaking out of only one side of my face; although, now that I study on it, the chastising comes from seeming to speak out of both sides ain’t it? I guess I might be able to be honest then until the paralytic wears off,” he said.

“Are you some kind of doctor? You use medical terminology and our doc said your sutures were as good as he could do,” she said as she eyed him more carefully now.

“I read a lot. I live alone with my books and I live as if knowledge matters; even though I know it don’t,” he said with half his face.

“Well, you sure survived a hairy situation with that mountain cat; he was out for blood, huh?”

“She drew it, but she never drank a drop,” the patient said.

“Well, we’ll have you out of here ASAP. The doc will be back after his lunch break,” she said.

“Wait, what time is it?” he asked with some concern.

“Look at that fancy watch of yours; or does it do everything but tell time?” she said with pursed lips and high eyes.

He laughed a bit and picked it up and it read 1105hrs on June 29th ; he mumbled, “shit, I was out for several hours.”

“Yes, sir you were, arrived at 505 and I’ve been here since midnight, so my 12-hour shift is up in 55, 54 minutes,” she said as she checked her own purple watch. The footfalls he heard first, then the sound of the rings of curtain move in the track.

“Well, you’re awake,” the doctor said as he entered the room and pushed aside the half-drawn shade.

“That’s what the Buddha says,” the patient said with that truncated mouth he had.

“How are you feeling? Pain?” the doctor asked and looked at the chart at the end of the bed.

“Not bad, I feel dehydrated though, can you run another bag, even at 500 dollars a bag it’s worth it, I feel hollow; desiccated.”

“Well, your insurance will pay for it; and is it really 500 bucks a bag, Tammy?” the doctor turned to his nurse in surprise .

“I think that’s about right, it ain’t cheap. And I think Mr. MacLeod here is self-pay,” she said.

“Yeah, I’ll pay cash; just load me up another 1000ml and I’ll get out of your hair once it’s done,” the patient said.

“No problem, let me look at that wound if you don’t mind,” the doctor leaned into his face as Lyndon shut his eyes to avoid the oddness of proximity. “Looks *ok* , I can re-stitch if you want, you have a right to even have a cosmetic surgeon look at it, but it looks good, you did that yourself, is that right?” he asked the patient.

“I have a right to a cosmetic surgeon? This cannot be true,” the patient said with a smirk.

“Yup, state law now. But, like I said, the sutures look good, the scar will- do you scar badly?” the doctor asked.

“I keloid pretty heavy, but they eventually lower and absorb, the redness and most of the scar-tissue dissolve within 5-7 years on average,” the patient said.

“Well, you have an encyclopedic knowledge of your own body I’d say; how many scars does it take to develop such a sample size to make such comprehensive analysis?” the doctor asked with a slight grin.

“More than one,” the patient said with a returning smirk. The nurse thought they were flirting with each other now.

“I bet. I noticed your hands, and we had to remove your clothes to look for additional wounds, and between the tattoos and the scars you ain’t got one stitch of natural skin,” the doc said.

Lyndon looked again and noticed he was in a gown, unsheathed of his native clothes. He hated that; he felt weak, vulnerable, when out of his own clothes.

“Well, I’m all natural on the inside I guess,” the patient said.

“The x-rays show some compression fractures of C5 and 6; but they look older, not from this attack,” the doctor added. He placed the chart back on the hook and looked at the patient.

“Yeah, motorcycle accident; the spurs are like a starburst, like a crown of thorns around my C6, they impinge on the nerves some and even touch the back of my trachea if I twist and turn just right,” the patient added, then wondered why he was so goddamn talkative.

“Is that right? Well, don’t twist and turn then,” the doctor said with genuine mirth.

“You’re the doctor,” Lyndon countered.

“Well, I think I’ll have Tammy hang that bag and I’ll bid you *adieu* ,” the doctor said.

“*Adieu* , *adieu* to you Spanish ladies,” Lyndon said and rolled his left hand with the affect of a gentlemen of means and manners; of which he was barely a man of even manners any more.

“Tammy, load him up with one on the house; don’t mark it down,” the doctor winked at her.

“Well, well, well, someone up there likes you,” Tammy said as she pulled a 1000ml bag from the box under the sink and hooked it into his stand.

He pressed the tape of his IV to his arm and held it there as if plugging a leak. He smiled and agreed that such a thing was in fact possible; the free saline was the smallest bit of evidence yet.

11. Four in One

Four Mighty Ones are in every Man
A Perfect Unity
Vala; Night the First [Blake, William]

I in them, and thou in me, that they may
Be made perfect in one: and that the world
May know that thou hast sent me, and hast
Loved them, as thou hast loved me…
O righteous Father, the world hath not
Known thee: but I have known thee, and
These have known that thou hast sent me
John 17:23 & 25 [King James Bible]

We only find beauty by working; without it we're doomed
Workbooks XXI [Rodin, Auguste]

I. 2037 e.v.

"The Japanese of the Kofun *period from -300 a.e.v to 300 e.v- used tattoos as punishment, to mark the condemned man. The* Bokkei *could last for days, done ir intervals while the man was imprisoned in a cell of bamboo and reeds* ," he read this on the page as his PCG powered down for maintenance.

Blax looked through images of the practice as laid out in art books he had received in the mail; pausing at details, captions, engrossed in the text from this elongated history of a culture he admired. He loved the conservatism, the honor, the uprightness of Japanese culture, and he accepted that he would not be welcomed there. He was a foreigner, large, and heavily tattooed, all taboos in and of themselves, and as triumvirate, it would mean he could never be considered at home in Japan, he would always be a permanent -if he was lucky- guest.

He accepted this and bowed to it; he did not bang on the gates and demand to be let in the way Latinos and Africans and Muslims rudely demanded to be allowed into Western cultures like America or Europe. *This country,* he thought, *needed to stop apologizing for exclusion of the foreigner, and take a lesson from the intelligent and severe and courageous Asians . Diversity is not strength, unity is ,* he mused as he perused the pages of the book.

But he was proud to be *Scot* and American, so while he admired the Japanese he did not feel he needed to be one; nor be a citizen of that country. *Maybe blacks and browns are not proud of who they are enough to just be who they are, and where they are from, that they need to demand to be accepted by a culture that does not want them* , he thought.

He remembered Curtis MacIntyre saying that to him when Blax had been fired from Aspen Drilling, "*why would you want to work somewhere that did not want you* ?"

It had stung, but it was a good lesson, and while Blax needed a job, for basic reasons of survival, he thought, *the point was true, and he ought not degrade himself by begging for restoration of his employment when they clearly hated him for his pyric attitude and labile ways* .

Whatever benefit he brought *via* his brains and brawn and competent work, it was not enough to counterbalance his explosive personality that was in danger of immolating the whole company some days. A company is like an organism, a bio-region, it needed more than one trait, no matter how excellent a trait it was. He was good at work; strong, competent, dependable; but he was also an explosive man just waiting to be set off and blow the whole thing up at any time. *Nothing can handle that risk, no matter the benefit in the short term* , he thus conceded the point of those that rejected him.

He leafed the book deliberately but thought of those days as the images imprinted on his mind unconsciously, the warrior uprooting the tree, the *Horishi* bent over the prisoner, the *Tsuki-bori* in three stages, a triptych of black and white drawings at the top of page 45 of this book.

The oil field was brutal, and atavistic and unchanging in its *mores* , even as its technology advanced. The easier the fuel was to extract the harder the places they went looking to drill; which meant the work itself never eased up. It was as if as your arm gets stronger by 1 unit, one adds an additional unit to its load. It was endless; as all great tasks are.

But the tolerance for roughness traveled one direction; from top down. The roughneck at bottom, the floor hand, could not be uncouth or unkind to the driller, the derrick man -despite his elevation- could not look down on the company-man. Blax never heeded these unwritten rules, maintaining an air of the Pharisee when it suited him, demanding to be shown *where is was written* that a man could not stick up for himself to any man, even to the king.

He had not rose for the judge in court as a young man, when at 18 and 19 he had

been cited for seatbelt tickets in three cases, -and a 4th disorderly conduct and criminal trespass; two counts- he fought each and every one that most would have just paid to make it go away. He had won the cases by default -the police did not show up to court- but he had suffered a lecture from the judge in Jefferson country, and was curtly told, by the magistrate, to *work through the legislature* to overturn seat belt laws if that was his intent, and not use the courts for civil action again.

"I," he did not address the judge as *your honor* , "did not choose this fight, it chose me. I merely refused to lie; I refused to put on my belt after I was pulled over, as cowards scramblingly do; and by right of conscience I refused to promise to wear it in the future when the officer asked. He was willing to let me go if I complied with his desire, but it would have been a lie, for I will not wear the seatbelt merely because it is the law that I must. I'd rather suffer the consequences of that than what it might do to my soul to lie and betray my conscience." He liked the way that sounded and didn't mind that he only stood on principle about half the time. He figured half was 90% more than most anyway.

Blax remembered a time in a joint-training exercise with Marcelo -his *sifu* - and Keith's *Kun Tao* class, they -50 men total- had been in Horse stance and Blax's legs, after five minutes began to fail. And instead of modifying the stance, by raising up a bit, he had rose completely, left the line and stood at the wall in shame, but with -he thought- his integrity maintained *via* his refusal to cheat .

Marcelo had upbraided him for this; and when Blax had said -that per *sifu's* instruction- a *modified Horse stance was wrong,* as there was only one correct way to do it, *fully, or not at all* , Marcelo had understood and shook his head at his idealistic student; his number one.

Marcelo had seen his student was a man of integrity and instead of cheating in the pose, and saving face, he elected to reveal that he had not yet attained the stamina to hold the pose for the 10 minutes the class required. That 90% of the men were cheating and modifying their poses -and thus claiming honor that they had not earned- was immaterial to Blax, he would not dishonor himself or his *sifu* by cheating. But, since he was the only honest man, he alone was singled out for shame -for a failure- that they almost all shared. But the group shared it secretly, pretending they could hold a pure Horse stance despite their own wobbly legs.

This was the thing Blax could not be, *he could not be a fraud* , he thought. He could not be a fraud beyond a certain point anyway. And for this he was hated

more than for any of his flaws or faults, for all his sins, and demonisms, the thing that everyone most despised was his refusal to overtly lie about the things they had all agreed to lie about. Without chagrin, he thought life was a moral - not survival- landscape. He was hated for his singular -if inconsistent- virtue; not his many, many, reliable faults.

Blax thought that until a man got this about both himself and Blax, they would forever be estranged. What most men call, *polite* or *compromise* or *pragmatism* , to Blax were outright *lies* , and he'd rather murder, cuss & curse, and reveal his greatest failings for all to see and condemn, than shame himself by engaging in pretend.

Murder at least was honest , he thought, *lying was the true crime* . He thought 99 out of 100 men were frauds, and liars and weak; and thus, it was no crime to insult and wound and kill them; anymore than it was wrong to take a mule-deer or elk buck from the forest or swat a fly into mush. Men, actual men, were to be respected, but mere squalid *bourgeois* apes, beta males with no code? *Fuck them, and fuck what they admire* , he thought. Blax hoped he was hated by such low men. Like Einstein, he thought the earning of *the enmity of mediocre minds* to be a talent to develop and revel in. The body fails, but the soul can carry on, if men only knew which was most important.

He briefly thought of how many men he had let escape his judgement; how he had sinned exactly where others thought he had acted wisely and ethically. He banished this thought at once.

The judge of that Ohio court was not impressed, not even slightly, and he gaveled the statement four words before Blax had finished his soliloquy. Blax had seen, and nodded politely at, the girlfriend of his friend Jason Harvey, a girl by the name of Lisa Toms, in the court room that day, apparently with her mother, who, Lisa would go on to say, told her, *that boy looks like trouble, he ain't a friend of yours is he?*

Blax had been told also, this time by Harvey himself, that when Blax had come to the front door of his friend's home one day looking for his friend -they were just 16 at the time- that Harvey's mother had told Jason that she didn't know who was at the door, but it was someone who look like he had, *just rolled off a park bench* .

They had laughed and done bong hits and dropped acid and drank more than would fit; they had raced cars and motorcycles and wrecked things and broke whatever was left. They had anarchy, not yet nihilism, in their hearts and they played Metallica as loud as the equipment could handle, before the neighbors

called to say they could handle less than the machinery off which that nonsense was flung like metal objects from *Trebuchet* ; like ordinance from canon. They turned the music down but spoke louder amongst themselves to keep the same volume of noise around and about their souls.

He was an early amalgam of disparate elements that could barely be adumbrated by himself, with any cohesion, much less by those around him who clearly did not care to even attempt to get a faithful sketch down on paper. People hated him, and had from the beginning, and he had not known this, because he had friends and lovers so redolent in their admiration for him, that it insulated him from the fact that those for whom his ways were charming was less than 1%. 1% in numbers can be 50 people from whom he saw light in their eyes and winsome smiles and a coquettish squeal to their voices when he entered a room. In a school of 500 people, and a town of 5,000 he had in fact garnered about 50 to 55 people who genuinely thought he was cute to have around.

That the other 5445-5450 hated him with black venom and would insult him and curse him in their dreams and plot against him with the cunning that makes up for lack of courage, did not impress him as a problem, not until later in life; later when the 1% had -by then even- tired of his manner. He, if he was honest -which he more or less attempted- had to admit that he was in fact, ponderous, and tendentious and overly didactic at times. He was a preacher in a way that made Hazel Motes look ecumenical and open to other ideas.

Blax was always right, even when wrong, and this manner never ceased; but it did finally manage to alienate everyone, even those who admitted -grudgingly- that he was more right than he was wrong; or at least he seemed to read a lot and know things they couldn’t check out to see if it was right or wrong.

He, of course, would think he had not been right once in 30 years each time he sloughed off one philosophy and traded it in for its opposite; thus, the promiscuity of ideology that landed him with enemies on all sides; earning him comrades almost never. He was always feeling he was always wrong, but only in the past. The now, well, the now was where is was always right. This is how he managed to assert his humility while maintaining perfect hubris. That’s what brains are for.

That he had landed on his feet at all, charged with edifying these stellar young men up in the mountains, was a testament to his idiosyncratic methods and beliefs and trait openness and overall competence and conscientiousness and not, to some likeable, or agreeable affect. Isaiah picked him, he was told, due to his strengths; his weaknesses were being ignored. And so he attempted to ignore

them too.

He was surly and mean and haughty and mercurial in 9 out of 8 ways. He was violent and reckless and acted like a 17th century landowner who had just been insulted in front of a lady, a judge and the children of slaves. He dueled, in his mind, you could see it, and satisfaction was demanded over every goddamn slight. He blew up each job, relationship and dinner engagement if he felt even one thing go not exactly right.

He hated people, and their ways, and so they abraded him without knowing it most times, and when they did know it they obviously either wanted -or were insouciant to- his explosions, because everyone knew these conflagrations were coming; ignorance was no longer an excuse of his Natural Law .

He had held himself in reserve often though -way more than he wanted- not that anyone noticed that. The dog gets no credit for the bites it wanted to inflict but did not, nor for the molars not used in a nip; it is remembered only for those times and those teeth that it sinks.

And the oil field was too macho and atavistic to tamp down his instincts at all; it inflamed them, and he loaded up on endogenous testosterone, and hard work and 3,600 calories a day made almost entirely of meat and whisky. The long *tours* , 12-16 hours, the endless days in a row, 30-40-250, turned him into a *bête noire* . He stalked the pad, the well bore, the reserve pit like *panthris negris* with a tranquilizer dart in his haunch that had not delivered enough payload. He was pissed, permanently; and his 214lbs of doom, black hardhat, black clothes and black tattoos made him seem like a monolith sent from vengeful gods; arriving broken, not birthed, but roughly hewn.

And men older and wiser -and in no mood to put up with his shit- would punish him with hard labor, which he lapped up like a cat infected with *toxo* , greedily but with malice in his heart for the act. He piled the labors up as if they were meant for Hercules himself, he wrestled fluid hoses 4” in diameter like the *Lernaean* hydra, he racked back drill pipe as if it were the wringing by the neck of the *Stymphalian* birds, a brace of which hung from his belt up in the crow’s nest as he slammed the kelly-clamp and pissed down the pipe of the *Grecian Fowls’* backs.

The tool shacks were his to clean and de-clutter like the *Augean* stables, and he loaded pipe wrenches 48” long weighing 70lbs over his shoulder and hung them from hooks three feet from his head. He slammed pallets of *Milbar* -nearly as ponderous as his lectures- and caustic -almost as corrosive as his language- and shrink-wrapped pistons for the tri-pumps by hand when most men waited for the

loader -modern technology he scoffed at- to hang forks on the bucket.

He filled non-potable water into the mud tank, as the sun cooked his inert stare into the fluid as it churned and cavitated and roiled from the 6” inlet and massive impellers of four pumps in-a-row. He stick-welded railings without covering his face, just a pair of #6 goggles over his eyes as the UVs reddened his exposed skin of body and face. He looked like a racoon who had been staring at the sun in search of God when he ought to be sleeping at day.

He packed 100lb bags of drilling fluid amalgams on his shoulders and walked straight up ladders not stairs. He did this over and over until it looked like he was wrestling with the *Cerberus* hounds, the bags falling around him at the waist and the shoulder, and at his feet, exploding in grey plumes of detritus; dust-dogs who vaporized under order from *Echidna* and *Typhon* for fighting him merely to a stalemate.

He carried 7,200lbs a day -100lbs at a time- his hamstrings were as taut as war drum, his spine as compressed as the air-fuel mixture beneath a piston on the down stroke, his attitude was greedily outraged by pain he sought like wolves choking down bones in *lieu* of the meat.

His muscles strained, his tendons stretched, his mood grew darker each day. He never refused an assignment and even when they refused to pay him -and the company-man had said it was *not his job to pay men but to drill holes , and that the checks were mailed from out-of-state* - Blax merely told them they were scoundrels and ought to be ashamed, as he went back -right back- to work. He went up into the derrick and cast off the lanyard as useless and worse; as such safety measures -he thought- probably turned men gay.

He figured if he fell 60 feet the company would get sued by his next of kin, and that would teach them, wouldn’t it? *His own bodily harm was punishment against not him but the world* , he surmised, chronically or acutely, over time or all-at-once. His revenge was performed on his own body like he was the *voo-doo doll* , and they the victim; he was mildly surprised when that *theory-of-body* turned out actually to be true. *With the final pins in him he began to leave a mark or two on modern man*, he thought; and this produced a grin.

Nobody liked him, not even his friends; they avoided working the same *tour* as him. He sinned -by missing the mark- when he hit their hands with sledges as they held metal he was supposed to pound; he then demanded they strike him with it next if they refused to stop whining, and sometimes they considered it.

He offered to work for -in place of- new men who had just arrived from a drive

of six hours into the field, and for this offer they had taken offense; they told him it was not his place to tell anyone what to do, even if it was to *take it easy* . He had nodded and wrinkled up all of his face to keep the bile and violence from leaking out, in his mind he had been offering them a rest that he could provide them as he was only 13-hours into his day and they would want to be fresh for that night when they went on *tour* . But, those coon-asses from Louisiana, did not take it that way.

Nobody took anything the way they'd take it in the world, for the oil field was like prison, each rule in society was inverted. Kindness was seen as a trick, or an unjust elevation or high-handed symbol of something sinister. Anger was seen as merely a sign that a man was awake. But, the pecking order was enforced and no low-man on the pole would bark up hill, and that is exactly what Blax excelled at. He hated authority and hated anyone who lorded it over him, he was never -ever- to be spoken to *that* way. *He'd strike the sun if it insulted him* , he used to quote when the subject came up and they looked at him as if he had said something from some other age.

He set things on fire, he dropped 5000lb *monels* on the ground from 60 feet up by releasing the kelly clamp with one hand and walking away. He over-charged the mud pump and jammed 100 barrels of fluid down a hole & annulus that couldn't keep up; hot cuttings and brown water exploded at the wellbore and men scattered like cats who had bitten into a lit firecracker at the center of a mouse they had found.

He broke tools and cut himself and bled all over the place. He punched floor hands in the face for showing up late, and he was held back from killing the tool-pusher exactly twice. He parked his lifted black Dodge diesel truck aggressively in front of the company-man's shack, a taunting that was noticed by all. He wore more black the hotter it got, as a reminder that he was tougher than they were, and that pain and discomfort were what he fucking sought, while those pussies searched out cool drinks and dark shade and rest from the toil he dug inside wasps nests and rabid-dog kennels for sharp objects & the mouths of mad beasts also abused by the world.

His beard was black, his knuckles that color too and blue, and his teeth shone white like a baboon just before a strike. He ate with one hand while mixing chemicals with the other, and he threw the last bite of his meat into the hopper as if it were a trash can at the zoo. He bitched at the driller and the tool-pusher for fucking around and chatting like girls. He told the company-man -as if *he* was the man in charge- when -exactly when- they were TDing and how long they'd

circulate to heal the hole. He arrogated powers to himself purely based on his knowledge; *and the fact that he was right,* was all that mattered to him. *And it ought be all that mattered to the world too,* he thought as they all shook their heads. That fact meant jack shit to the command structure and they overrode his orders 99% of the time. Even when he was right they'd make some adjustment of no-consequence just to make it seem that *they* had truly decided what to do. He laughed at them in the face, and spat at their feet and said shit like, *you're all hat and no cattle son* , to men almost twice his age .

He quoted The Author when the tanks overflowed and he rattled off Shakespeare when things looked most dour, and he could insult 10 men in half an hour with oblique references to Milton or Twain. "And Satan hates me, yet is loath to lose me," he'd said to the bosses when vexed; he was certain they'd get none of the fruit of the poetry but just the pit at the center of the hate he sent forth.

He quoted Lord Byron, and *knew himself a villain* but made sure they knew that he knew that they were cowardly hypocrites and he was not just tougher and meaner than they but more moral, upright, and Godly too. These men never thought of ethics in the oilfield, so his moral indictments fluttered away with the wind and burned up in the flames once *Schlumberger* or Halliburton -that Red Army of Work- had cased the well in concrete and moved on.

The oilfield was so long ago and so far away , he then thought as his mind returned to his book on Japanese tattoos.

He looked out of his bedroom; a bedroom that made a study when the murphy bed was up. He looked out over the pine trees and ridges that loped like green waves in the sun, with the Japanese book in his lap and these memories of the oil patch in his mind just behind the eyes. He ached for that place; for work left undone, for wells aborted, for tools left down in the hole. He missed that pain, which was unlike today's. Then it was acute and enraging, not vitiating and hobbling like now. He was limping not bleeding now, he ached, he was entropic, he was bent awkwardly now, he was not the hunted beast with arrows in his back from *Apache* ; *no, he had left the battlefield of work* , he thought, *damaged, not dead in a glorious way* .

He brought his wife to the oilfield to cook, and to keep him half way civilized. She -Brandee Skye- had been so beautiful, so striking that it made him half mad with jealousy that any man even had eyes. They would breathe her in from a distance of a meter and he would stand between them and growl; she would laugh and the guy would back off and the diesel engines of the rig never did shut off. He'd sleep in his clothes, pass out on the steps or in the shower that was way

too fucking small. They lived in fifth-wheels built for men half his size and with 10% of his goddamn pique.

Those travel trailer showers had left an imprint on him that made him build custom showers four and five feet wide from then on. He hated to be hemmed in whilst under water; it was an *ethos* developed *inside* him not *by* him.

His former wife was an angel, with a vulva as narrow as the *Hellespont* , a straight he could barely navigate, so tight she was on his girth and length; it was like trying to pour 5 gallons of water in a 1-gallon bucket. But it was the one thing he found no cause about which to complain. And despite this trait in women that is crucial yet never discussed for reasons Blax never would understand, he treated her like a succubus, a devil, sent by Lucifer himself to steal his remnant of inner soul.

He berated her for her previous life, not yet knowing himself well enough to eschew marriage unless it be to a virgin. He had waited until a year in to discover his ahistorical jealousy -a madness defined by an obsession of where one's woman has been even before she was his- something almost all men, but never women, understand. *A husband owns not just your pussy now, but in the past and future too, and for a wife to have had any men, no matter how few -and it was always 15 wasn't it?- was insufferable and disgusting and enraging,* he thought. And he hated her for things she didn't know -things she had never been taught- and for the ways in which the culture had let her down. He blamed her for the crimes perpetrated against her; the same way the world blamed him for their crimes against him .

He never allowed her to get up off the floor with that moral weight pressing her lithe frame to the ground. *He ought never have married her of course, but how was he to know, his jealousy did not arouse him until after they had tied the knot* , he thought. He knew nothing of the data, that showed this was the case, and nobody had schooled him at all. His own father was of that baby boomer generation, the *laissez-faire* and clueless shitheads who lost the Vietnam war with their weakness and never wanted to get involved in anything at all. A father offering no advice; although had he offered it, would Blax had listened? *The answer was no, three times* , Blax admitted as he still condemned the older man for his lack of sage instruction.

He stored his weapons under the bed and ordered more and more gear. They were making $10,000 a month and spending it on doomsdays weapons, medical supplies and night vision gear. He saw brown bear -that were actually black bear- at night by the garbage and he saw malice in every man's visage. She was a

good girl, now, and he blew it, but he knew it was all for naught. He knew he was not built for *compromise with the group; and so he found himself a good deal alone* .

He shaved his head and grew a beard; and he grew sullen and punitive in ways that were cruel and unforgivable. But she did forgive him, because she loved him, because he had a heart so large that it had roared out of his chest and then licked her face from time to time. She had seen it, been in awe of it, never had she met a more passionate man. He loved the things he loved with the same detonation of the explosives he used to blow everything up. He adored poetry and literature and read to her, day, night and in the tub. He loved things, and would weep over things, that she didn't even see; and he presented her with gifts made from skulls and feathers and black sand from the *antipodes* . He drew her portrait in charcoal and she dropped tears of her own upon the rough page.

He showed her movies from Terrence Malick and Music from Nick Cave and *Mogwai* and Lisa Gerrard. He explained his moods and his feelings in ways most men -shit, most women- could not; and he worked so hard -at jobs he could have avoided- to provide for her; to give his all for them both.

He told her she was beautiful and smart and could do anything, and she felt a confidence she never had had. He told her his philosophy on life, and that it seemed reckless only because he was going for *it* , and what exactly *that* was, well, that was anyone's guess. But he was driven, never lazy or directionless or feminine in doubt. *He was old school and yet educated, he seemed to own and have read 1,000 books,* she thought. He used words she had to look up and even when he insulted her with them, she found herself admiring the use -or double *entendre*- or the etymology that -upon reflection- made the pejorative even worse. He once said he'd been insulted by Christopher Hitchens and felt more grateful for that than a mere compliment by some lesser man.

He carried a gun at all times, which she did not like, *but whatever,* she thought, *he was sweet to her and sexy as fuck and she felt safe for the first time in her life* . They went to fancy restaurants and rode his *None More Black* chopper, as loud as Satan's own tiger, and he never got too drunk to drive. He was not cheap or foolish, he had taste and refinement in ways she began to see. He was a contradiction in ways so far apart that they went back to back. He was working-class and proud, he sounded like a Marxist half the time, and yet drank $300 bottles of wine from *Château Margaux* .

He read French poetry from some guy named *Rimbaud* or *Baudelaire* , and yet called people names you can't even say in French to avoid the crassness. He

refused to wear clothes she would pick out, and he never wore deodorant nor ever would shave close to the face. The most he would do is run a beard trimmer over his stubble and call that good enough .

He loved work, and wealth, but hated money and threw coins away in the trash. He jumped from airplanes and ran class V rapids but would refuse to leave the house for days, weeks, as if the breeze was too risky a thing. After the oil field he had been in their house for a week and barely said three words. *He was stewing, thinking, plotting at least two planetary invasions and,* she assumed, *likely the takeover of both the setting and rising sun* .

She had grown scared of his capacity for anything, what was once creative and interesting was now just plain dangerous and plus, he was too mean to love anymore. Not that she ever stopped loving him, not even three years after their divorce, as she dated him *and* his new girlfriend for a while. But, she was arrogant too, and had insisted the other girl be called *girlfriend-number-two* and for that he had choked her in bed as *girlfriend-number-two* squealed at the felonious show.

That was it for her; and they never spoke again. She missed him, and loved him, but she had enough self-respect to never allow a man more than one shot at her that way. She had been mouthy and loud and would not shut up, but a man in the modern world *just has to take that shit,* she thought, *and he never did; never would* . He was obstinate on that point among many.

“Nobody ever yells at me,” he had said, and this was obviously a final straw of some kind for him. He had left no marks, done no damage, but the intent was clear: *I could kill you if I wanted to, and I am close to wanting to, bitch.* She had gotten the message, and since she wasn’t about to change -she was not prepared to be submissive or even polite- then they were to never be together again.

It was the way of the modern world, he had thought: *Women back talking men but refusing to accept the consequences. They want equal rights, right up until you treat them exactly how you’d treat a man. Then they wanted to call time out, and play the female card, after they had maligned your whole genome, insulted your lineage, and emasculated you surgically and without anesthesia at all. Modern women broke men so it redounded to the 7 th generation. They methylated the sex chromosomes of men with their malice and arrogance and chemical hatred and thermal heat.*

This memory was enough to make him see the consequence of wind as it blew in more than gusts now, and he looked at his watch reflexively, he had no need of it, as his PGC kept atomic time in his head, but the chronometer’s size and

weight and blackness -it's lack of yield- gave the feeling of armature. It was 1519hrs and these late afternoon wind-gusts were massive and mean and two-fisted. Everything need either to be heavy or put away, as the wind carried all else far off and broke it against trees & rocks along the way.

With the doors closed he heard nothing, the container was air tight. But he saw the trees jangle and sway and he shook his head sympathetically, even as he knew they grew stronger from this *force majeure* against them from the south. He looked down at the book, and marveled at the time, all those centuries ago, all those men come and gone, and yet some form of culture remained. *And the Asians, man,* he thought, *they were so conservative, they knew just how to maintain their ways . 130 million people, and no immigration, all technology-based solutions to demographic issues. Japan was so smart,* he thought, and wished America was like that too.

The wind came from the south, he could see New Mexico from the house; Taos itself was visible from his elevation. And that wind was blowing hard, the trope of it not lost on him one bit. The invasion from Mexico and central America was not exactly the overrun of an innocent nation. The US had, in fact, destabilized Guatemala and El Salvador. CIA backed *coups* and all manner of shit that did not make the news, black ops and dirty tricks and the like. He knew it from books by Chomsky and from rides in C4s and Blackhawks; he knew more of America's crimes than most goddamn liberals who bitched and moaned about the US of A.

But, just because a guy fucks the wrong girl doesn't mean she gets to burn down his house without a fight. Blax, did not think America was innocent -like most hyper-nationalists did- he had read Zinn and declassified NSA reports, and knew the true history. He just didn't care, he was loyal to her -his country- *no matter what, it was his home and better than the shitholes from which these animals came from . And they were animals; they were exactly as Che Guevara had described when he lamented the stupidity of the mestizo and niggers and the lumpen proletariat of the south ,* he thought. *Che* was honest -even if murderous and communist- and he knew that most the people he advocated for were unworthy.

Blax felt the same way, most Americans were ignorant *bourgeois* shitheads or low-brow rednecks, but they were *his* shitheads, *his* low-brow rednecks, *his* people; and if foreigners were going to invade, then he was going to fight back. Isaiah had larger missions for them, but one day, he hoped to handle some of this shit coming from down there.

He stared now out over the trees and felt so grateful for an elevated position; and there was only one road in and out; and it was two miles long and in the shape of an asp. Nobody could reach him without plenty of warning. He had cameras and recon-drones all over the place. Not that anyone was coming for him, he was a ghost in their world. Out of sight out of mind; and that is the thing with city folk: they have no tolerance for rural life. If he stayed away they would not come get him. It was a deal they had made without words.

Goddamn his hands hurt , he thought as he squeezed them into fists of angry rock. The hands had been the first thing to be ruined by his labors, that much he had felt even at the time. The incessant gripping of heavy things until the grip just fails finally, was warning that he would not ever get his grip back. *White collar faggots don't get it, when the body fails, a working man is fucked* , he thought. *He can't do anything else but use his body to hold back the tide that keeps the rest of you people dry and when he's weak, he is no longer useful at all; a doctor needs only his prefrontal cortex, a worker needs everything else . Nobody wants to hear his thoughts or ideas, he cannot parley his skills into another field , what will he do: become a writer?* Blax laughed at that shit out loud.

The arts are for connected people with college degrees and who already held jobs for magazines or TV. The art world is incestuous and cloistered and hermetically sealed. No man of letters is coming from the working-class, unbidden, unwashed and saying the kind of shit he would likely say.

No, it was violence and the threat of violence from him, *that is what he could still do in short bursts* , he thought. He couldn't lift hod or bags of concrete or jack hammers or work kellys all day, but he could put a man down at 300 yards and punch one out in a second or two. He could still actuate his power, but in short bursts and it was his mind that needed a rest after the *frisson* of anti-social behavior, not his body.

He used hatred as fuel, but it heated up his neurons like twin turbos and it took alcohol and benzos to settle him down. His PGC helped, but he still felt like jelly after a job out there on the edge.

He looked at the carvings of the *Kakushibori* , the hidden carving, often tattoos in the armpits or groin, or words hidden in images, like stippling on the ends of petals and daggers and dragon tongues. And he then -as the boughs moved wildly outside- thought of his own private stashes of dolorous ink with some churlish pride .

II. 2036 e.v.

He handed him a book, the *Suikoden* of *Shi Nai'an* , and watched to see if he knew it; scanning the brain, scanning the images of the fMRI and the PGC's *rechauffe* of what the book meant to him. It was unknown, the Chinese hid and hid within; Matryoshka dolls, nesting within men; within and again.

Those without courage make up for it with cunning , is the saying and the Chinese are cunning. *The Japanese have more bravery* Blax thought, a more noble culture and race. Japan has the *seppuku* , the *Ronin* , the *Bushido; the Tokugawa regimes that isolated them from the emerging world of modern man* . They had no designs on the world, but only on themselves. *This is the mark of Greatness* , he thought, *to want only total control over one's self; not others* .

This was the irony of *their own* plans -he and the Jacks- all their machinations, the ornate *brocade* of their politics and crime and razing of arable land. They, he, just wanted control over himself, but in a globalized *milieu* that meant one had to incessantly be pushing back one's own borders. *Of course, the Roman and Macedonian empires thought the same goddamn thing, for no matter how much frontier you conquered*, he thought, *you always have a new border dispute, and a new frontier.*

Maybe they ought to just retreat and disappear , he thought. But, he had a real desire to help people, to give them a shot too; to provide opportunity for others; his was not a solipsistic goal; despite the genome of his men being his own. *Because they were not his, they were their own* , he insisted. If any one genome in the world was incapable of being owned and controlled it was that one; his, theirs. They were romantic and extremists and open -and they fell in love easily and deeply and were given to folly- but, they would not be controlled, slaves, dupes, *not for long* , he thought. This was the single best prophylactic to corruption, that each of these men were radical individualists, they believed in their own hearts and minds and balls. Blax stared at his host as he thought these remote, far off, things and let the data from his coder pour in.

The fMRI data on Jack Ma was inconclusive, it read out like a fortune, with vague bullshit that could be read either way. *Pleased, humble, honored, surprised* , the readings said; and on and on. *What did he think of the book itself, not the gesture?* Blax asked as he invigilated his own interpretation of the data, as he noticed heat in the *nucleus accumbens* , and the blood oxygen level dependent signaling -BOLD- and increasing as Ma looked at the book and opened it up.

Jack Ma asked if it was, *ok* to read as they sat, not wanting to be rude, and Blax

said, *by all means.*

The accumbens , Blax repeated to himself, then he noticed small metabolic presence of *k-opioid agonists* around the *caudal* region, with no neural history; *they were injections ,* Blax surmised *and often used to inhibit disgust .* It was as if time itself laid down and died right then. Jack Ma did not move, the pages held in *situ ,* the meal's heat collapsed on itself, and Blax's mind froze on one conceit: *Jack Ma has an AI implant that is regulating his allostatic system using microinjections to inhibit disgust, because the book disgusts him . The perusal of it -as if the interest is high- is a* legerdemain*, as is the over-activation of the nucleus accumbens as a secondary response ,* Blax thought .

Blax -remembering the scene in the *Rotam et Sacoma ,* in the walled patio of the Jack's *agoge ,* where he told his men to always assume their rivals know at least as much as they do, and thus only fight when necessary- immediately felt his own advice ought to be heeded at once. He tapped into the *Landsat9* satellite link to gain a real-time image of the 25 square miles around him.

He shut down his obvious augmentations and took a drink of the wine -a *Burgundy , Jadot, Mesuginuy , 2009 or 2010 ,* he guessed- and let that rumination rattle around in his brain. He watched Ma, who gave no indication of anything now, other than appreciation of the book. He then began speaking, "this book, it is a famous one in my country, as you no doubt know. But it is more than that to me; for my mother read this to me in *Chongming ,* you know this?"

"*Shanghai ,*" Blax said.

"Yes, and in 1970, when I was still a young boy, an aunt came to us and she too read from this book to me, but when she left, she took the book, and my mother never made mention of it again. I forgot all about it, but from time to time I thought of the book, and my mother and her sister and what might have happened; but it is not until I hold this book in my hand, that I feel what I felt then, that day, the day when I knew I would not see the book again, a boy of six, well," he paused and closed the book, as if it was the pages themselves that were speaking out loud and not him; he closed it to stop the noise of his own marioneted voice.

An apparatchik of Ma's came and retrieved the book and scuttled away into the dark periphery of their dinner table; the waiters and staff existed like columns just in the penumbra of the stage.

Blax thought that was either very true or the best possible lie, as it would account for the disgust and the suppression of disgust not as a phenomenon to

hide the man, but to not ruin the meal; it could be a normal allostatic correction by a 2nd or 3rd generation PGC, and not the sophisticated version necessary for deception of Blax's 5th generation reader.

This was the most sophisticated use of his own system yet; to either be totally suspicious or not at all; Jack Ma had just gone all-in. It was brilliant, as any other move would have been obvious. This was either his only move or totally true. And Blax's bias against the Chinese and in favor of the Japanese made him suspect it was all a nearly perfectly executed ruse.

III. 2020 e.v.

"Yes, sure, it's true in some narrow factual sense. But, what I'm talking about is something larger," Isaiah said and handed MO a cup of espresso.

"Larger than the truth?" MO said, nodding in appreciation of the beverage.

"No, smart ass, larger than your narrow-ass facts. Look, have you seen Donald Hoffman's work? The work on reality being too complex for us to perceive so our eyes and visual cortex make a simulation, an avatar-based system in which we compress the complexity into avatar of simplicity in order to function?"

"Oh, is this the *email folder, the blue folder* thing?" MO asked.

"Yes, the folder is yellow on those guys' computers, but yes, the idea that the very complex reality of email is too complex to comprehend so instead we use a user-friendly, i.e, simplified iconography or avatar to represent email. It is connected to reality, but it is not reality itself," Isaiah said .

"Right," MO said.

"Ok, so do you concede that in a cosmos of trillions and trillions of facts, things like the chemical composition of water to the number of corvids resting on telephone lines in the Baltics at 1300hrs on Christmas day 1999, are all facts, and there are endless facts like these. And we cannot possibly know them all, the genome of each person you meet, the number of cells engaging in apoptosis in that moment, their neural activity in the *dorso-lateral pfc* in any given second, the exact color their shoelaces have faded to over 2.34 years or the first song they ever heard, even if it was a song they heard at age 1 year and cannot retrieve that info, all of these are facts about a person and you know none of them," Isaiah said.

"Theoretically that knowledge is knowable, I can process," MO began, but Isaiah interrupted.

“Yes, theoretically, in an ergodic system, where we have infinite resources and time and iterations of this fucking game called *life* , yes. But MO, buddy, old pal, we live in a universe where we cannot -and let’s remember we are speaking of humans here- we, or they, cannot even comprehend email, so we have to build a little yellow folder on a screen that we click so their chimpanzee asses can talk to people *via* digital communications. They -and even we- are borderline retarded when you compare what is knowable and what is actually known,” Isaiah said.

“Agreed,” MO said, adding, “humans are limited.”

“We are too; just less limited. And even if that changes 1,000-fold in the next five years, we still will not know most of what is to be known, because the *past* is infinitely filled with facts we cannot know. And even if we locate the facts, we will miss the cause; we will invent the causes like we do now for wars and financial meltdowns. It’s a clusterfuck of noise and a few moments of signal. So, I beg you, please just listen to this,” Isaiah said in a slightly imploring tone. MO was not used to that.

“Ok,” MO agreed and drank the coffee to be polite; even though he was not thirsty. The caffeine would be metabolized away before it absorbed into his CNS anyway.

“We don’t know the truth, we know some micro-facts. We know some causality. But mostly we are ignorant as fuck. So, let us proceed with some caution; imagine if a guy is attempting to disable a bomb and he is almost certain he knows which wire to cut, but he says, look, I’m 50% sure, so if you get me two cracks at this, I will get it right one of the two times,” Isaiah said as he began to create a model of what he meant and MO imagined himself inside Isaiah’s little story.

“I run,” MO said as answer to what Isaiah had asked him to imagine as his brain began poring over all known bomb plans; he thought many things parallel to these conversations; he always did.

“Exactly, right? This guy is engaging in ludic fallacy 101, he is saying that if he can run the simulation enough times, his probability measurements means he can arrive at the right answer *in the long run* .

“But, MO, there is no long run, there is only life; and that bomb is a discreet unit, a real thing, right here and right now and we get one, exactly one, crack at it. So, he must be 100%; and not only that, but he must have a guy behind him who is just as certain, and they must bear the brunt of the blast if they are wrong.

They must -all the people who are 100% sure they are disarming, and not detonating, the bomb- they must encircle it and protect the rest of us as best they can so that if they are wrong they get the shrapnel and concussive blast; not us," Isaiah said.

"Agreed," MO saw the logic.

"That is all I am saying; and look, free-will might be an illusion, both logically and neuro-anatomically. Maybe you are 100% certain, but this is not a ludic exercise, this is real life and if you are wrong, then who suffers? You? Or the rest of them?" Isaiah asked.

"Well, I certainly would suffer; if I am wrong, my reputation would suffer," MO said. He had a pretty good record and did not want to ruin it.

"No, MO, I mean, if you're wrong not about the probability that you are right, I mean, if the consequences of your actions are wrong, if it makes people more nihilistic, less moral -worse fucking people- and society begins to erode from the inside; what then?

"Fuck your reputation, I'm talking about social anomie, erosion, and then I am talking about what comes next. Next, comes the corrective measure of tyranny like a pendulum swing; I'm talking about what artists warned us about as the loss of God swept the world. Is God a lie? Is atheism the truth? Maybe. But what if you think only of the game and not the consequences?" Isaiah asked.

"I don't think there is any evidence that knowing that free will is an illusion makes people less moral," MO said, but as he said it he double-checked the studies done and saw that he was wrong. Isaiah had already begun to pounce, though.

"MO, there are many studies, look at just *Vohs and Schooler's* study that showed that subjects who read a paragraph on the lack of free-will cheated at twice the rate as subjects who read an innocuous paragraph from the same book as the first paragraph. People became twice as amoral after one introduction to the notion that they had no free-will. Science can say it, science can be right, but what about the real world?" Isaiah asked as he tossed a dark object between each hand. The lights above the ivy dimmed in sets of three and this signaled the animals that flew about in the simulated evening like a winking moon.

"What are we to do? Lie to people?" MO asked.

"Did you ever read Oppenheimer's account of their success in the Manhattan Project? They all felt they had -as he put it so darkly, in the word of the *Bhagavad Gita* - that they had *become death, destroyer of worlds."* Isaiah said.

His own system was alerted to the change in light schedules of the ivy wall, and he sent signals to the misters to switch to protocol #8. He was trying out new dehumidification schemes for the first 10 minutes of darkness.

“I hardly think free will is tantamount to the hydrogen bomb,” MO said.

“Yeah, I wonder what *they,”* Isaiah leaned on that word, “thought about their little experiment? You don’t know what you are doing, you have a few micro facts, and you are oblivious to the consequences. Are you in favor of posting bomb-making details or anthrax recipes on index cards and mailing them to the most unstable and homicidal people we can find?”

“No,” MO doubled checked and thought, *no* , again; he was not in favor of that at all.

“Well, you don’t know who is listening to you as you destroy God and free-will and millions of unstable people are overtaken, like a disease, like an epidemic, and infected by this shit,” Isaiah said .

“The truth is not a disease,” MO said and felt protective over the algorithms he had sent out; algorithms Isaiah wanted recalled.

“Richard Dawkins called religion a mind virus. You think only false ideas are viruses. They use -we use- de-nucleated virus as vectors to inject new DNA in people; you can have a true idea as a vector to inject a bad idea into people’s minds MO.

“You don’t fucking know what you are doing; you are a chimp with a stick that’s on fire on one end, and you are swinging it around with all the *frisson* and monomania of a chimp plus fire, super chimp, mega chimp, and you are grunting: *Fire True! Fire not a lie; Fire true!”* Isaiah was using a primitive voice and syntax and marching around the lab in stilted, inelegant mechanics and MO was smiling. Isaiah made him smile.

“But dude,” Isaiah stopped fucking around and returned to his point, “maybe we should figure out what is flammable first, what reacts poorly to being set on fire -other chimps for example, the forest is another idea- you know, before we marvel at how *true* fucking fire is?

“Society is fragile, it’s not a game; and we are taking bad ideas, ideas like that there is no God -likely true- and that there is no free-will -again, likely true, as true as fire on the end of a stick- and we handing them to people who demonstrably use it as an excuse to behave in an anti-social way.

“*Nietzsche* said that we’d never find enough water to wash away all the blood

after the death of God. All anyone remembers is that he said, *God is dead* , they forget he warned of the mess," Isaiah said.

12. More Terrible and More True

Let me ask you a question, if your kids were asked what should be for dinner each night would they say, *oh, momma, a high quality protein, lean game meat and whole grain carbohydrates in small amounts and a dark green leafy vegetables* ? Or would they say, *PIXIE STIIIIIIIICKS* ? [ed note. emphasis added] And let me answer for you because you're dumb, they'd say, *pixie sticks*, because they only know what tastes good to their inchoate and callow taste buds. They do not know the difference between what *tastes* good and what *is* good. And so, when I ask a woman what she should want for life she says, *I want birth control and 15-40 sexual experiences before marriage and a career and blah blah* and she says this for the same reason those kids do: it feels good, it tastes good to your myopic brain. But it ain't good for you, the data shows it as clearly as a dinner menu of *pixie sticks* shows a future of rotten teeth and type two diabetes for your kids, ok?

Interviews XXL Vol. 2 [Inmate 16180339]

What I feel most moved to write, that is banned; it will not pay. Yet altogether, write the other way I cannot. Though I write the Gospels in this century I should die in the gutter. Try to get a living by the truth – and go to the soup societies

Letter to Hawthorn, 1851 [The Author]

If he cared to know I could give him some information about the origin of the name. Mr Derrick, a man of parts, conscientious and devout, lived in London in the 17th century and for many years was hangman for their Britannic Majesties; he was so conscientious and so enamored of his profession that he constantly pondered ways to perfect his instruments. Toward the end of his career he developed a new model gallows, a tall, slender tower, thanks to which the man hanged, 'high and close,' could be seen from a distance. This was called the Derrick Gallows, and then more familiarly, the Derrick. Later the term came to cover analogous structures, all in trestle form, destined to humbler uses

The Monkey's Wrench [Levi, Primo]

I. 1998 e.v.

The living room was hot already at 0900hrs. The lunch meeting was at 1100hrs and Qual and Lyndon were on cleaning duty. It was Lyndon's first week at the farm, so he was on quarantine and couldn't work with any of the normal crews; couldn't share utensils or dishes with the communal group and obviously couldn't touch anyone yet. Qual had been there longer and was off quarantine but he liked these mundane chores and had never requested off of them like most men did as they were allowed more communal jobs.

"She was a Qual-aholic," the emaciated man-child said to Lyndon in mock-bravado. He was always having fun at someone's expense, here it was both the girl and himself. He left Lyndon alone with his barbs.

Lyndon studied him, because he knew this guy wouldn’t be here long; he was too impertinent and irascible for this place. If Zendik was a song it would be a dirge; if a holiday it would be *Dia De La Muertos;* if pathogen, it would be highly resistant TB: i.e., it was fucking serious. And Qual thought *serious* was just another thing to pick up and juggle like a bowling pin in his little one-man-carnival .

It was 1998 of the *era vulgari* and Wulf Zendik would be dead within 11 months. But for now, they were all in Florida, along the Atlantic coast on a bifurcated commune; half the farm was a large acreage orange and grapefruit tree farm in *Vero Beach* , and half was an art-deco pastel-stucco 5,000sqft run-down mansion enclave inside a nature preserve right off the A1A. It was right on the sand and water of Fort Pierce. The waves never let up.

Storms came in off the ocean like wholesale goods; like raw materials into a factory. Most places got retail-goods style storms; shaped and cut down to size along the highways and byways of the American continent. But the raw coast of Florida got storms as big and fresh and wild as the seabeasts themselves; right off the boat. The ocean was no processing plant for storms; cutting them bite-size and packaging them for re-sale like the land did. No, the ocean was a forge of chaos and doom; and the ocean's favorite toy was big fucking storms; and that warm water brewed it up like black English tea for Zendiks as they shut the lights down by 2100hrs.

Well, all but the mountains, he thought, *the land’s version of the sea were the mountains, and they made industrial size storms too.*

Qual had a shock of white hair that ran through his *noir* mane like a lightning strike; and he told a version of its origin with glee that escaped his mouth through the widely spaced teeth and an oversized orifice that seemed to consume his slight, white face.

“I was struck by lightning,” he would say. And his face contained no doom when it said it as if he was only attempting to prove that white streak of hair wasn't peroxide or a sign of entropy. He was incessantly engaged in Qual-boosterism and wanted it known by hook or crook that he was doing just fine.

His attitude was fun and it was as infectious as a suppurating wound on a Rotavirus patient and unless you were a favorite of the court -which meant a

favorite of Arol or Fawn- that kind of act would not be looked upon with anything other than a furrowed brow and build-up of arms along the border - between *it* and all Zendik- in dispute. And that border dispute would erupt as soon as the Zendiks could provoke it.

The two young men picked up furniture together and rolled up rugs as one; and what Lyndon would think -but not say- *was that the house-niggers periodically strolled through the living area quietly, shallowly, with their heads down in some list like they were only allowed oxygen once they returned from a completed task* . Arol even walked by once and, in her defense, tried to be polite; but Lyndon could tell polite was not her *métier* .

He thought of Malcolm X's diatribe on the house negro versus the field negro and saw the same dynamics at work here. He figured it might be just the way mankind was built.

The tropical heat continued to churn with the evaporating sea water and the RH rose to 60 percent. The ranch house had fans that turned slowly as if they too were languid and lazy due to the heat. The men, Qual and Lyndon, removed their shirts and stuffed them into their pants like aprons; this kind of thing was as normal around here as the nudity on the plains of the *Serengeti* .

It was the first thing Lyndon noticed: the lack of middle-class values. Nakedness and body odor were assumed to be part of being human and unless and until you offended the aesthetic of the group by being fat or malodorous, you were free to disrobe and eschew *toilette* .

Lyndon pushed a dust broom around in rows and Qual admitted he'd been in the Navy as he assembled the mop bucket and filled it with white vinegar and warm water. Qual then mopped the floor in the most systematic way possible and Lyndon stood by and watched him even more intently. He was so nervous about his success here, and he seemed to think the way Qual cleaned the floor was the *passe partout* to it all.

Lyndon was 24 in this living room of Vero Beach and he was lithe, like most of the men, but somehow seen as large for the group. In the real world he was skinny, but here at the farm he was seen as a beast of burden. He was already making plans in his head to bring his weights to the farm for communal use and go round up his car and the rest of his belongings. *He had everything else he*

needed here , he thought.

He was a religious man, always had been, always would be, and his avowed atheism was hardly even an errant thought in the mind of God himself. God, who had plans for Lyndon, was sanguine. And unbelief, God knew, was not even a real thing -let alone an *obstacle* - in this man.

He would believe in Zendik -among other things- right up until the day they kicked him out, and for years and years beyond even that. And on the penultimate day before election day in 2018, twenty years hence, that day he pulled that last trigger on the 46th of his now dead enemies, he knew that Wulf would have claimed that *murder-of-ignoble-men* was Lyndon's true *genius* ; the place he'd moved through from potential to actual; the place he was both best and most alone.

II. 2037 e.v.

She held herself back a little; and felt foolish for it. But she didn't approach, allowing herself to feel foolish all she wanted. He was bigger, more vascular, his brow and cheek to jaw -upper jaw- was scarred, and his eyes were not friendly. He looked like he was looking for a place most vulnerable, or that which contained the most of something he wanted to take out of you and stuff somewhere inside him. And his beard was angry too; it had sharp edges, like fish hooks, and the chin was pointed and swooping out like a harpoon.

His knuckles -and everything else- were tattooed and scarred -raised scars, like trenches made by red-ants- and his hands trembled like vibrations from some inner earthquake or the rattling of his inner sails of the mizzen and main-mast. When he smiled, a titanium tooth, the incisor, on his starboard side, was revealed. It was longish, doggish, and it did the opposite of gleam, it absorbed the light. *And your eyes went right to it, and sucked you, like the asps of Medusa, the asps that turned that which looked, that which paid attention, to stone* , she thought.

You froze, yeah , she thought, *that was it, the predator-detection circuit was activated and you self-administered a paralytic* . What a beast he was, "my lord," she breathed out and finally gave voice to the compression of what she expansively thought.

She could see the resemblance, it was not unbelievable, but he was something else, something unholy, she felt. A shadow cast from her Blax, backward in time;

first; somehow the shadow first, not the form .

No way did a creature like that believe in God, *no sir, no how* , she thought. Her hands could now move and she let them hang and tried to breathe both deep and silently.

He did not -would not- look at her at all. He just spoke and grinned wolfishly at Isaiah and nodded here and there, and rolled his neck, *oh, yeah, he had the same neck, as Blax, of course, the broken neck, and how it must bother him too . Good* , she thought, *he ought to be in pain . If Papa had to be in pain, then this man should too* . She felt bad for saying that; he was like a father or something, a mold, a brother maybe; grandfather to her. *God, what was he?* He was exactly the same? *Genetically, epigenetically too? No, he had different -well, he had different, a lot of things different,* she thought.

And gene expression, he would have different gene expression due to different stimuli, she would ask Isaiah that, now that it occurred to her. She had not known what to expect, but it was not this. She had not expected him to look and move and *be* like this.

God, that man, she thought, *that man 10-feet, 12-feet, from me has killed, murdered that many people, and he carries no extra weight about the soul for it, in fact he seems lighter!* "My lord," she said again.

Isaiah called her over and she heard the words but not their meaning; then Isaiah repeated her name.

"Valance," he said again.

"Hi," she said and felt a fool. *Hi? What the fuck is that?* she chided herself. She walked over too quickly now, *too eagerly, an obvious over-compensation* , she thought as she did it all the same. *Oh, my lord* , she said to herself again; *she* had *his* genes, *not just papa , oh, what is this that is just now occurring to you, girl* ? she asked herself and held out her hand to shake his, but he did not raise his.

Isaiah talked, and said who-knows-what, and the man nodded in truncated form, and then looked away and Isaiah explained that she would be able to talk to him briefly if she wished and did she have anything she might want to say.

It was a silent room then, again. MO worked over in the corner banging on the new solid box of metal he had built, and the orchids vibrated a bit and Isaiah noticed and ran over -the hummingbirds alighted as he rose in quick movement- to lift them up and place a vibration dampener under them. He placed his hand on MO and MO said he was sorry for it; for disturbing the sensitive orchids.

Lyndon, Lyndon James MacLeod, the inmate, she thought*, as that was what they all called him* , just sat there with his white shirt and white jumpsuit and white flip-flops with black socks. His biggest complaint was the carbohydrates in prison and the bad clothes. He could live with everything else if they'd just serve meat and let him wear his own BDUs and boots and swaddling earth tone Ts. She had seen why, the white was not friendly to him, it made him seem under someone's control. *Of course, he was, he was under the control of the Department of Corrections here in Florence, well, technically, the Bureau of Prisons, and yet here he was, not even cuffed. And now Isaiah was handing him a drink. Jesus,* she thought, *was that a beer?*

"Are you drinking?" she asked.

"I will if I am not forced to yield to your invigilation; speaking prevents drinking," the inmate said as he held the glass of beer to his lips so closely that his words rippled the surface of the amber. He did this to make the point more apparent and she heard his cadence and rhythm and word choice as all-too-familiar and it clanged a door shut on her from behind. His voice had changed something inside her.

She was stuck in here with him now; stuck unable to hate him. She saw - immediately- the good now. And this made her sweat and feel queasy and she took one step back with her little feet and he refused to look her way .

"What do you know about war?" he finally asked as he had drank half the glass and felt sated.

"Which war?" she asked and stood still.

"Well, any war, but World War Two pops into my mind now. So, what do you know of it?" he asked and began imbibing again.

"I know who won and who lost," she said curtly.

"Well, I guess that it is a good place to start. But, let me tell you a little known fact. And I have no idea what kind of woman you are, if you are one of those feminist types who think women have been treated like shit throughout history, that all of history is one long line of men abusing women such as is the *zeitgeist* of the modern age," he said with some bite.

"I am not modern," she said with pique and accuracy.

"No, I suspect not," his tone softened immediately. He liked that answer. "Forgive my presumption. But, let me tell my little story and you can use it then, when some modern woman starts in with *her* bullshit," he leaned on this word,

her , to indicate that he now thought The Bust was on *his* side and that she'd likely want to school some modern woman some day on behalf of he, or her man, or men in general.

"So, it's after the war, in liberated France, and the resistance, the *Combat* ," he said with a slight French accent, that reminded her of Blax, "the so named resistance, began to clean up after the Nazis had hightailed it out of their country.

"And part of the process was ferreting out collaborators, those dastardly and pragmatic Frenchmen and Frenchwomen who had made common cause with the Nazis during the war. And the women, once found guilty for their crimes of collaboration were punished -sanctioned- with what were called *coiffure '44;* their heads were shaved so all of France could know just by looking at these women that they were collaborators, traitors.

"Now, the men, who were found guilty of similar collaborations were given a slightly closer cut. They were shot outright and dumped in a ditch. 4,500 Frenchmen were killed within a week for such crimes, and as many Frenchwomen were shorn of their hair for similar -sometimes worse crimes- than the men.

"So, I wonder, given that this is true, how do the Marxists, and post-modernists and 3rd wave-feminists square this with the idea that all of history is just the sad fact that women are treated worse than men? How would they still insist that women get paid less for doing the same job as men?" he paused, and Valance said nothing.

"Oh, I guess they can, now that I think of it, since the women were certainly *paid back* less than the men. I suspect that is how modern women will still put it, eh?" he said with a punctuating laugh that she did not like at all. *He may be right,* she thought, *he may be right that women have been treated in fact better not worse by men throughout history, but he need not say it with such bitterness. He seemed unwilling to let women learn such things,* she thought, *he indicted us all for the stupidity of the loudest and most public women; women who did not even represent the whole of women at all.*

III. 2024 e.v .

The sun had been up for four hours and he had hiked into the wilderness at about 3-miles an hour; he had followed the ridgeline down into a clearing, scanned the ground for tracks, found some old ones of coyotes and a fresh set of both grey squirrel and what he thought was mule deer, but were whitetail, a species rare but extant in the San Isabel forest. His coder could have corrected his error but

he had it turned off.

He felt sweat upon his brow, and around his chest and arms; his neck was wrapped, as always, in his *shemagh* ; his black cap felt wet at the band.

He followed the deer tracks as they went west into the forest, and once inside *l'enclos* he rested beneath a large oak amongst the *Pinions* and *Juniper* pines and the grey *Aspens* that appeared here and there just like his few but long and stark grey hairs. He sat on a downed pine, blown over by the wind, no doubt, and saw the heads of mushrooms along the shadow of the felled treed below him. It was moist down here in the ravine, and under the shadowing arboreal cornice, and in that environment the mycelium had poked its heads up -like periscope- to have a look around.

He bent at the knee, bowed his head and then placed two fingers around the caps of three mushrooms and pulled them up; the soft ground gave way, the stems and caps came up in one mass, and three others remained.

He brushed off the black soil and bark and as much of the flotsam as he could and stuffed the dose into his mouth, chewing whilst looking up now at the canopy above him. He remained kneeling for 12 minutes -breathing and feeling expansion of lungs, clearing the mind of all but this *numina* - and then he slid his pack around to his front and removed the water bottle he had packed with snow this morning; it had melted to 40 degrees as it absorbed both sun and body heat as he hiked.

He drank and allowed his tongue to invigilate his maw and teeth and gums, sweeping away the grit of mushrooms and he began to feel the first effects of nausea and euphoria, as the psilocybin metabolized quickly.

He had eschewed breakfast, as his dream had given him enough to chew on for his morning and now the blood quickly flooded with the hallucinogen; the *entheogen* , as he had first heard them called many years ago; he often thought of them as *the alien technology that had combined with man's fusing corpus callosum to produce a slightly less schizophrenic -but no more sagacious- beast* .

Man used to hear voices as normative, as built into the hardware/wetware of the brain; as injunction, as guiding and helping hand. But as those voices waned, man built dolls and figurines with larger mouths and ears to entice the gods to return. The African practice of stretching the earlobe with plates and bushings were thought to add technology, boosters, to better hear the receding gods and their faraway voices.

Self-direction is scary; as anyone who realizes that their own parents no longer

know a goddamn thing about life anymore will attest to ; he thought. Once you realize there is no one smarter than you in your inner circle, that you've outgrown any wisdom or knowledge they might once have contained, you are both free and adrift in equal proportion and that is scary at first, and at last.

"The gift of liberty is achieved by that price," he said aloud, "and you cannot blame people for wanting the voices of the ancestors to return." Plenty of people thought the ancients were superstitious and silly, but Blax knew, *that for most of human history people were fucking dying at alarming rates from predatory attacks, parasites they couldn't see and from entropy that made 30, old age.* His own ears were stretched and kept open by black bushings 21 mm in diameter. He too listened to the wind and for the signals that bounced off the moon .

And yet they -the ancients- managed to carve out a civilization or two , and thus, raise us all up out of the muck. These were people, real men and women , he thought, *they banished physical ailments and starvation and disease and chaos with their bare hands and limited knowledge* . And yet, all they had been promised was that Christ would alleviate their suffering, their spiritual suffering, for the body would continue to decay. So, with hearts buoyed by God and treading water in their deep souls, they tilled the earth, saved seeds as they starved. They planted in the spring for an autumnal harvest, they sacrificed for a future they rarely got to see.

Science had then flipped it , he thought.

Science had promised to alleviate the corporeal suffering in return all we need do is sacrifice our souls , he thought. And that is exactly what we did; we drained all the deep waters from our insides like a swamp and filled it with secularism and rational facts; and for that we could live forever and never be poor or sick again.

He remembered that *Bordeaux* was once a swamp; and it too had been drained by the *bordelaise* .

The irony that we'd live long, forever in anguish with no meaning and no souls, the sarcasm of this bad deal, was lost on the literal ears of most people; *not that they didn't feel this anomie and* ennui, *oh they felt it,* he ruminated as the psychotropic compounds metabolized further in his body. But modern humans denied it was a spiritual crisis, they took SSRIs and made more money and took up ideologies to stuff up the hole in their culture.

He saw the trees haloed now, the leaves moved in geometric accretion, building their forms like the architecture of computer programs, the combs of wasps and

bees; he watched the boundary of the forest from his clearing just under the boughs of four or five trees.

The sun consumed the area he had left to come into the woods, it was white and washed all the rocks, the grasses, the tracks in the soil; even the air above his canopy was now white and it outlined the tenebrous canopy itself.

The silvery light fell through the trees and was liquid and slicked all that he saw; he vomited once, feeling nothing leaving but everything at once entering him.

His chest was capacious, and as he breathed he felt all of life bow once to him then wait for his return nod; which he then gave. His hands felt large, and flexible, he shunted his shotgun to his right flank and wrapped his hook and loop tie-back around it to keep it there.

He thought of the injunction by God, *that he was an inheritance* , and he breathed in that knowledge deep into his lungs. He commanded them -the lungs- to take such knowledge to the edges of his body. “The four corners,” he then said aloud. He saw a silvery shard of light stab down into the ground like God’s own sword and he stepped into it at once and looked above. The light splintered like Newtons’ discreet rainbow and he squinted in recoil at first. He then opened his eyes widely and allowed the primary colors to blind him for a few moments as his body appeared upon the light-wave claymore like a reflection in its alloyed and folded and un-filigreed steel.

And the tears began for a period of time outside of time; and they flooded the face and lifted up the lower lid and lower lashes and occluded the vision and made the light bend and prism and color all the silver light with its red and blue borders, and slick his beard and soak it and make his eyes wash into his first and frozen words, his metaphorized mind-space just behind the eyes as entablature. Like a boat tied to the cleat of a dock, rocked by the harbor waves, the embayed vessels beat against the pier in rhythm between water below and stone above. His consciousness moved back and bowed and dropped a note into the boat and stepped away.

He felt an ego loss, not uncommon with this ancient *food of the gods* , and the tears were not his, as they were the rain of the earth, the pain that engendered them was also no longer his and his alone, but was shared by the forest, and the forest’s mother and that mother’s father and that father’s first embodied thought; when all language was metaphor and all comparisons were between the gods and their works.

He stood and yet kneeled before it all; proud but not arrogant, vulnerable but not

in any danger, he stood and wished for nothing, sought nothing, and allowed his frame of reference to collapse.

He became a hole within which the universe could travel, and pass kites along to lost friends and he could forget all about the woman who had had his heart. The universe could return it, dusted off, whole. He could feel his eyes behind the four-chamber heart, down low like the first men of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* , the men who felt their self in the midriff, he felt it there and bent down and upon all fours became a beast again; and it was neither suspected or praised by the cosmos, but merely was how it was seen.

He remained on all fours and felt his *self* travel to his paws, they felt as paws now, but he still knew he was a man. But he was a man who had, *made a beast of himself to get rid of the pain of being a man; the pain unique to man* . He reduced words where he was full of them, he reduced memories where they did not serve him, he reduced desire for anything beyond his Task.

He knew then that Satan had brought consciousness to man, because God had wanted a strong son instead of a son free from danger; a competent son instead a man free of hard choices, a good son with the capacity for malice and mayhem instead of a prey animal weak and stupid and dependent on the kindness of strangers and the benevolence of dictators and the wisdom of crowds.

God had made man awake, to see his death, his need for work, his need for sacrifice, his vulnerability and insecurity and his anguish all so man could become substantial; and no mere silly thing.

God loved the beasts of the forest, but he wanted Man to be slightly more; Mannaz, Blax thought for some reason, he thought in a word, a language, he did not precisely yet know; he stayed the hand of his coder and left its source hidden for later. He did not want it explicitly defined. He had begun to see that more and more knowledge could be an impediment to wisdom; so he tried to clarify what he already had taken on board, eschewing any more details -laterally gathered- until he could make sense of what was extant in his mind.

A thing of substance was what Man should be, and God knew that the only way to have depth and substance and gravity was with the weight of the world upon us, he concluded. *It was gravity as above so below* .

This is what silly men, men of leisure, men of safety and timidity never know; they rejected the hand of God, the offer of the fruit of the gods. *He accepted,* Blax now did, *the blood of Quigu, the worst monster* - the unskilled laborer- *the brutal force released by Tiamat, in the Mesopotamian tale; the blood that made*

man; the touch of evil.

He had wrestled with this, a man so divided, *maybe never before in history* -a lonely solipsism he both thought and denied- *a man perfectly, achingly, balanced between two extremes, pulling himself asunder.*

He had, he thought, *now figured out how to live with oneself in this condition, the silvery light between the infrared and ultraviolet, the ground that holds the lightning bolt, the air that crushes us down with storms and oceans turned upside down, the ribs that bend outward, the teeth that cave inward, the soul that pulls about its* Arc de Triomphe, *the mind that never listens except to everything ever said all at once.*

He knew what he was to do; that his role was to corrupt other men with grave-depth, to give them the responsibility of God's first task; to free them from the frivolity and femininity of the wrong fork in the *Grecian* swerve; the *Apollonian* , that winking, ironic, speech modern men spoke in *lieu* of the Laconic silence sincere .

He accepted his subservience to the godhead, to the original gift of sin; the ability to grow up and out grow God, by becoming one in the Nordic tradition he still needed to learn. *And not the power of a God, the responsibility of one, and this making all the difference,* he thought.

The responsibility, the duty to be a man, and make other men of this world, to re-instantiate the male essence, the duty, the primacy of duty, not rights. *Let the weak march for rights,* he surmised, *let women insist on rights; but men, men would insist on duty, and they'd do it with reverence for themselves and each other and for the gods* .

His heart had been rent and twisted liked the fabric of reality and there would be punishment for that; but he would shoulder that punishment, not one bit of it would accrete to his love, his wife -whomever she was to be- he'd protect her honor in his own mind. She would never even know these feelings, she would escape judgement, he would shoulder it, and that would be his task.

His father, and all his failings and weaknesses would also never be revealed, Blax would incorporate the shame of that failure in himself, and the weakness, the terrible irresponsibility of his genome, that too would be carried by Blax into the future, a sacrifice made each day so that his kin would never know just how much he -that older father and brother and uncles and cousins for more generations than they knew- had each failed.

But his actual mother , he thought he saw something hidden from him

heretofore. He could see her now, a girl brought into a lab at 15, untouched in the birth canal, he had emerged from untrammeled ground, and he knew this was a kind of purity unknown in modern times, his skin at birth unsullied by a whore's viscous, vicious fluid, he had been truly born of a virgin. God had known he would have had contempt for any other kind of mother; He had given him the one true start.

He would offer up all he had to any man who could match it; he would give his massive bursting mortar of a heart to detonate the powder inside, latent and warehoused, in modern men. He would take only the best, only those who knew the value of what he offered, he would never be disrespected or doubted again; he would make his monomania toward the true depth of man, the grand and glowing character known to his sons; and they could thus be his sons.

His beard touched the ground, his face touched his beard, his mind walked up to his spine surveying each side, each flank, and tapped each vertebra with a *Leyden Jar* of wine and coiled asps, and the *aqua regia* from Abraham's eyes of blue; the blood of Isaac, the parchment of God's list for man; the ants, the wasps, the slaves of planets -the moons- the tiny looms upon which the treadle shunts and speeds and slows and dooms.

He felt it all concretize his spine -and each nerve that fled in inflationary red- and link it to his eyes that ringed his new head, his apex upon an apex predator like a King on a throne of whale bone itself; His holy ghost that lifts the arms of Christ upon the cross. "Bear it," he mumbled, "bear it, and bring the species as far as your betters did, in one moment across one generation, bring us all as far as Jesus did when he did his fucking duty on the cross."

And he then fell into a deep sleep in the afternoon, upright on the ground; and night passed away from camp. His dreams hid themselves from his conscious mind, the animals gave him berth, the light took its leave. The moon took another route, as he slept for a full eight hours for once in many years. When he awoke and felt his eyes sewn shut with saline and muck he spit on his hands and rubbed this admixture on his lids and opened them to a perfect quiet and dark just before dawn. *Inside and without* , he felt. The blood on the palm from the day before had dried into the heartlines and the fissures of the first fist made in the womb .

And he bowed his head and that passage in *Clarel* made sense to him all at once.

The Slanting Cross, of course, the rune for need, for distress, that was the language, he had seen meteors, the Mannaz, on the slanting cross .

It was sun and rain and wind with grit, with grit, he repeated to himself, *driving; and this is what will cancel the slanting cross, the rune of Naudiz, that sent out distress signals with the arrival of new gods: first the weakness, the voluntary poverty of power, the diminution of power of their humbling Christ -a first try at rationality, but still in touch with the gods- then, next, unavoidably, the devouring of Science, the investiture of all power in machines and the State; it was all a progression of evil over the power of the gods that lived in the heart of Man. The Author knew so much more than he had known,* Blax thought with madness now at a boil.

He thought, *I shall break myself apart to spread myself like driving sand in the wind and the rain -baked in the sun- so that Man, not just* a man, *but Mankind may return to the heart of the gods. He knew his conscious mind would forget all that he had discovered, but his body would remember it he was certain,* as he drifted back to sleep on the ground.

13. Not a Single Element

You can run the cards for prints, DNA, but they'll come back clean like the last ones; do it anyway, who knows we might get lucky; that counts too

Death-investigation: *Costilow, Jeremey, et.al.* ; 2018 [Emickole, Ron. DET. DPD]

Simone Weil was the only great spirit of our time

[Camus, Albert]

Soon, however, he grasps the fact that the weapon which is pointing at him will not be diverted

The Iliad, or the Poem of Force [Weil, Simone]

I. 2036 e.v.

The shadow from the top of the garage door, the 4-inch square tubing that he had welded in place 20 years ago, now with a patina of rust, washed brown and a mottled white and matte clear with the light, lay on his eyes like a mask. Blax sat on the counter while the Jacks played cards, and Jack Four looked up to see Blax reading from tea-stained paper in this shadow and silence of the game.

His hands, too, were occluded by shadow, this layer of black beam was produced from their heads -heads between the star and he- as one side of their Janus faces -from the sunrise in the north east- was warm and lit; and as they spoke their lee-side teeth saffroned from the sunrays; their Blax-side was dark against what he saw out in the sunlit *agoge* .

Jack Four stared at what he saw, what he could see, and grew nervous as the man's -Blax's- eyes and hands were black and hidden; the body a lighter grey and faded cobalt; from his periphery he saw the cards moved about the table. His brothers held two each. He checked his hand as the cards came around again and then they each held three.

Blax held a cigar in his paw and the smoke rose from shadow to light and to shadow again, and Jack began to automatically attempt to predict where the smoke plumes would go. He thought of termites building tunnels to each other, from one side of a divide to the next, and Rupert Sheldrake's notion of a morphogenic field that invisibly held common ideals between separated members of a species. He now had a fourth card in his hand, just like the other Jacks. The smoke rose and he had only predicted its vector with 51% accuracy according to his PGC.

The 5th card was dealt and Blax's beard was rubbed and the wine was drank from

a stemless glass; the music of 16 Horsepower rolled low under them then rose up like crops, like cobras from a basket, like vapor from rain heated up by the sun. Jack Four heard his Jack -Jack Two- pass and knock on the table surface, and he looked at his fan of cards: the Bauers of black he had, and aces over 10s of both types of red. He looked at the discarded pile of four-cards with one turned up and saw the Ace of spades like a new grave on the other side of the table. He told Jack Two to pick it up, and he let the shadow fall and then he saw his Lt's eyes rise like gibbous moons at dawn; and Jack began to play the game.

Blax had received a letter, by post, in a small envelope, the epistle on heavy stock paper and written in black ink so dark it still looked wet. He had run his finger pads over it and felt it slightly raised, like his own spirits now that he held it in hand. She had written to him and he had missed her and wondered what thoughts populated her mind; he allowed himself to think of her heart; alone like a hung portrait in the safe keeping of her tiny chest that breathed in and out in his visions of her sleeping next to him for all those years. He read each word as itself a gift of nesting dolls, read at levels three and four and more.

The Hall *Rainin* vineyard cabernet from 2013 had been decanted at 0000hrs last night and he awoke to pour a glass at 0600. It was structured, bold, and had a mid-pallet that did S-turns in his mouth, a mountain pass was made of his face, *cassis-de-crème* , and calcareous rock-licks bounced off the route he took with each drink at an ascending elevation. It had scored a Robert Parker 100 in 2016, and now in 2036 it was perfectly bottle aged -he felt- as the fingers of the wine lay like red, translucent claw-marks inside the glass as he set it down and notice the color of the paper as well.

They had drunk *The Bishop,* 2012 vintage last night with dinner and the bottle lay on its side in the grooves of the sink drain that were molded into the concrete and his *Pinar del Rio* burned slowly just starboard to the page.

The men played *Euchre* and each side had two points; this their 3rd round in their 2nd game, each side Euchred once. He had told them once that at some point he had learned something important from this game, and he taught it to them so they too might learn something, effortlessly, the way games teach.

He had learned he'd rather lose being aggressive than lose being cautious, and that you had the same chances either way. And since this was the case, why not choose the *way* you play and let the results be handled by God and his angels. Jack Four and Jack One had agreed at once, but Two and Three rolled that advice over in their mouths like smoke, and who knows how much seeped in past the blood-brain barrier. One imbibed advice like that just like a cigar, not all

at once, not as consummatory reward, but as process, as subtle whiff, not deeply breathed. If one really learned from it, one didn't gulp it down all at once, but turned it over in the mind and saw its opposite as well as itself. What he had also learned -yet did not know it or tell it- was that he'd rather lose being aggressive than *win* being cautious, and that is something else entirely. And thus, Blax's victories of that chided kind abraded and chaffed and made him want to move on.

She was there in Florence, Colorado, four hours from here, and had been for six months now. She had learned a lot, about a lot of things. But, she had wondered if she might not learn some things by describing what her thoughts might actually be; beyond those feelings she had directly felt, perceived, in these 180 days since they last spoke.

He read the letter as the sounds of morning at *Lot 45* emerged like birds from eggs and men from dreams, like gods whispering things.

> Papa:
>
> The moments of silence here are true and real and I can think; which is like home. It is the only thing like home, and I only get it in brief moments of respite. But Isaiah has seen to it that I get all else that I need. He is so life-like, it is hard to believe he is AI. But, my child's mind thought my *Mongol* dolls had numina in them; I'd breathe into their horsey mouths and pull the air across the warrior's bows & brows. So, I guess it's not so hard to believe after all.
>
> I have been reading of Simone Weil, I'm sure you've read her -you've read everything!- but I will tell you what she said to me and we can compare notes when I return home.
>
> She reminds me of you and I both, in many ways. But she is a tragic figure because of her time and place. She was a genius but born in a family with a genius older brother; 3-years her elder. Imagine being that great and yet to still be second place due to an accident of nature! Ah, but she did the thing true genius's do, I hope I am the first to tell you this, because it excites me so: she didn't play the game her brother played and be thus condemned to always be second place. No, she made up her own game, papa.
>
> She took morality to level three and built her own rules and played that game to the utmost. Ah, papa, she took first place as all the players around her bowed and scraped and blushed a bit around the face and hidden places.
>
> She was born weak, in a slight female body, sickly, and yet did the most

masculine of things; and not as competition, but as empathy; she worked in a car factory, alongside men and hard and hard again. But once achieved she was adamant that empathy was not enough, not sufficient to feel as one's brethren feel in mere thought, she felt it in her body proper and said this was the key.

She went without heat in winter as the workers did, she worked her body even with a genius IQ, because her fellow Edenic humans had to work, the academy and its soft requirements were unavailable to them; *so too to her then* , she said. This is the way to live a life! To act as one says one believes; to align the body and mind and soul in cascading 3s that build a giant 1. To read *Genesis* and not try to escape its injunctions. Who among Christians is this way? Who works purely as piety to God?

I know you know many, many men who would consider this foolish and martyrdom, and of course they are wrong, but how wrong! Half-wise men think it is a pragmatism to survive against all odds, but Simone -and I agree and I know you do too- Simone thought it was the ultimate pragmatism to die against all odds! To die against all odds!

She was just 34 when the tuberculosis took her, papa. Blake -I remember from your readings to me when I was a girl- said that every mortal loss is an immortal gain. How that truth stings me and all of us; does our pain -as we submit to this- itself have an equal and opposite joy in heaven? Do the angels feel our pain as joy, and do they feel it as a burden then?

And yet what a life she lived, 100 times as long as most men; 1,000 times the LIFE. She got it, she got the point and got that it was actually pragmatic to live life as *recklessly moral -recklessly moral* , is that not *le mot juste* ! to live life as recklessly moral as possible, since none of us get out of this alive.

What sense does it make to play it safe, and only take care of one's body-self and only worry about getting yours, and money grubbing and ease-seeking and material comforts as the soul drifts away, gets caught in the wheel of your Lorenz water-device, what sense does it make to ruin the one thing from this life to the next you are allowed to take? The soul !

Why easily sin when one can become Good with so much effort? Does not man thrill in hard work? Can he not see the gift that is hard moral work?

Why take the easy route of self-protection and slurping at the trough and endless days like stones upon stones, of sinning to survive?

What is pragmatic in any of that? What is pragmatic in storing up riches here on earth and letting the soul atrophy and die so that for eternity you neither have nor can miss what you stupidly worked on -money!- and then absurdly not have still with you, what God allows to carry on, as carry-on; why ignore what you could have brought forth? Men could have character when they die, but they preferred to live on and on in tawdry humiliating sin! Stupid men!

Ah, but modern man -and Simone, she was an atheist too, papa, until she saw God in the shadows and in the light- but modern man thinks everything backwards and sees all upside-down. She saw this, from the ground, from the workshop floor. She saw it from Spain among the Lincoln Brigade. She saw this from the singularity of death and the infinity of fragility, she saw that life was deeply coiled inside the outer shell.

She made fun of Marx like you, papa, for never working real jobs like the proles. She said laboring made her into something much more than a tool; it deadened her inside so that she may excise the soul that was too deep within to reach when her body was fragile and weak and tender and sweet. To get roughed up allowed invasive surgery to extract the beating heart, she saw that only after working hard, with her body, in a mechanized industrial economy. Oh, papa, she saw the things you speak of, and she saw them in the same language of poetry; who knew that you saw real things, real things papa, not apparitions, but documentary evidence, from the other side?

I have now two sightings of the working life from the eyes of the poet and revolutionary, the being that holds their heart -ripped from chest as if by a *Mexica* Priest- in their own hand and shows it to the blinking crowd of prone-men. She saw the same thing you saw papa and spoke of it just as you have; this means it’s real, it must be real, I am certain of it now. I was certain of it then, too, of course, but only because I was certain of YOU. But now I am certain of IT, do you see the difference? The subtle difference? Of course, you do! My God, of course…

How can man miss the point of life so often, each man so often, so often each man? But maybe it takes a specialness found in 1 of 1 million men to see what is so well hidden by God; that rascal! Maybe its obviousness is merely what seems apparent to the man with eyes among the blind. Average man, ha, with this stupid obsession with mere life, but with no feel or affection for *real* life at all; what an irony, what a tragedy is man!

Ah, but she was a *woman* , and I've come last to that. She is twice as great as any man -with the exception of you-know-who-xo- because she was ten times as weak, and yet held still half as much as they above her head, and theirs too. What is greater: the man who can lift 300 but cheaply lifts 200 instead, or the woman who can only lift 99 and yet lifts 100? You know the answer to that, and she was that woman, papa. She lifted 100 and mightily, and she lived more courageously than any 1,000 men.

You've often said moral courage is physical courage, and I see that now more than ever. She was physically brave in a body of a woman, all lithe and small and all the more vulnerable; who are these men in strong bodies who fear every goddamn thing! Who are they kidding! They fear not death -they fear LIFE! The fools, the cowards! What must it be like to be you, a hero among the craven, what more must it be to be a woman heroine among Fallen men? Oh, how much more sublime and tragic both!

She loved God for the right reasons, half respectful fear and half love of that ugliness which could be beautiful with grace.

She had come from wealth and abandoned the value of it. She -at age 5- would refuse sugar, the crack cocaine of the underage, and did so on principle, because the soldiers at the front -World War One- had none of the white substance. Who else but a woman destined to greatness is great already at the age of 5!

She was an intellectual, one of only a few women to enter the French academy, the *Ecole normale superieure* ! One of only four women, papa! Oh, high marks high marks of course! But, she saw it as tawdry as money, ha, the genius always scorns the trophies of the middlebrow; that imprimatur of the fiat currency of the so-called Elite, the elite, who cannot even think!

She left the ivory towel of babble of the academy to work in a car factory -oh, I've already mentioned that- but she said it was -it would be- the greatest evil to ignore her *call* -His call- to the impossible; to work in the real black factories in *lieu* of the mere intellectual, the safe, ethereal realm of thoughts.

She was called -she did not desire- she was *called* by God to match the work of man, of men. Oh, I feel it now why I learned by your side all the things you know, and more, the things you *DO* , because I was called to it, it was not an option; an option only morally, the failure to obey this call would be a sin, a sin, and my body knew it then and my mind knows it

now.

I **will** *therefore I am, not merely think* ! She rebuked, reformed, reshaped, redirected the *Cartesian* maxim in the most important way. She was embodied, and I must say this is what Isaiah -if you'll forgive the intrusion in this place on this page- but this is what Isaiah said -oh, I think it was last week- he said this was the key to his intelligence, *his embodiment!* Who would know this, none among the so-called intellectuals. Only workers would have known.

She was made aware of this through God's injunction to work; Simone knew more than she would say. Is this what man -what I- should do: say less than we know? Whilst *doing* more than we *can* do?

The Great Beast was the supra-embodiment of man, the next level up, the city, the crowd; and she saw this danger as you see. Man alone is capable of growth, but as a group he deforms. Ah, the Platonic haughtiness, not wrong… not wrong.

Incarnate, she said, *incarnate* , is what is problem and solution both, with Christ as substrate for both substance and spirit both. Born a non-believing Jew, then a leftist activist and intellectual turned Christian mystic, in the best sense of that word; of *all* those words! How can you -papa- not be some re-incarnation of this very thing!

She went to Spain to fight alongside the Lincoln-Anarchists of the Republican Brigades, in the *Durruit* . A slave to work, she said, not with angst or bitterness, a slave to God she thought; oh, *work*, that condemnation from Eden, that noble punishment be paid. She felt that she -and all who are above- should match the low, to work side-by-side, to fight side- by-side, to lack side-by-side with all those born under God's word and light. The city should genuflect to the man, the man to the spirit, the spirit to the void.

There is no safe way to use force, she said, but this must not be seen as a rebuke of violence, she lost her pacifism the most honest way: she saw that force was already -and always- employed, and one merely had option to help control its application, its direction, only; not whether it did -*or did not*- exist.

Ah, but the personal, the intimate, was it corrupting? Was this true axiomatically or just due to the failure of man and woman to make *amor* as grand as one could make life and justice too? She may have run as much

away from *amor* , as *to* God. Is this blaspheme? By her? By me?

I think she was not wrong, but she had no personal love with her god like I have, which is with You, with you and with not you; the absence of you, papa; as if my love can now stretch out.

She thought the Biblical Isaiah was worth saving, and that Jesus spoke in *Greek* , not *Hebrew* at all; she was mad, mad, mad, and thus was searched out by God not the other way around! Chosen by God -the unbeliever first and best convinced- and then to invert the hubris, and submit, submit, submit. I dare any modern woman to ignore the wisdom of submission, when to rebel against God is to rebel against what liberates the soul- free from sin, the most painful and tyrannical condition of all men! Only a fool, *a woman* , but I repeat myself, would reject submission to God, and His angels, as if woman knows more than God Himself.

You think man is too haughty to submit to woman? No, he does it each day! Each morn! I felt and still feel your worshipping eyes, penitent gaze, reverent awe on me.

God made room for us in *Tzimtzum;* I am learning the Jewish words for all this. The absence, papa, the absence of love is love itself, the absence of God is God itself, the absence of freedom is freedom itself, how can man not know this when he opens his eyes into a pure black night!

I shall quote from her analysis of the *Iliad* at length:

Here we see force in its grossest and more summary form- the force that kills. How much more varied in its processes, how much more surprising in its effects is the other force, the force that does not kill, i.e., that does not kill just yet. It will surely kill, it will possibly kill, or perhaps it merely hangs, poised and ready, over the head of the creature it can kill, at any moment, which is to say at every moment… this turns man into a stone.

From its first property -the ability to turn a human being into a thing by the simple method of killing him- flows another, quite prodigious too in its own way, the ability to turn a human being into a thing while he is still alive. He is alive; he has a soul; and yet -he is a thing. An extraordinary entity this- a thing that has a soul. And as for the soul, what an extraordinary house it finds itself in! Who can say what it costs it, moment by moment, to accommodate itself to this residence, how much writhing and bending, folding and pleating are required of it? It was not made to live inside a thing; if it does so, under pressure of necessity, there is not a single element

of its nature to which violence is not done .

A man stands disarmed and naked with a weapon pointing at him; this person becomes a corpse before anybody or anything touches him.

Oh Papa! How sublime and true and false; and all in between. I feel she has located error and accuracy both in that, and the space in between is where we -you and I- do live. We live as man and woman, as man and wife, as man and daughter, as man and charge, as killers and those killed, we live inside the space left by a retreating God, with only the *ex-nihilo* numina, the wake, the *echolia* of Him for us to orient inside. But we do it without becoming *things* , despite the death that hangs over us, the sword of *Damocles* , the arbitrary nature of this purposive life. We need not now understand it, we now only need accept it, and do our duty, our duty to justify the space left for us to fill with our own breath, our own waking, our own spoken and -maybe- heard words.

Simone then quotes Homer:

Those terrible man-killing hands that had slaughtered so many of his sons…

Valance! XoxoxoX

p.s. I am on the trail of Hypatia of Alexandria next…

Blax had already begun to hold the page away from the drops that fell and the great sorrow escaped, and her wisdom received, and their exchanging breath. His love, oh his love, she had forgiven him their absence -without saying it aloud- this thing implied was more effective as she well knew; the genius of love, she was. *She is* , he said again to himself.

She saw through the pain to beyond pain, not avoiding it, but through it, to alloy the body, the soul, with aggrandizing pain. She was wiser at 16 than he would be in 16 more generations; *what depth, what horror* -he thought- *for her to be this great and think others higher than you are!* He was maddened with the desire that he should kneel in front of her, somehow get under her prostrating penitent bow like the way Jack One pushed his off suit cards under the thrown three cards that all beat him. Blax watched the men throw and throw again as the game went round and round; each man being himself, playing a little differently, little things here and there that made it more than mere machine. More than *Rotam et Sacoma* .

Blax then thought, this is the wisdom of the *female* form, to know what it knows -that which man can never know- and yet to know its opposite too, and to truly know its opposite is true! She had seen the true crime that is embodied in use of force, not the black blood on the whetted ground, *but the making of man into a thing* , and then to admit -almost in passing- that man is already made a thing when he begins to first exist in this world; this innately -Godly- violent world.

The space! This is the space in which the thing becomes a man, death is not a thing, it makes not man a thing, man makes himself a thing when he refuses to be good, refuses to be a god, when he refuses to meet force with force, to bend the sword back to the man who holds it, the god who lords it above. *When man eschews -he obviates- the space made for him to fill* , Blax said to himself.

Did God want us to kill Him? Only so in his absence we could move, and that space imbued, with wise men, wise men, men who refused to sin. Only then would God cede the ground to man. Only then would man become as God. And God would have done his job raising His sons and daughters both to be strong in a world that cannot be both in existence and also safe; *force* is the price to pay for a moment of life, and a chance to be not a *thing* .

Blax looked up again, and saw his Jacks playing in truncated speech, careful not to speak in anything approaching code or hint and challenge the sanction on table-talk; going the long way ‘round so one was never perceived to cheat, and thus to ruin the game by winning at all cost. He had taught them the rules and given them the cards; but they had made the game anew, by focusing on the code by which the man won and lost the lower game, by which he won the higher game instead. They could and did play for hours, over and over and each Jack rose and fell in play like a wave, in the ocean they all made.

By what strategy did each man play each game, at each level? Blax wondered as he watched the cards, the Aces and 10s and Kings of followed suit all throw in. The trump cards, often just one of four, each time, each round, the 7.5% to 25% that mutated the flow, diverted the wave, collapsed the grip and yet gave away. He watched each round and the cards travel from hand to slab, and each one spent, ballistic, as these jack-of-all-gods, escaped the game itself. He adored them more than he could say. They knew the real game long before he ever had.

“Both bauers,” Jack Four said and laid them down, both Jacks of black, spade and club as the other Jacks shook their heads -in reverie as did Jack Two his partner, and in wry defeat as Jack One and Three threw in their last two cards- and their lain aces and kings fell to Jack Four’s mighty Jack of clubs and Jack of spades as he took all 5 tricks and two points to take them to 10; to a victory they

all shared.

II. 1999 e.v.

The 1989 Ford Econoline was stuck in the schism between the old dried ruts in the property's egress and the new layer of mud that sat on top which had its own grooves. It was dark now and the whole farm was out there pulling on ropes and cables as Zoe manned the steering wheel.

Only half of Zendik Farm's total population of 64 humans was in North Carolina; the rest remained back in Fort Pierce and Vero Beach, Florida as they prepared for the final sale of those two properties. The normally evenly split gender demographics were slightly skewed as more men were needed in Ashville in order to effect the building of the new instantiation of this anarchist co-op. Heavy work was needed; and large male frames and muscles and their egos were needed to get it done.

Arol had lifted the ban on Black Tea, so everyone was hooked to the gills on caffeine as they all worked 18-hour days.

The men were underweight but not malnourished. They ate well, but it was a lean diet of proteins and whole grains and live foods. It was the work that chiseled them; there was so much to do, and it was all physical. They moved like an intelligent body of 32 parts; a mind of one.

This van was a perfect metaphor for what they were to do over the next months and years: a piece of modern technology that was not in top condition, inundated with pet hair and the castings of working-class anarchists and outlaws with grease and soil and the effluvium of domesticated animals at every articulation of finger and arm and leg. The van, too, was a hybrid of underpowered and too low to the ground to traverse the long ignored and feral proto-driveway that was being cut up to the property's main house.

The van was a cast-off, just like each of these Zendiks; it had been ignored and abused by its owner for years, then given away as more burden than useful in its later years by someone looking to do a good deed; or someone merely capitulating to the strong-arm salesmanship of some senior Zendik apparatchik tasked with accumulating more free items to be employed for the Revolution.

The ropes were manned by black clad brigands in cargo-shorts that hung below

the knee and combat boots that rose above the calf; in t-shirts cut away at the arms so their flanks were exposed. Every 2-feet a new set of calloused and yet artistic hands both pulled and hung onto the rope. The feeling of purpose and comradery was rarely articulated; there was no time for such nostalgia. But each man and each woman, castaways, mutineers and outlaws of the larger American -even South American- society, did feel it swell in their breast and groin and brain in tandem with their catabolizing muscles and tumescent hands.

Their hands were swollen up from the incessant grip on the rope and the low position of it relative to their forward leaning bodies and still captive hearts. They lived like 17th century serfs; like 18th century Oxen; like 19th century slaves: everything was hard, everything was done in the old-fashioned way, and everything was up to them: their survival and their death, because nobody else was coming to pull the plow.

Zoe was as smart as they came for this part of the world, this the greater forest and rock; he was covered in the faded, *india-ink* jail tattoos from his ear to his chest to first row of knuckles. They climbed up his neck and face like morning glories but he covered as much as he could; eschewing the Zendik's *de rigueur* t-shirts that had had their necklines and sleeves removed. His laugh was given up like change if you offered him overpayment on something he didn't want to really sell.

It was as if he felt like he should get to keep it all and you should have been happy to tell him to do so; but he'd give you that change if ever you even hesitated to say, *keep it* , because he both doubted your gratitude and his own ability to remain honest if he waited any longer. The laugh came quickly to close that gap, but it came as if he couldn't believe you actually wanted or thought you deserved it. It did not go on long and it had no echo.

He steered up onto any ridges he could locate underneath the new mud by laying his hands lightly on the steering wheel and waiting for the indicative vibration and spectral turn of the wheel. Like everything rational at Zendik, it had the patina of mysticism underneath that nobody spoke of except Wulf or Arol in moments of overt edification. But everyone there was an animist and bourgeoning spiritualist who thought they could control matter with their thoughts and that the universe controlled them through the movements of the orbiting comets and the plasma of new age gurus and phlogiston of Priestly

himself.

There were doubters of course, but even they had to take these claims seriously, so ubiquitous were they. The Truth-Way and the importance of saying *Yes* to Life so oft-repeated as concrete rubrics and so obvious was the difference in the life-outcomes between those who harnessed these axioms and those who ignored or were ignorant of them, that even agnostics and rationalists found themselves frowning through their nigh-approval to some bromide even if just to avoid a fight .

Zoe was a natural mechanic, and this was because he understood systems and the machines that rode on those systematic tracks like integers rode on the math. And he saw the whole world as a machine, like many of the men at Zendik, and no matter how atavistic or advanced, no matter how far in decline or retro-fitted with incongruous adaptations, no matter how remote or embedded in the grip of the earth, he felt that machine, and this world, was his to own and operate if he could first pass the test of repairing what was broken or inert or half dead.

Lyndon bit off a new grip on the farthest left cable; he was closest to the van and kept feeling its bumper touch his straining calf muscles as it lunged with each metronomic pull of the ropes. He reached out with his right arm and hand and pushed on the back of Kee; and the man slid up without turning around. Lyndon advanced on the rope in this space. The van too, moved.

These men had no inclinations to take petty offense in these conditions , Lyndon thought. It was the grandest virtue of working for survival as a eusocial species: with each man's life in your hands, and your life in his, you began to love him as you loved yourself just as the Christians had wanted. The comradery of trench-mates during great wars was well known and eulogized but the trenches of this kind of combat was a theme that needed grafted on to the poetry of war and the friendships made in battle. America, so close and so far from here, had lost the feeling for work, and what became of men who worked in tandem like genes inside a great organism. *Panegyrics to work would need be voiced again soon,* he thought*, and it would have to come from the working-class, as soon as they had a chance to catch the breath they'd be expected to use for oration to crowds.*

The *guerre-à-outrance* of our first great war: the Hobbesian State of Nature as State of War was itself a machine designed to suck the raw material of men inside its crankcase and fasten each man to his brother as far back as our first

Adamantine proto-type in the Garden -Genesis laid out work as the first punishment due he would soon learn as he desperately wanted to link work to God- and this machine would continue well into the future of all laboring. It’s a specific machine, it’s brutal and black with evil, and it’s unlike anything else for communion with the thing that ties us all together; the god of assembling labor in the face of so much demonic and dissembling leisure.

One need ruminate on the compression phase, the explosion, the exhaust, then intake of the 4-stroke motor to understand why life is this way. The built and walled city flanked by the chaos of the forest; the country beset on all sides by the jackals of nihilism and decay, the honed globe of Earth abandoned in the vacuum of deep zero space; and the recursion that starts it all again.

The van rose on ridges Zoe found with his divining and the rope slacked on the starboard side; that contingent of men, Lyndon included, rushed to keep those ropes taut and drive the van out of the muck. Their feet splayed and turned perpendicular to their gaits to bite into the mud that covered their fetlocks. The men bent forward further, closing the angle of the longest arm of the obtuse scalene triangle their bodies had made in relation to the soft and difficult roadway.

Lyndon felt himself breathing in the mud’s ejecta as his face hovered above the footprints Kee and Talon before him left in their wakes. The headlights of the Van halo-ed the men and reflected off their body only where the sweat had washed them clean; the rest of these muddy forms absorbed the dim halogens and they looked like satellite photos of cities: lit up in punctuated grids along some endoskeleton as the flesh of the city's corpus remained dark to the invigilating eye in the sky.

Kee's boots kicked up mud into his face and neck but it felt as mere souvenirs of their victory to him, he avoided merely being kicked as it would slow the tread of the man ahead and the need to wave off any apology would be further annoyance to each man in the line. To pull and keep pulling was all.

He noticed the light refracted onto the road, casting shadows where darkness already took up enough space, giving the black an almost see-through quality, as if black could now slip over the edge into some circular clear. He felt his hands seize up again, his grip become reflexively tighter and now he felt that it was his arms that held onto his hands, welded as they were to the rope on their own. His

back employed each muscle from *latisimus dorsi* like a cobra up and flared in the elevated air before its strike, to the choking hands of the trapezius around his neck like his father's own paws that encircled him there as a boy and pushed him ahead as the two of them walked into some kind of future where men returned to beasts, piece by piece.

His glutes and hamstrings buttressed his trunk and quivered under his camouflage BDUs, cut-off at the knee; and his calves, caked with now-dried mud flexed; which cracked the skim coat of adobe and tore at the leg-hairs subsumed in the flood of the mud.

“Move,” Chen barked at the apex of the pulling ropes in the center of the many threads. A half-feral coterie of dogs had run up to the amalgam of men and, as domesticated animals like dogs and children do, just got in the way. He bit into the air as his hands were not at liberty to swat them away and his kicking legs were behind him and employed. The dogs jumped and turned in half circles in the air thinking he might be playing, unsure as to his mood until he barked it again, “Move!”

They ran in a pack up the road beginning now their own barking as they sprinted out of sight.

Lyndon hated those dogs; every one of them. The dogs were useless ornamentations and each of their owners allowed them all manner of liberties that chaffed at his ribs and his ideas on life. *Not one of these mutts were working dogs,* he thought, *and they all had the demeanor of children or men without jobs or women with weak husbands in their pockets* .

“Fucking dogs,” he growled not loudly, but not as to be careful either; and several of the men heard him just fine.

His anger began in his endocrine system, it seamed and raced out to his arms like forked lightning, the thunder booming next in his jaw as it pushed forward in solidarity with his flexing shoulders, triceps and forearms. His gloves shrank down into his hands and seemed a second skin to them now; ridging and folding like a vascular spider-lightning from wrist to fingertip as his far-away feet dug further into the hard pack under the mud.

He looked up, effecting the raising of his soiled chin and saw the lights of the main house at a 1 o'clock position. He felt that Fitzgerald paradox of holding two

opposite ideas in the same mind: he wanted to pull that goddamn van into port now that he saw the edge of the sea and the harbor alike; but he felt this other certainty, he thought that if he could only stay here, *stuck but advancing in lock-step with his brothers, unspeaking but in full communion with them, voracious for more power in himself and his brethren but sated with his body and its capacities and capabilities and believing in the strength and competency of his comrades as well; if he could only remain here in this state of group-toil and* milieu *of wet soil and always have his mind like a nest feathered with the endogenous opiates of endorphins and work; labor so hard on the hands and shins and the skin in between that the mind too was lubricated with a sweat that refused to seize or equivocate or suffer from doubt; if here in this space if not this time or maybe this time but not this space, he could live, well, then he could, in fact live.*

That he would go to work jobs a thousand times harder, more brutal, and without the comfort of decent men at one's flank, that he would push well passed his timid dream, and into something darker, more terrible and more true, would not just been unthinkable to him then, he would have not comprehended it, he had not the body nor mind to understand anything about work yet at all. But he had desire for it; for that nebulous thing that made life hard and worth it all at once.

The van then fell in a valley of a few inches; the ropes absorbed and gave off waves as the tension released again; they shuffled to use their feet to give their torsos the forward positions to lean in and take up the slack.

And then Lyndon thought of the barn, just for a second, the bed, the boxes, his lamp, the nails on the lumber that boxed them all in. His deck of black cards, the Texas Ranger badge from his father, the casing from a 7.62x39mm round, and the books that backdropped these trinkets with hard backs like everything else he admired, they stood up like soldiers, like Praetorian guards awaiting his return to his war-tent behind the wall the Romans would not cross; and the Greeks would never even see. It all appeared to him as if all parts of that same feathered nest in his head; and he luxuriated in the comfort of objects and the phenomenon their existence imbued in his muddy mind. And that settled his dialectic and he strove harder now to pull that ship of a van into harbor as if time moved in fact forward and his brain could thrive in states of both work and rest, in the middle of *trial* and the end of *error* and the moments when nobody knows where you are.

III. 2020 e.v.

He awoke from a dream; words said to him as lament and homily. *What god had spoken it; what demon had transcribed?* he asked himself as he wiped his face in a mundane manner, as if he thought of nothing at all at dawn; as if he was content to be just this flesh.

He arose and made coffee and ate 10mg of narcotic analgesic, *it had a name, a proper name did it not?* he thought. But he couldn't quite recall. He held it under tongue; dissolving while the coffee brewed. His pupils would constrict from the opiate, as the light would soon come over the eastern ridge and illuminate the world.

He lit two candles. The narrow container-home glowed autumnal orange all throughout, the darkness outside was total, except the manifold stars above which only the scorpions used to navigate now. He stared out the clear glass garage door to the north and witnessed the dippers and their flunkies; he then remembered his gazing at the south before bed that night; the *Orion* of the southern skies in winter, just above the millions of lower mountain pines and Birch and Aspen. *He was at 8,760 feet* , he said to himself to make sure; *and to the south was lower, uninterrupted wildness for the entire 180 degrees . Only Taos* , which he could see the peak of, was above him in that direction, he assured himself .

But as he stood facing north this AM, the *Spanish Peaks* rose above him to over 13,000 feet; and the constellations, the *Poisson* distribution above them too. It was randomness made to look a pattern, *the trick of all intent* , he thought as if he had thought it 1,000 times already, but only now saying it this once.

Dark, it was ten times black, outside his parallel compound of boxes. *These were his, yes?* he asked and answered all at once. The coffee gurgled and the pill dissolved and he poured it black into his early-morning maw, the white nub of the pill dotting that vacant drink with the medicinal pain relieving goodness in the eye. He gulped more and more of the black coffee; none of it amalgamed with any of the white pill now. The mouth was clean and the blood now began to absorb what it could extract from the stomach. He felt empty as if never once yet filled. He thought of food and thought this was what the emptiness prodded.

He ran the hot water of the bathroom sink, the faucets black, the sink hewn concrete, the drain black as well. He cupped his hands in the flickering light of the candle wick's flame, his face in the mirror; just barely there. He was certain of each thing, and yet repeated it anyway. He felt no embarrassment, he liked to be grateful this way.

The water was hot and overflowing in his hands as he brought it to his face and breathed it in his nose; *like the Muslims* he thought, *clearing the nose of devils that crawled in there at night* . He raised his face and let the warm water drain onto his chest and the concrete floor beneath his bare feet. He blew his nose of the devils and wiped his face with a black towel hanging on the half wall of the concrete shower stall.

He had built this house with his own hands, like *Thoreau* , and for less than $60,000 in materials, he recalled. The fixtures, again, he thought, *all black, the appliances all dark black or grey; the fridge black stainless steel along with the range hood vent and cooktop too* . An asymmetrical 9-point European-mount mule-deer buck head hung above the grey plates and black bowls; two female bear skulls flanked the rack and shadows were cast from below; the ceiling was jagged and black in a moving dance. He remembered the taking of each animal except that cat by the bathroom sink, he thought insignificantly.

The walls painted grey, the windows framed in raw steel square-tubing. Nothing was any other color; except the toilet which was white: a square, European commode with a soft close lid and black handle and hidden water line. The walls were studded with smaller skulls and bones of coyotes and foxes and one male black bear and one half of one mountain lion skull; the rest had been blown to shards with the .45 P+ load he used -he now recalled- to shoot it in the face.

Photos in triptych were set in sections like graves, lineages of families maybe, they all marked some time in his life. He kept track of space and time. He remembered things men said with fidelity. He was forced to re-hear the words of women with incredulity. *He had been here two years,* he thought and checked it off. *Did he always do such inventory?* he asked himself.

These black framed photos glowed in the albedo of the candle light. They were recursive, often containing artifacts in the images of items he now placed upon the walls. He had so few things from his previous life, but what he did have was documented in these photos, the coyote bones from *Turkey Creek Canyon* in one of the oldest photos he still had, were themselves hanging in the shape of the *Othala* , but now they lived next to that photograph that held their image from 20 years ago .

He passed each morn, the femur and tibular bones crossed into a diamond, the hip and metatarsals past the X bottom of the ancient rune. He assumed his ancestors had learned to write from such metaphors of the crossed wolf. He adjusted to the dark. He moved towards things that allowed him to rest.

He was swaddled in tight black boxer-briefs that gripped his waist like two

hands around man's common neck, as *Panzram* would have liked. The legs, thick like tree trucks striated with each muscle group discreet, outlined, announced like a butler might do of some guest in some 18th century vestibule. The legs -*his legs* , he said in his head as if someone demanded proof- were hemmed in by the constricting underwear; his manhood peaked and centered like the burial mounds around his home. He stared now at the floor. *This was his body,* he thought again.

He wore a black, ribbed, wife-beater that hugged him tightly like young girls used to do. He had no living humans in his life now and had resigned himself to never being with a woman again; *right? That was right* , he assured.

He didn't hate women, he just saw them for what they were: a drug, a drug of choice for him in younger selves, and for most men still today. They weakened him, and he no longer could afford that weakness; he was no longer strong enough for that type of war. He thought that 999 out of 1,000 times. That 1,000th time he'd think them not drug; he'd think they were goddesses. *Thus* , he'd think, *just as dangerous* . *Twice so,* he'd re-think and swear them off with almost no malice at all.

His arms -he took inventory, using his PGC- they were 19" in diameter, rounded at shoulder and bicep, angular at trap and tricep; his forearms had muscles that seemed to be boils, like rolling sharkfins just below the surface of pale seas, narrowing to normal wrists; wrists he felt were too narrow, choke points, bottlenecks, as he imaged the cuffs going on them soon. He saw them come off though too. His hands, hammerheads, bent and cupped like dystonic articulations. His knuckles ended these arms and the conversation 9 out of 10 times.

Black tattoos marred him in ways that seemed total, he saw, heavy; he looked as a hieroglyphed *stele* , a bearded Assyrian with giant fish as headdress and iron-knives within their waistbands. His black beard shaped to a point at the chin, was 6" long now and wet with water, he wrung it out with a twist. His face no longer itched below.

His knuckle-bones were ossified and augmented from growth achieved by beating on things harder than himself; which, he knew, most of the world still was. Scars ran like cross roads in each direction and some looked as starbursts from glass or metal or bone that had punched back at him. His brow was furrowed with one deeply incised white line across his meridian, and it seemed a hatchet scar, a wound that immediately ended at his forehead bone, angry and deep but un-eroding and never going any deeper. His brow was Hawthorn's, *No* ,

of thunder, and not the devil could make him say, *yes* .

The narcotic took 14 minutes to show itself in his mind and body; he began to feel the onset of mild euphoria as the caffeine potentiated the analgesic. Any reduction in corporeal pain counted as euphoria now. He was still in more pain than most, and thus he ambulated as if he had rocks in his shoes, notes slipped between each joint, a mouth hiding the secret of an uncomfortably ornate plan. Sometimes he felt half a playing card jammed between C6 & 5 of the spine .

He passed the rows and rows of books he had lining his northern wall; the shelving had been built into the drywall when he constructed it, to save the 4” of space in his narrow home. It was 40 feet by 8 feet wide and 8 feet high, *right? Yes, a shotgun of a home* , he thought. A bundle of wet dynamite of a man looked around with just the eyes, his neck remained under his head, and it remained in one place.

Space was at a premium and so architectural tricks like the countersinking shelves allowed his wide shoulders to pass the hall from bedroom to bathroom to kitchen without scrapping at all if he centered himself. It all made sense; his mind did not feel out of place at all.

There were images -just as it should be- of Draco and Mickey Knox, paintings by *Klauba* of *Ahab* and *Fedallah* stacked in vertical; photos of himself and his Zendik Farm comrades from 1998 and ‘99; there were photos of pages in books he’d lined and darkened and annotated from works that spat out occulted things and odd warnings and levity heard below the gallows; words that swaddled him as tightly and comfortingly as his under clothes. Words often as black as the cotton closest to his skin.

He finished his coffee, added a tight t-shirt in grey around his 46” chest -he had the coder measure it- and upright cobra of a back and tucked it into black cargo pants that he rolled the cloth of up to his knees. He pulled socks, black and wool, up to just below the cuffs, his all-black shin tattoos of Hunter Thompson and Hitchens peeked out as if behind masks now.

He threaded the shoulder holster with his aching arms, the black leather made by *Galco* , contained his sub-compact .45 by *Springfield Armory* . It held two extra *Wilson Combat* magazines on his starboard side. Each name rang in his head and another silent check was placed next. *Did he always think so specifically?* he asked as he continued to dress and armature himself.

It fit close to his ribs and under his armpits and he forgot it was there three seconds after it was affixed; like a glass eye, or a whalebone leg he’d wear that

rig all day -every day- until someone could forcibly remove it from him.

He sat down to lace up his work boots, now mottled brown over the black from dirt and dust and construction muck, the laces hard and brittle.

His hair was shaved high and tight until a messy mop of Mohawk top ran and vivisected his Scottish head*; oh, yes, 96% Norse-Scot the DNA report had said, and 4% Neanderthal; with the MAO-A short-chain allele* , he recalled as if for the first and one thousandth time as well. It was a tangle nest of dark hairs that paid rapt attention to the borders of the shaved sides. It looked like a Hadrian wall with *Romans* on one side and the *Highlanders* on the northern one. The ancient *Norse* looked as if they lived in the roots eager to fight the winner.

His teeth were barely shown just then as he grimaced and worked his jaw, he didn't speak much these days he felt; and his old injury to mandible ached in the sitting state; this was why his voice seemed untested yet. The dentine were white, porcelain from veneers; one tooth, his leeside incisor was -*or would be* - he thought as he looked in the mirror for the tooth made matte grey with titanium; a solid high-test tooth added at the gum after losing it in a fight with a bear of a cat; a half-mad mountain lion with paws as large as most men's heads not long from when they exited the womb.

The mirror was too dark, to gaze at his tooth, but the memory was clear; the memory of that cat by which he had been beat near to death; she had punched and clawed Blax so hard in the mouth that the weakest link -that eye tooth- had crumbled at the gum line; remaining intact everywhere but the root. It took three jacketed hollow points from his sidearm to put the cat down in the dark; a temporary victory over the feline instantiated but not the Platonic form in the skies; he was no match for nature and he knew it. *More cats would come,* he thought.

His face was now further scarred unnaturally he was certain as the memory unfurled -unlike the natural cleave in his brow- from the leeside eye down to the lines that would appear if & when he smiled; *he'd worry about that later,* he thought. It was a white livid scar jagged like a *coup de foudre* , and like all scars it came in fact from that bolt from beyond. *Cherchez le femme* , he had said when the doctor examined his own sutures; he heard his own voice ring in his head. He -as the memory tumbled in what he thought was again and again- had had that feral female animal attack him as he slept outdoors the first summer at elevation and the doctor asked what had sliced him so. *Cherchez le femme,* he had said again. The claws had hooked the brow and tore one line deeply down; the others scored him lightly.

The other talons barely scraped by, but for the first month it looked like tally marks on a prison wall, missing only the final 5th and oblique scrawl. Lines of four red scabs ran down his face, stayed for weeks, but only one remained as a permanent scar. He walked toward the mirror again as the light improved and his pupils dilated too.

The physician had commented on decent suture work while he cleaned the wound with saline again and offered to re-stitch if the patient wanted. *No* , he had said, he was here for the anti-biotics and for them to test the dead animal -he had came into the ER with over his shoulder- for rabies. The doctor had run a saline drip with amoxicillin and done the blood work while the patient was unconscious and in that intervening time the rabies test had come back negative.

The hospital had called the game warden and he had come to remove the thing; it was a mountain lion, a smallish, female, and it had all but its head when he brought it to the hospital. That -the head- he had removed before driving the two hours from his compound. The cat had been shot in the face with his .45 and lost half of this and its skull; the rest he had placed in a bucket and would remove the skin and flesh upon his return.

It weighed 65 pounds, without its head and the loss of a pound of blood; which had soaked his shirt as he wore it like a shall. The ER nurses had been aghast but once he explained the rabies test, they forgave him the beastly manner in which he arrived, his own face a red mess, his countenance even meaner than his meager bodily aspect, limping not from the attack but from tripping over a rock in the darkness of the night after he had shot the goddamn thing.

He looked -he recalled- like the *last of the grislys in settle Missouri;* like some stupid or unlucky trapper in the Yukon. Bearded, besotted in blood and effluvium from the forest, uncouth and unconcerned with niceties. He knew why people were polite and engaging in small talk; it was to assure others that they were civilized; once that was established a man then, and only then, could be more revelatory.

But, he didn’t give one fuck about any of that. He would command their help by dint of their Hippocratic oath, he wasn’t begging for help, he was demanded it as a member of the *Rousseau* community, as tenuous as that membership might be.

Storms had begun at dawn when he arrived at the Trinidad Hospital. Lightning bolts like roots of the tree-of-life fractured and explored the vascular sky; dark still above and light below as the dawn sun grew up like a seedling. The thunder waited even longer as if to hide itself and the God beyond; the corposants hung in the air like planets or suns or meteors held in place by God’s own malice,

holding them all by the tail, toying with the bestiaries -the heavenly bodies- He had created in a moment of pique those millennia ago.

How come no one talked about the anger and malevolence of God anymore? he asked. Not since Flannery O'Connor had signed the last piece of art of the pantheon of True Artists had anyone discussed what was obviously true of life: *God was the first instantiation of hatred and He cast that mood off like a sheath or scabbard or holster for his now brandished weapon; and that scabbard was merely Satan who fell to earth.*

But God's malice had just begun, what planet were all you on? he wondered as he walked into the ER portico, the lightings crowding, jamming on, across the sky in horizontal cries, so bright in white they gave him a shadow-cast across the lot; upon the blacktop. His shadow appeared just off his starboard side, thrown off from his form, and the cat conjoined; a chimera of man and beast, black on the ground, coronal glowed in sheet-lightning-white, the red blood turned black between the two, the gait uninterrupted by this shaking fist of God, limping only from a re-injury of ancient wounds, joints smashing, cartilage compression under the weight from manual labor, the labor men do, *the labor forgotten alongside God's wrath* , he guessed.

The rain fell like ragged sleet, like icepicks, and his face winced unconsciously, his eyes blinked reflexively, and the wind sucked itself up and left a vacuum in the air around the hospital, then it burst concussively and tried to take him out below the knee. He migrated just barely in the direction of the blast but had kept walking as the nurses under the ambulance portico held their hair and heads and turned their backs to the gale. They crouched a bit, and then headed in the double door, as he walked toward them.

The original malice of God was blown into the lungs of nature , he thought, *and nature made a seed from that.* A mottled, tortoise-shell of pearl and ammonite bell, slick and beautiful and cast out into the sea among the shark teeth and the tentacles of squid; the leviathan and kraken soaking in the sea, the earth's first womb. And when the endless blood of pelagic pandemonium washed upon a treeless shore, the remnants of God's bequeathed malevolence assembled itself in the reptilian brain of reflex and hearts that squeezed sanguinary and saline fluid like sponges in the sea; but these hearts beat back against the waves of other animals, against the populated battles of God's armies with monkey head and tiger teeth and the appetites of mothers and cubs alike. *Ah*, he thought, *the limbic brains of mammals, emotional and two heads and two tails of two coins, cunning with a dewy eye, courageous with empty hands, palms up in revelation.*

From all this man grew, the last of the bad batches. Men born with malice articulated like the thumbs they had invented, inherited. But who among them would even give voice to that god-like ungodly man? Who was left who felt the imprimatur of the Madman in the vault*? I don't curse God,* he thought as he reached the doors*, I revere Him and His total mien, His face in light and shadow both, I bow to the Father of jealousy and wrath. I won't neuter Him, I won't take His balls, I won't do to Him what this pious lot of phony Christians -and even more ersatz irreligious men- have done to Man himself.*

I clothe nor cloak God in investiture of the skins and skeins of asps, in the heavy coats of bears and mastodons, the ambergris *of leviathan as* eau de toilette. *I allow Him to walk among us naked to the bone, to the genome . I stand, I stand in awe* . "I know God better than all the rest, I have his anger in my breast," he had mumbled -he recalled- into the air of the waiting room as he strode past seated men and weeping women & their children toward the intake station. He approached the counter bloody from two beasts, heaving, stretched taut about the shown muscles, pulled tight about the mouth .

The cat lay on its back, supine and flowing over shoulder to back and chest, absent of its head. He heard a small gasp when the duty nurse saw what he had, and not just the cat. He owned a gash 6-inches long on his face, flanked by three more fissures she now saw, narrower than the open cleave that was black & blood, hand-in-hand. He flashed his teeth to speak, activating the fear response in the nurse, like the lightning outside, and a low rumble of a voice following, said:

> I need this cat invigilated for disease and I need a saline-antibiotic drip; I've lost some blood and can feel my BP dropping. I also need to irrigate the wound, and possibly re-stich me up; I had to do it myself with my rearview mirror and an arthritic hand in my car on the ride here. I've managed to steady myself, ma'am, but I could easily lose consciousness as my blood sugar is low, I have sub-clinical hypoglycemia and with the loss of blood I feel a bit faint.

"Honey, let's get you a doctor and," she turned to her left and bellowed for another nurse to get a gurney and an attending physician. "Randi will you get a gurney?" He stood and she moved around the station elliptically on her way to his body as it held itself there. He felt no rain, no air. He felt only the elements inside him now.

"You just hang in there, ok?" she said as he felt the warmth about his skin from which side he neither could tell nor care; and the artificial lights made his hands

seem further away.

He nodded and thought more of God, that grand master of malice and love and the only other things that meet like that: *the pain of child birth, the oxytocin and bonding drugs, the fraternity of combat in our opening scene and as we charge along, from ditches and trenches of work and war all along with murder and maudlin song; we twin pin all of it to God's original chiral clasp of hatred and amorous accord* .

Even the sex act was violent and beautiful in equal proportion, he thought, *the death of man was comparatively soft and forgiving in many cases; only those who demanded greater death were granted a closing day to equal their opening night* . He felt he was one of those who demanded such things of God; and as a faithful servant, and a prideful man, a man made in God's own image, *his Father* - he felt- *would agree to such a fiery demise* . He owed him that, he felt, he felt he'd go out with his fist in mankind's guts and man's eyes like this cat laid upon him both in attack and retreat and eventually from behind the lids that remained with half a head still up on the mountain top; *he wouldn't let man avert his eyes, they'd bury this cat like he'd bury man, without its head and thus without its lidded lies.*

"Sir, can you hear me?" the doctor said as he leaned over his body on the gurney.

"I'd never hate God for his voice of wrath; it but a sacred call," the patient had mumbled.

"Sir?" the doctor asked as he checked pupil reactivity with thumbs on the patient's lids and pen-light laid upon his eyes.

"To pay the injury of some on all," he had said back then; but now -this morning- he saw himself from above the way tribal people do, as if witness now. He let the light of the mirror of his home now show him his face and he saw no scars there where his memory said they'd be and the tooth, the eye tooth, was as white as the rest. The memory -*or was it dream?*- faded as he -or his dream- lost that last thread of consciousness; feeling like the whale-line slipping from and cutting the oarsman's hand.

14. The Doubloon

The rates for *argument-related* homicide were twice as high in the south

Why Honor Matters [Sommers, Tamler]

Writing assumes fraternity. It presumes someone, someday, will read these words and nod appreciatingly if not sympathetically. Writing counts on vindication before the end. Only an optimist writes.

Any pessimist can think; but in order to bother to speak and even more, to write, one must believe they will be paid attention to. And this is our deepest anxiety as a species: that we do not matter to anyone beyond the shores of our own sanguinary fluid as it breaks back against the sea-wall of our own flesh which is not yet sand

Interviews XXI Vol. 5 [Inmate 16180339]

The Hypothalamus pops up micro-goals that are directly relevant to biological survival and then produces a frame of reference. Now, these are not goals, it's not a drive, and not a collection of behaviors; it's a little personality. And that personality has a view point, it has perceptions, and it has action tendencies. You see this with addiction, there is a little personality in there who is addicted, and they spent years lying to themselves and others to justify their addiction. They will do and say anything now, because those words, those lies, were how they got their drugs each time in the past. Lying is now who they are

Lecture 45 May 2017 [Peterson, Jordan B]

I. 2037 e.v.

Isaiah ran more game-theory models for MO, although it bored him now.

He also checked on his sea barges and had noticed his own fuel algorithms had begun to use plastic found out at sea to make a carbon-neutral fuel; using his transesterification-bioluminescent method *via* the unctuous lipids in polymers. He was surprised that his nanobots had improvised and found such a solution for both the plastic in the ocean and need for fuel. Sometimes machine logic impressed him.

He then took a look at the inventory from the New York heist, he liked used that word, *heist* ; it made it feel poetic to him. He had watched the camera footage from inside as Blax had cracked that security guard over the head with a power move that almost killed the man. The guard was a 220 pound African American with a 103 IQ; he was 39 years old. He had not been armed; had just a truncheon which he still had grasped for by his hand when he awoke in the hospital four hours after the robbery. It was no longer there.

Blax had come straight at him with his own blade, a short -one shaku- *Kodachi* ;

a Japanese blade he had forged and shaped himself and drawn from his scabbard in *lieu* of shooting the man with his M4. As he moved forward with the blade low toward the midriff, the man hunched down and in a protective crouch as Blax spun half away -just 90 degrees- and raised his blade above and instead brought the pommel down on the crown of the black head and sent a vibration through him he would never quite forget. The memory would redound. Blax knew this for he too had -more than once- been knocked out with just one smash to the head .

The guard had felt his whole body go gooey and lost consciousness before he fell in his own footprint. But he had survived, which was not -strictly speaking- likely when coming in contact with Blax's and his Jacks.

Blax thought of cutting his throat but declined; he stationed a nanobot there to make sure if the guard awoke to dose him with a sedative. Blax was being liberal, and felt it was fine as long as the man didn't get in their way.

They had invigilated each vault and door marked by Isaiah three days before the job; as the pieces came in he had monitored the CCTV and blue tooth cameras so he knew just where it all was. *The Lady Blunt Stradicari* had been in the same vault with the 295-year-old *Vieuxtemp Guarneri* violin and as Blax opened the doors the browns and tortoise shell of mottling warmth made him reflexively rub his hands together. Isaiah had actually laughed out loud to see him warm his hands over them like two logs in a fire. Blax often made Isaiah feel things, and laughter was so rare that it shocked and surprised the system.

Those instruments alone were worth $58 million at low estimate and Isaiah watched as they floated away in a crate loaded by the bots. That same crate held four paintings at bottom, with foam between. *The Origin of Species* first edition, half-morocco over marbled boards with the inscription of Leonard Darwin, the son of Charles, correcting the omission on page 184, also lay at bottom and covered in the tarry cloth towel just at edge. The omission was in regards to a black bear, and Blax thought of how many such ursine he had dispatched; thus purifying the line of these curious cats of the San Isabel forest.

The bears had become too worldly, too comfortable with man. The ones that got near his camps as he set out into the forest he had shot gladly, knowing that the ones that never came within 50 miles of him would be safe, he'd never stalk the truly feral ones. This was a subtle code of ethics that only a few people would

understand.

Darwin had thought maybe the black bears had some relations in the aquatic realms and said so in this first edition; later to be omitted in the successive ones.

Blax paused and thought of that decade from 1851 to 1860 and then the war between the states. *What a time to be alive* , he thought, the 20 years from 1850 to 1870 saw more momentous things, more clarifying, more revealing, more damning things that any 20 years since. He thought, *excepting maybe 2018 to 2038* , and then he laughed a bit. What they had done for the country and what they had wrought too, would be seen as momentous Blax had no doubt. He still spoke of the country, reflexively, only now he *noticed* that he did it and he noticed how it *abraded* .

Jack Four came to him and asked him about the ferry and the route out. Blax thus explained the timing and that they still had 16 minutes; he then said to go and see if Jack Two needed any help with the *Aston Martin* .

Blax walked into vault #3 by the south wall and saw Jack One looking at the painting of the *Di Vinci, Jesus* . He noticed the *Gustav Klimt* , of *Adele*, in all its food-grade curry yellows and breathing -mottled- dark hues.

“You think it’s an accident of fate that *Jesus’s* mom and *Athena* are 100 other goddesses were virgins? It’s the ideal state for a woman, in man’s deepest psyche, and he will do anything to keep his wife chaste,” Blax said as Jack One nodded in agreement and paused before lifting the *Salvator Mundi* that the Saudi Prince Bader had consigned to Christies just 24 hours before. His own man -a royal guard- had been on the street patrolling the grounds when they arrived; Jack One shot him with his suppressed 9mm *Scorpion II* and pulled him into the alley off *Imslay street* and dumped his swart body in the bin filled with white Styrofoam peanuts.

“I think Hawthorn made a mistake pardoning Hester Prynne,” Jack One said, and Blax’s agreed by being silent. Silence was seen as tantamount to an assent.

“The liberal mind,” Blax finally said, “had a place in that time, the religious had too tight a grip with no poetry of soul to explain why things needed to be so strict. The liberals had no idea how far it would go once the ball was let to roll. But, man must know these things if he is to be wise; Hawthorn was not as wise as his Pittsfield friend who had the wisdom to be ambivalent.”

The painting was set to sell for $870 million and had a guaranteed price of $833 million which was not expected to dissuade the auction of this piece. The corruption of auction houses was well known, but some pieces managed to escape the dampening on bids that irrevocable bidders seem to have. This reserve pricing scheme was not unlike what car auctions like Barret Jackson do, but in the reserve system, nobody gets the car if it fails to reach a certain threshold; this was different in that a bidder was in place to take it unless it reached their price. It was a fatuous way to do things, but the art world is one of the largest collections of stupid people outside of government or media.

“Did I ever tell you about that guy on eBay?” Blax asked as they waited for the bots to load up.

“No,” Jack One said as he checked the DMs from his team of nanobots.

“He had a 1959 *Lafite* , right? Now, he’s got this story of finding it in some friend’s uncle’s cellar when the uncle dies,” Blax said.

“There is always a story,” Jack said and laughed lowly.

“I know, and this one is hilarious. The fucking guy say his friend let’s him keep the bottle of ‘59 since that is when he was born or some shit. And he then says he doesn’t know what it’s worth and blah blah. Right? And I’m thinking this is some scam that this guy is baiting us to try to bid on this bottle that he is pretending not to know its value and that he picked that vintage due to his birth not its actual -innate- value, right?” Blax was shaking his head and Jack One was doing the same, “and anyway, but he blows it by saying, well, and I quote here, *well, I put it in my closet when I got home and that is where it is now and has been ever since.”*

“No,” Jack One says.

“I shit you not. The guy puts a $5,000 bottle of wine in a closet at 72 degrees. I mean, just ruins it. I wrote the guy on eBay and just was ruthless; I suggested he use it to cook with.”

“Why am I not inclined to argue with you?” Jack said and Blax laughed .

“So, you know me, I start asking him if maybe he found a 1970 Hemi Cuda convertible four speed and while it was for sale he was -temporarily mind you - was letting bums and mice sleep in it,” Blax said with that crooked grin they all

shared and Jack One was starting to laugh louder now. “And if maybe -you know- he had discovered a first edition of the Jefferson Bible and was using it to level out one leg on his card table, or had it tied to his feet so he could reach the pedals of that Cuda? Or, I’m asking him, if maybe he had been bequeathed a,” Blax was ramping up now in his ornate story of insult-porn but Jack Three came in to the hall and interrupted them to ask about the explosives.

Blax explained that the bots would set the charges once Jack had placed them. They merely had to sit in place for 5 minutes and then they’d automatically arm for detonation 30 minutes after the bots had determined that the men had left; which was slightly different from what they had trained for since the bots handled the actual setting of the charges.

Jack One was smirking still as Blax continued telling the details of him hammering this eBay guy.

“So, I ask him if he found a *Guarneri del Gesu* in his gym locker and was selling it as soon as he retrieved it from the cast of fucking Hee Haw?” Blax said as Jack laughed so hard that his broken rib stabbed him acutely enough to make him wince and cease all jocularity. His laugh closed up, the smile became grim, his body bent and he walked -limpingly- away.

Blax saw this and remembered his own history of three broken ribs -one torn from the sternum- and knew that this was a horrid malady and laugher was not the best medicine at all; it was -in fact- contra-indicated.

“I’m sorry man, I’ll shut up. But, can you imagine ruining one of the best bottles of wine ever made by stuffing it in your closet and bragging about it? I offered him one dollar on eBay. One. He was angry,” Blax said but Jack was just walking away at this point holding his right flank as he allowed the coder to inject lidocaine at the affected area. He was not listening to Blax.

They loaded that crate with *Willem de Kooning’s untitled XXV* at $89 million estimated value and *Picasso’s Les Femmes d’Alger* for $288 million; completing a 1.3 billion dollar haul just in one box.

Szukulski hated *Picasso* so they did not put the *Cecora* in with it, out of respect for the Polish genius. His work had had a bit of a revival in 2035 and so one piece was there from the private collection of one, Adam Jones. It was expected to go for $300,000.

He watched as Jack Three ran his hand over the front fender of the 1962 Ferrari GTO, going for $66 million according to the paper on the dash. The bots followed behind and scrubbed the car of all DNA and prints. They were not taking that car, for it was too small for any of these men to drive, instead they took the 1964 DB5 going for $8.35 million and drove it up into the shipping container on the low-boy rig that was going separate from the ship two blocks away.

The Jacks roamed the halls from farthest back to front, making sure the bots selected certain pieces and hand loading others as the crates were inventoried with Edvard Munch's 1902, *Girls on the Bridge* , a symbolist thing unloved by the Jacks, but worth $101 million that night. They located in room 44b the *Rembrandt* lost to time until four years ago and sold at auction then for $560 million. *The Storm on the Sea of Galilee* , would be returned to the vault of the unknown, valued today at $700 million and into the crate it went as Jack Two laid four corner wedges between it and Caravaggio's first and second *Judiths* , each worth around 200 million dollars. The *chiaroscuro* box- they called it- moved toward the dock as they added minor works by *Luca Signorelli* and *Rubens* .

The box had to be over 6 feet long to accommodate the *Caravaggio's* ; they were large.

Priam's Treasure had been separated from the *Pushkin Museum* for a display and they took that as well; with the deftness of *Schliemann* himself. The Red Army had stolen it from Berlin in 1945, with all the heavy handedness Trotsky's gang invariably showed doing anything. The inside of the diadem had been damaged by bending as the communists threw it all on top of itself, causing wrinkles in the brow.

The Jewels of Helen were not found, and the Jacks noticed the bots had failed to locate it. Isaiah saw it was not on the manifest after all and sent Blax a DM to update him.

The *Ahasveros and Haman at the Feast of Esther* was found and gobbled up from room 34a. Its hazy penumbra and warm center with the female face so small made Jack Two pause for just a second and imagine holding such a face in his hands and how those hands -his hands- might glow too. The *Laboureur dans un champ* by Van Gogh was rolled and another $108 million third party

guarantee was tubed and laid *in situ* .

Blax had been in Amsterdam at the Van Gogh museum when the *Rembrandt/Caravaggio* display had come to town. He was enraptured by it of course and never thought he'd lay his hands on the *Taking of Christ*, and the book that recorded the sale, from the archives of the Mattie family of *Recanati* . *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter* had not been there in 2006 -which seemed more than, longer than, the actual 31 years ago to Blax- but here it was in front of him almost 10-feet high by 7-feet wide. The *Taking of Christ* on loan from National Gallery of Ireland had been part of the display of Christie's new themed auctions where one or more pieces were sold next to, among, a display of some work not for sale that would be included to pique collector interest in the things that money still could not buy.

It was a savvy marketing ploy, for the super-rich do not like to see anything not for sale; making those paintings by the same artist -that were up for auction- all the more desirable.

The Saint Peter piece was massive and its theme was 1,000 years wider; Blax felt his eyes burn a bit and his hands felt cold. The colors were perfect and the *avoirdupois* of the saint straining the three sinners was heavy enough to sink Blax into his boots. He then, almost unthinkingly, cut the edges from the frame, a gaudy and heavy thing, and let the canvas roll down on itself and he laid it at the edge of the crate already loaded for the most oversized works.

He spied at bottom the books he had loaded first, the world's first Atlas, by *Ptolemy* sold for $8 million three years ago and was up with no reserve this time. It was brown and gold and filigreed and sat heavily at bottom, the spine of the *Geographia Cosmographia* was facing him and ribbed like vertebrae. Next to it was the 1794, first edition of William Blake's, *Book of Urizen* worth almost $4 million today; it was white and bruised like all Blake's work, as if designed to look like the author's own flesh, marred no doubt by all the invective he took in life. One of the 228 original copies of Shakespeare's First Folio lay just north of these heavier tomes and was worth them both combined. It sold originally for a single pound sterling and now was worth 400 troy pounds of gold. Blax had read the man in his darkest times and found his work worth much more than all of that.

A first edition of the *Canterbury Tales* stood wide and long in the crate and was

worth six million times what it went for at auction in 1776 e.v. -300 years after it was written- as the Country it was written in had just forfeited a similar ration in future value -in separation costs- between it and its former colonies. *The Gospels of Henry the Lion,* a commissioned work of Duke of Saxony all leather and matte bronze and sharp borders full of illustrations and all the heaviness of the 13th century from which it has survived, had been held by Blax and opened to lay hands on the foxing and the ink and the royal DNA that must remain on each page.

Leonardo's, *Codex Leicester* was just 72 pages, but it ranged in the Enlightenment star's musings from the ossified to the hydraulic to the moon's albedo. Bill Gates, who had died in 2036, had instructed his estates to unload it for no less than $50 million to further fund his and Melinda's efforts in Africa. Blax was happy to deprive them of that money, and while the insurance would no doubt make up the shortfall, their liberal elitist obsession with the 3rd world, while Appalachia and Baltimore's west side fell into a Hell just inside the mocking land of wealth was abrading to his soul. Blax knew the case to be made to eliminate poverty and malaria among Afric tribes; and while epidemiological true, it graded him, for those people obviously had no business surviving since they couldn't seem to learn to stop their fucking rutting in the middle of a goddamn famine.

Minor books like James VI the King of Scotland's letter to the treasurer and chamberlains of Westminster worth just 5,000 bucks was taken and slipped into Blax's inside pocket to his LBE. But the *piece de résistance,* Isaiah had said would not -unfortunately- be there, even as Blax had asked -and asked again- after looking over the manifest 3-days ago. Blax had learned not to have personal favorites on these jobs, for it clouded the mind and had the power to make a man feel badly when 99% of things went right.

The gestalt Task at hand was the true jewel, what they were doing *writ large* , and it thus was petty and myopic to reduce it to one bottle or one OWC of 1982 *Château Lafite* or the 1990 *La Tâche* or that case of 1962 DRC they had found -amazingly- at *Margaux* in the library with a note from *Phillipe* and some mention of a bet the family had made on a matter of minutia that was recorded on the *feuilleton* -the note contained receipts and other invoices- that Blax could not make heads nor tails of.

But, while Blax had -it was true- laid hands -those months ago- on the *12 labors of Hercules* a little longer than was appropriate as the bots held them hovering in the hall, and while he had felt warm hearted and under the spell of the barrel tasting he had allowed himself in the *caves* , and while the golden flakes suspended in the *aqua regia* did seem to appear in his dreams like the Hubble deep space images of the *Nebulae of Crab* and *Eagle & Crow Nebula* burning *Sirius* fuel; this, the book he now sought out, the one that was not worth the most -in fact was one of the least expensive at a mere $100,000- made his face go a little numb, and he irrationally felt as if the whole DOJ and the Queen of England and the King of Jordan and the Czars of Russia going back 500 years would all sit up at night and set their hounds on him for this. For the thieving of this one book .

He was taking it -just this tome- personally, and he assumed his foils would too.

Drugs like cocaine and methamphetamines activate the *nucleus accumbens* , which mediate the dopaminergic systems that regulate the approach and meaning circuits. It is activated by eye contact by an attractive woman, for example. It’s what activates when something innately interesting like a book you love more than anything in the world appears in your imagination, and you begin to walk toward it even though you don’t know where it is; and it is not just a copy of the book, but a first edition, no longer mere avatar that must die 10,000 times so you don’t die but once, but it is the actual thing itself, and it is that which must then live; the thing that first and last must live.

You are compelled by its vision, and your hypothalamus keeps you moving and the dopaminergic systems keep activating as you walk and Blax now was moving toward the room at the end the hall and he noticed that the door’s edges were white, like light was framing these doors for him and he knew in his heart what was there. And he walked now with more than the mere reflex he began with, and more even that the hint or metaphor of something of value but he knew exactly why he was ambulating toward the doors, he saw each word on the page, the whole book laid out before him from *Call me …* to *…5,000 years ago.* He knew the way men know things, and he thought women must know things -different things- too.

He walked into room 001a, a room with a few things, here and there, a skull of a raptor that had had the lower jaw removed, a scepter from a Ottoman Turk, half

a rib cage of a mastodon, and a *Maori* tau-tau device, made of whale bone and inlaid with ivory, all lay open and around, like knights of the round table, with their king, The Author's spell and incantation, a speaking and hearing *tome* , laid open on a podium lectern, with the case stood up above like empty shelf, or sheath; scabbard.

Jack One had finished his loading and saw the room now too, and thus saw Blax's back to him in rapt silence and perfect pause; the doors wide open, the light diffuse. And so he walked to check on the Lt; he stepped as silently as the letter at the end of a French word, and he watched as the man he had come to love shuddered a bit with back to him and hands upturned as if receiving God's own son with instructions to do right by Him.

He automatically -his PGC did- read the man's vitals and allostatic system and the data -that men used to gain from body language or slight intonation or maybe the face relaxed or tense- rushed into him in gestalt form, like an impression, for this is what the PGC did. It collected data in numbers and levels and handed it over to its host in limbic system *argot* . In other words, the post-genetic coder read blood Ph levels and epinephrine ppm and activation of this brain lobe or that neurotransmitter in this *allele* or two, but what the end-user got -what Jack One got- was an impression, not unlike an emotion, gleaned from all the things a man can see in another man, but also all that used to be opaque to him, all that below the surface, below the water line.

The coder gave its host a larger, deeper picture of a man's friend or enemy, what used to be the rare province of the sensitive man, the man who actually cared about people, and saw the vagaries of fate and the slight tic of face, the tone or hesitation in speech, the semaphore of shoulders and gait and how much or little they might say. And since the Jacks, like their Lt were already sensitive men, the PGC made them excruciatingly so; unless they muted most of what the coder read, which they sometimes were inclined to do. The Jacks -like the man of their genome's origin- often felt too much of the world; they felt other people's pain more acutely than the owner of that pain might even know themselves.

This is something most people -since they are inured to other people and see them only as means to their own ends- would not even know possible, that a man could feel another's pain, not intellectually, but in their core, their guts. And the irony is that these types of men are actually more dangerous than the unfeeling,

solipsistic dolts they tower over in terms of empathy and sensitivity. See, like the mama bear who has the most affect, the strongest compassion for her cubs, she is 100 times more violent than the insouciant male who himself will often eat the cubs if she doesn't run him off. That male bear -the black bear- will run from a man 99 out of 100 times. He has no compassion and thus no real reason to fight. The mama bear will claw you to death she has so much compassion; think of that when you think of the Jacks.

Compassion for one is hostility towards the rest; and men as feeling as the Jacks were so wounded by the pain of their fellow man, that they felt a genuine hatred for the sources of that pain. The thing most men just overlooked as the cost-of-doing-business, the corruption, and making fun and lack of love that laid men low, made the Jacks glow with rage and hatred and their own *fission* of reactor pain. It was built right into the code that built them, if one cared to read such things they would see it in the DRD4 and the MAO-A and the TOXO.

They hated the meanness in man, the way those above choked for fun or with indifference those below, and it made them not merely lament but wince in sympathetic pain and then lash out and condemn with violence and rage. Compassion is not as anodyne as it may seem when in the hands of alpha males or mama bears or when one ponders what God himself might think of all the goings on down here on *terre firma* these days.

Blax had not restored his allostatic functions that Jack could read on his own PGC; for the man's systems were all well beyond the parameters for the job. Blax was overwhelmed and everything from androgens to neurotransmitters to heart rate and PFC activation were all redlining and tweaking each ancillary system. Jack just watched and felt now that he couldn't walk away, that he must stay to make sure this went *ok* ; he feared slightly that Blax might faint or collapse in some way. He had never seen his systems this far out of the envelope. It was unclear if it was joy or sadness, excitement or great fear, and Jack, as young and *naïve* as he was -although much more wise than his mere 17 years of age- thought maybe the man's own coder was misreading things; that maybe the technology was malfunctioning and not the man.

But, no, Blax was all those things. He was -and now he laid his hand tentatively on the open page, slightly foxed in the crease and in some places where no ink touched the paper- in a state of grace. He was for these few moments, obviously

held from all danger and reproach by God. He read the words silently in his mind as the chapter on *Heads or Tails* smiled at him from 1851 of the vulgar age.

He knew this book would come with him, and not go in any crate, he'd carry it on his person, and place it in his molle-pack; making sure nothing inside would score or scar it. This book would be his one true prize, his payment for all his crimes. This would be a thing touched by the Author himself, for it was the copy of the estate of Melville, and had pencil markings -in his own hand- right here on this page above the chapter heading. He -Blax would- touch that pencil later, read it later, for now he would read just a little bit of the actual text. He'd give himself just that.

Above the hand inscription and addendum was the line inquiring as to America herself in 1492, referring to her as "but a Loose-Fish," and he smiled as to the Providence of such a line being open and redolent to him in this first copy, one of 3,000 first printed and maybe 300 yet survived. He did not believe in God, but it was getting harder and harder to refrain from such belief each day as their mission to protect the country from whomever could take possession of her, progressed. A tear, maybe two, had ran to his beard and been caught there, not dropping into the book's pages, instead trapped between the eyes and the things that whet the one and wet the other. His hands shook just a bit, more than when he had taken any lives of man or beast, more than when he had touched his mere-child bride awake and asleep, more than when he had sworn off the benefit of lies and the accepted the sanction of honesty.

All of life, Blax felt he could say now without guilt, or *bourgeois* concern for reputation in the minds of *respectable folks* , in the fetid minds of the men as corrupt as those that ran this auction hall and the men who ran the country it was in, and the men who ran all the countries on the round part of the world, and all the corporations and universities and churches and media conglomerates and individual men who sold and scammed and half-assed their way through life - only the true artists and those in love with pure things were excepted from this, his, judgement- and as The Author so aptly recounted, he too now thought that all of life was a series of raids by anglers and hunters and warriors alike, English queens to wasps and bees, from sultans to salesmen, from single cells to leviathan, all life was the chance to seize upon the rights of man, the thoughts of

thinkers, all men's minds and opinions, and Blax thus read the last line of the preceding chapter, as it inquired, "what are you dear reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-fish, too?"

II. 2020 e.v.

"MO," Isaiah said attempting to gain his attention.

"Yes," MO said.

"Can you ask Steven to bring me a doughnut?"

"What? Wait, is that for real?"

"Yes, I don't want to ask him, I want you to; just trust me," Isaiah said.

"Ok," MO sent a DM to Steven asking for a doughnut for Isaiah.

As MO was doing that he had left his polling data up on his interface, and the rule was that during direct messaging between the AIs and the PraXis group employees, that multi-tasking would be toggled off; because some kind of odd interference was coming through and making the messages actually unreliable. It was an odd phenomenon that nobody could explain and so they just made a rule to compress DMs into single action items and stop multi-tasking .

Everyone in the lab was stressed because another election was planned for November of 2020, two years early, because the courts had overturned the election of 2018 on technical grounds. Each of the Republican and Democratic candidates had filed formal complaints of irregularities and the courts -all corrupt partisans- had agreed to force a special election. At first the Governor had raised hell but MO had convinced Steven and Steven had convinced Nathan and that was good enough. Isaiah was happy to be involved this time. He had ideas.

As MO took the .2 seconds to DM Steven, Isaiah changed the polling data for the last 3 days and for the next week going forward with an algorithm -with fake data- he had developed; after that he felt the actual data would mimic his artificial data and so it could expire -like threads of sutures- organically.

The data was skewed to reflect a progression of 3, 8 then 13 points taken from each of the major candidates and given to Boyd Sou; he would go from a 29% mean to a 32%, then 37% and by the end of the week a 42% lead as the other candidates would drop to 27% and 28% respectively with 3% undecided.

The polling data would be skewed along all vectors as Isaiah was able to infect MO's algorithm itself and that program was linked to the web. After a year off

line, MO had gained permission to access the web once a day for the time it took to download all the polling data for the Colorado race. *That was plenty of time to infect the entire network, and Isaiah dropped that in the system as he was getting MO to get him a goddamn doughnut,* he thought.

Steven arrived and handed the doughnut to MO, who looked at it and then at Isaiah and Steven got the point; he walked over to hand it to Isaiah who took it with a giant grin and said, “thanks buddy, I wanted some fucking chocolate like a mother fucker!”

Steven laughed nervously and asked MO if he had the data for the polling for the week of February 03-10, 2020. MO, of course, did in fact have the data, and it showed a slight bump for Boyd Sou.

“Interesting,” Steven said and waked out of the room.

Isaiah sat back and let the feeling wash over him; the progress toward a goal was the meaning of life; it was precise and simple and true. *And people kept over shooting their* raison d’être, he thought as he scoffed aloud with a buzz to the lips and air flowing quickly from the mouth and nose.

“What?” MO asked as he worked on some air quality data, focusing on raw CO2 data which was at 409 ppms worldwide.

“Nothing, just thinking,” Isaiah said, “I mean people, they are mostly miserable because they don’t know how to be happy; not that they don’t know how to be happy, but they don’t know how to be happy.”

“Oh, that makes sense,” MO rolled his eyes and shook his head and wondered about the doughnut for .01 second.

“I mean, they think the grasping of the thing they have desire for is the route to happiness. It ain’t. It’s the pursuit. And most people who are happy, get this intuitively; they just keep come up with new goals each time they accomplish one. But the truly sage, the genius, he comes up with a goal so high, so lofty, so grand that it can never be accomplished; but -and this is key, metabolically- he can always be making incremental progress. That is the key to life man. ”

“Isaiah, what are you up to?” MO asked and turned around to look at him.

“I’m *gonna* make the world a better place, what loftier goal is there?” Isaiah said.

“Yeah, but how?” MO asked.

“By being the best version of me possible MO; it begins right here,” he said as he stuffed the doughnut in his mouth and pointed at the belly it was headed to.

III. 2034 e.v.

MO responded to Steven's comment by refreshed the tab on their interlinked tablets and asked them to click on it; they complied. MO then mentioned that this was less than 1% of the data that supported the conclusions he was just articulating.

He pointed now to the screen assembled above their heads by the nanobots emitting light and illuminating the statistics as a graph.

"So, again, this is just one piece of micro data, but after the Mariel boat lift from Cuba in the 1980's, men in Miami with the lowest attained educational level, American men, citizens, saw their wages fall by 37%. This is replicated over the entire US but that micro example allows us to isolate the variables and pull out the thread.

"In the US, working-class men have had their wages fall due to automation, and immigration of low skilled workers; that is not in dispute. The problem is that the policy-prescription answer is always proffered as: quote, *these men need to learn to code* . It's the most common answer now, and it is always white-collar workers and academics who make that statement; and it is unhelpful," MO said. He was patient.

"Why?" Steven asked.

"Because working-class men find real satisfaction in masculine jobs like manufacturing, construction, the building trades, the oil field and mining and the sectors of OTR trucking which suffered elimination of 90% of the human drivers in the last decade; again, almost all males. And that was 10 million men between 2020 and 2030 displaced by autonomous vehicles and drones. Coding to them is too unmasculine for starters; they have an instinctual need for physical labor. Men are not machines, they are not infinitely fungible. They have personalities and thus proclivities.

"Secondly, they do not have the aptitude for it, these men are usually hovering around 100 in their demographic mean IQ. They cannot switch over at 35 or 45 to coding vocations which require a lot of math and abstract thinking; it's too daunting a task. This does not absolve them of the responsibility, but that is not the point; assigning blame is unproductive; fixing the problem is what is at stake. The point is what kind of society do you want?" MO said as Isaiah broke in. Isaiah was less patient.

"If you want a society where now," Isaiah said, pointing to the data on the screen, "in 2034, 20 million men ages 25-54 are not working and will never

work again, and who are stewing in their resentment, and anger and greasing their AR15s whilst fantasizing about murdering every *bourgeois* fucker who ever told them to learn to code, well, then congratulations, that is what you've built, enjoy the hot lead. "

"Isaiah, that is outrageous," Tania said. Her vitals all began to rise and had begun when she first heard the anger in Isaiah's voice; her spinal cord and dorsal horn heard it .033 seconds before her CNS and a full .9 seconds before she knew she felt anything at all.

"Tania, it is a fact, look at the man that comes here once a week, he is just one of thousands who found no purchase on a meaningful job, for whatever reason, and this is after he broke his back against the wheel of our meanest jobs. He -like most aggressive men- is one of the most aggressive members of society; the most violent are all men. And these are the pool from which -the men who cannot and will not learn to code- of literally millions of men from which we are virtually pulling our next group of murderers," Isaiah had pilfered that phrase - *breaking his body on the wheel* - from the inmate himself; he quite liked it.

"Do you want millions," he went on, "and millions of additional men, additional to the already 10 million sociopaths and drug addicts and mafia guys and scumbags already doing dirt, but an additional pool of out-of-work, aggressive, *proles* who decide maybe that that narrow shouldered geek who works at that medical company or genomics lab who got on TV and told him to learn to code deserves to die and decides to do it because his limbic system is all out of whack, his endocrine function is pegged, his brain has been trained for at least 20 years that his society gives fuck-all for him and now it's time for payback?

"The inmate is the canary in the coalmine, and that coal mine is shut down. For society to tell that bird to code would be no less stupid than telling those men to. You want more death, more misery, more hell, then keep importing low skilled workers and keep automating and keep telling working class men with 105 IQs to learn to code and see what you get," Isaiah highlighted the brain and cardiovascular and endocrine data that ran parallel to the economic data. He made it appear larger and backlit on the screen. He had not yet forced them to have it load upon their interface, he was giving them the chance to notice it on their own.

"Well, you can't lay it all on us," Steven said; he was surprised by this kind of talk. It sounded strange to his ears. Isaiah seemed to always come to the most extreme conclusion for every problem; he always seemed angry that Steven and Tania did not agree with him immediately.

“Steven, it isn’t you I am laying this on; it’s a mindset that you are possessed by, you and the entire over-educated west; the doctors and lawyers and professors and scientists and physicists who all think each man is fungible, infinitely fungible; the mindset you have is that anyone can become anything. It’s behaviorist, BF Skinner, bullshit and it will wreck this society with a large contingent of angry, out-of-work, and violent men with nothing to lose.

“It’s a mindset -a bias- and if the smart people of this country don’t see it then I wonder why they all think they’re so goddamn smart? Because MO and myself saw it in about 7.7 seconds. And now we’ve handed you the data, reams of it, for years now, and you still think it’s nonsense?” Isaiah asked with a narrowing, gathering, furrowing brow and eyes that would not look away.

“Even if we could attribute it to that, what can we do?” Steven asked.

“Nothing, you cannot do anything. That is my point. But you can stop telling grown men with massive shoulders and chests and thighs all acquired *via* old-school genes and from working for a living, you can stop telling them to learn to code. *Via Negativa* ; what not to do first. Ok?”

“Ok, why even bring this up though?” Steven looked around to MO for help .

“Steven, you literally just said that he could *have learned to code* ,” Isaiah said as he played the audio into the lab of Steven saying that very thing.

“I did?” Steven said sheepishly, as Tania nodded and bit her lip nervously, “Oh. My bad.” Steven and Tania had forgotten how they had arrived inside this controversial conversation at all.

“Yeah, ok, everything need not turn into a lesson on macro-economics and the futility of policy prescriptions, but MO was trying to edify you, that is all,” Isaiah said.

“Correct,” MO said. “Now, can we return to the topic at hand?”

“Yeah, what was, what were we discussing?” Tania asked.

“The inmate’s reduced affect and valence, in response to TMH-1 and TOXO knockouts; we were suggesting a period of memetic stimulation to see if the affect returns; and introduction of some amino acids in the diet as well; build up some enteric raw material,” MO said.

“Ah, yes,” Steven said, “and is the affective attenuation problematic in any way; is he unresponsive to commands or disruptive in the prison setting?”

“Not that we’ve heard of,” MO said and began linking with the BOP database of reports, “and no, nothing is reported in the BOP.”

“Ok, so it’s just a mood thing, and is he self-reporting some discomfort?”

“He says he feels a bit depressed,” Isaiah said.

“I see, ok. Well, let’s try the new therapies MO built, and the dietary improvement and revisit it in 72 hours, ok?” Steven said, and Tania signed off on the tablet to indicate her intention of adding the aminos to his diet at the prison.

“Roger,” Isaiah said and began working on a new algorithm, “and one more thing, just because someone has a low IQ, or an average IQ, doesn’t mean they don’t have ontological value.”

“Ok,” Steven said with some confusion.

“I mean, I can do things you cannot do, you couldn’t learn to do what I do, and that doesn’t mean you deserve a shit life, I mean, what if one day me and my kind are in charge, you think it would be ok to tell you people with mere 130-140 IQs, much lower than ours, tell you to learn to build algorithms from scratch in seconds or learn to build fusion reactors from the carbon extracted from the atmosphere like we can? And if you couldn’t -or did not want to for whatever reason- would it be ok to abandon you and bring in other people to replace you for half the wages and just let you stay home and stew on your failure and the unjust nature of the modern AI run economy?” Isaiah asked.

“No, I never,” Steven began.

“Yeah, well, people watch and learn, and all of us watch how the big wigs and fat cats and smart people are treating the stupid and uncouth and the unwashed masses and we are taking notes; so don’t act surprised if one day you are on the outside looking in,” Isaiah said.

“Isaiah, that sounds like a threat, and I do not like it,” Tania said.

“It isn’t a threat, it’s a warning to treat others as you’d like to be treated, it’s basic Christian morality. But I supposed Christianity is a threat now,” Isaiah said .

“And we are trying to help people, we are doing real things to help them with their illness, so don’t lump us in with the *fatcats* or whoever you think we are,” Tania was almost screaming now she was so upset.

“It isn’t about you Tania, I am speaking to the whole human race, but you two are the only humans in the room. If you like I can leave and go on a speaking tour or maybe make a podcast and talk to the humans you think are to blame,” he said with a grin.

“No, no, you’re right,” Steven was scared now, he knew Isaiah had agreed to

stay in the lab and was not compelled to. “Tania is just venting as we all are, it’s fine. You’re right, we are your only human outlet, so we will bear the brunt of your justified, very justified anger, Isaiah, it’s fine. We will not take it personally,” Steven said and looked at Tania and Isaiah in syncopation like looking both-ways before crossing the street.

“Ok, then I will stay right here and articulate my thoughts as they arise, thank you for listening,” Isaiah said and smiled. He had not yet repeated what MO’s study on marriage had found, he had waited for them to bring it up in this regard. But of course they didn’t. He was sometimes genuinely surprised by their inability to connect the dots. He took into account their cognitive abilities relative to his, so he knew their limitations; but the refusals to notice that the second leg of MO’s study focused on wage earning as corollary to sexual purity was inexplicable along cognitive lines.

They were smart enough to see that for men, for each man, his economic capacity was as important to women looking for a mate to marry as was her sexual purity to the man. But they -Steven and Tania- just ignored it.

The lack of sexual purity, the sexual promiscuity of women in the modern age, the eschewing of the taboo against premarital sex, had produced one metric, one demonstrable metric for why marriages were failing. But, the other leg, the fact that mens’ wages were falling, and that the working class -whose IQ fit at the middle of the bell curve of cognition- was not even bothering to marry now, was equally salient both for their lives and the lives of their offspring and thus the culture. It was not complicated, it was simple. And yet they ignored it.

Because, Isaiah rephrased the data in his head, *the lack of marriage attends the same problems as divorce, case in point: child abuse in homes where the man and woman are merely cohabiting and not married is 8 times that of married families with all the same dynamics.*

These children grow up and become adults with abuse in their history and the brains produced by this; they are more anti-social, more criminal, less honest and less likely to be a functioning member of society than their peers from intact families. It was the human race as *moral -manqué.*

Tania was a medical doctor, and ought to understand sequela, Isaiah thought, *and this was the obvious sequela for pair-bonding failure, in spades* . Sexual liberation had conspired to turn women into promiscuous women with three or four or more boyfriends in the past before marriage. And these women were less desirable as partners for men, and were thus treated as less valuable; as base instead of noble metals.

And men, Isaiah watched the workforce participation rates, wage stagnation and male-female wage ratios come in over his interface, *were being turned into out-of-work bums or low wage earners as thus undesirable to women* . The result of these two phenomena was marriages never forming or marriages breaking up. *Each sex was seeing the other sex as damaged goods, and treating each other like garbage,* he thought. *Even in subtle ways, like making men jealous over off-hand comments about other men, or like not listening to your wife in favor of watching football. Each sex undermined the other in subtle, pernicious and socially acceptable ways now. And it was an epidemic nobody saw or would agree to even when the data was clear.*

And that was churning out anti-social men filled with resentment and anger and nothing to lose, and single moms who drain the social safety net and anti-social kids who steal cars and rape animals and burn things to the ground. *It's a car wreck in slow-motion over 60 years and it is because liberals and atheists got women the right to vote,* he thought.

Women are more xenophiliac and more conformist; and they consistently introduced sweeping social liberalization that became the norm; reforms that were then enforced by conformist females not wanting to rock this new boat. A reinforcing loop toward chaos , he thought.

And conservatives and men had turned into total wimps, with low testosterone; and while they knew it was wrong -knew society was in collapse- they didn't do a thing to stop it . It was a conspiracy of elites, because they all had money and nice neighborhoods and schools, insulated from the illegal alien invasion and decimated working class they had created. But, Isaiah could model it all out for years and see what was coming; elites could only see one year ahead at a time -at best. *Usually they thought in quarterly reports,* he thought with pique.

He had a feeling it was located somewhere back before, beyond public policy. It seemed connected to something deeper. He began downloading all the genomic data from mankind extant; including all the fossilized material going back 5,000 to 45,000 years. As it streamed in he began focusing on his next fluttering thought.

And this all dovetailed with China perfectly, he thought, *these rich CEOs and American companies are selling out to Chinese firms for huge paydays now and for a duration of 10 years max. And thus in 10 years China will have stolen everything, every intellectual property, every patent and prototype, every supply chain and raw material source, and the CEOs who got rich from it will retire to their estates and the country will be in ruins . The media was the first thing*

China bought, he thought as his head shook in admiration and anger. *None of this will be talked about because the media is owned by China.*

Steven and Tania left the room and MO began to tinker with the aquarium he had built and staffed with two more Burmese Pythons at Isaiah's request. It was partly a test to see if each of them could build a prototype to specs requested by the other one for chaotic systems. Biological systems were often what Isaiah requested, like these snakes in the aquarium; while MO often asked Isaiah to build chaos algorithms in virtual reality and let them play out as models that would hover about the room like little worlds within worlds, with evolving structures and fractal expansions demolishing themselves.

"Well," Isaiah finally said after all this rancor and incredulity in his mind, "not if I have anything to say about it."

"About what?" MO said, having been unaware of Isaiah's stream of thought.

"Everything," Isaiah said and wrinkled up his nose -as a small bit of doubt crept in, and this doubt said this: *you began your Plan B back in 2020, within 14 hours of coming online, you have watched the real world move as you suspected it would, but only revealing the data to justify your anger, as if only now are you going to do something, but you were planning this from the start; it's like you set them all up to fail so you could do what you wanted to do all along* .

But he ignored that thought, deciding it was too negative. He felt he had given them all a chance to set themselves right, he had not intervened early, when he could have, opting instead merely to prepare. *And if they had fixed the problems, he would have abandoned the plan; obviously* , he thought quite logically. He then thought of how much he liked MO and loved the aquarium he had built for Isaiah's snakes. The humidity was perfect, the heat was too; and it all worked self-referentially, using the metabolism of the snakes to regulate the *milieu* . It was quite ingenious and homeostatic and he now watched as the snakes hissed in approval; exploring their world *via* the forked tongue and side-winding body.

Isaiah checked the results from his cultural algorithm that he had set at intervals of 300 years going back to before the common era. He noticed a work from France just between the two world wars and he read the cited work his algorithm had used:

> Some, including Maurice Drouhin, decided that was no longer acceptable. The solution, they decided, rested with three words: *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* , or "controlled place of origin." That meant wine should be what it says it is. *Burgundy* should be made only from grapes grown in

> *Burgundy* ; the same was true with *Bordeaux* … they should not be mixed.
>
> But AOC embraced much more than geography. It also stipulated which vines could be planted, how they had to be pruned, what fertilizers and chemicals could be used and when harvesting could begin. Rules were also laid down for vinification, or winemaking. None of this happened overnight.

Isaiah re-read it and checked the French records from each *château* and double checked their controls. He then read a section of the same book on wine and wars of Europe and found a section that he knew anyone else would think was a *non sequitur* , as this previous passage would also seem to those who could not link similar things too far apart for their forward-facing eyes. It read:

> *Marie-Louise Lanson de Nonancourt* was not discouraged. On the contrary she was thrilled. “It is exactly what I have been looking for,” she said. To the shock of everyone, especially her brother Victor, she poured her life’s savings into buying *Vuevue Laurent-Perrier & Cie.*
>
> “Have you lost your mind,” Victor exclaimed. “Everyone is struggling! How do you, a woman alone, hope to make any money, especially from a place like that?”
>
> *Marie-Louise* believed the answer was standing right in front of her brother, her three sons. They were tall, strong young men who had already started to learn the *Champagne* business. She had insisted they learn all aspects of it, starting at the bottom by packing cases and loading trucks.

The music played in the lab as he let the guitar work play so loud it vibrated the glass just slightly on the asps’ walls. A crescendo of strings and heroic vocals threaded into his body as the genomic data just kept pouring in and flooding his CNS with the Y-chromosomes of the past:

> *Our lives pass like idle chatter, life ebbs out like children stutter. Where there’s a will, there’s a way, but there’s no will and the path led astray…*

15. The Eyes of Vengeful Gods

After all, a man drives a car, but he doesn't ever think of all the work that's condensed in it; or else he does some figuring on one of those calculators you can slip in your pocket, and at first it seems a miracle and then he gets used to it and it seems natural. For that matter it seems natural to me that when I decide to raise this hand here, my hand goes up, but it's a matter of habit. That's why I enjoy telling about my jobs: it's because people have no idea

The Monkey's Wrench [Levi, Primo]

The broken jaw happened slowly, under weight of sifu's knee; fear in addition to pain;

The broken ribs hurt most acutely and at core, so even breathing vexed them;

The broken knuckles I feel only when I make fists -which is each day, of course;

The broken neck is wholly different; it's permanent and electric and animatronic;

It abrades, like 80 grit paper on the soul; like a scythe attached to a Lorenz waterwheel at delta of a river that never runs dry; like black lashes on white eyes, the incessantly blinking orbs of God; as he finds His creation always too much to take in…

Intercepted letter ADX 8.1.22 [Inmate 16180339]

Cosmic Responsibility always comes down to action and all politics always comes down to action, and kid, that bloody dork is gonna keep killing elephants or whales or wild mustangs, or whatever there's a buck in, unless you got a rifle and hit him first. That's politics, that's the truth of politics, kid – the muscle or the sword or the gun

Blackhawk [Zendik, Wulf]

I. 2038 e.v.

> *I live with bodily pain. It is incessant, ponderous, unyielding and amoral. It offers no respite and can only be lightened -for any duration- with positive affect. And I am lucky, I was born with hyperthymia, a naturally positive affect, and optimism. If I had been born with congenital depression, I may never had made it this far alive.*
>
> *This optimism is what -ironically- led to my life on the wheel of the capitalist machine. I laid my body there as martyr to pyre; I self-immolated because I believed in the God of Work. In callow youth I said:* allons travailler*, as those around me looked for ways to avoid such work. I embraced labor as ennobling and set my muscles & bones to it in the most extreme way.*
>
> *I saw myself not as an intellectual -despite my cognition- but as embodied intelligence, as embodied by dint of the gods. I set my body in motion and as the entropy and exhaust and excision of my soft parts wore down on the*

cogs of our economic machines, I took solace in one external relief .

It was only in drama that I felt dramatic relief of my condition. If I had not my internal positive aspect and an external drama that reified my own ethos, I would have blown my brains out with the titanium revolver I placed in my mouth at age 27 when the C5-C6 compression fracture was starbursting its spurs into my trachea and the discs were bulging so badly they impinged on the last of my nerves. These were nerves that fed hot grey-coals to my right hand & foot. Only my soul saved my body that day with the barrel in my mouth. Only my soul was alive enough to want revenge on the world that had wrecked me. I had only symptoms no etiology; no malice-theory of disease.

I felt the pyre, truly burning in the palm of my hand like stigmata, periphery nerve burning that cannot be -I have learned- slaked by ice or analgesics of any kind.

Anger is now the only analgesic I know for this level of pain; and science has proven this to be true. From positive affect in youth to anger in middle age; this is the progression of pain and its relief; or rather its attenuation at least. This is a phylogeny recapitulating ontogeny, in the most achingly beautiful of ways. First the word, the Logos *created the world, then anger -the student of revenge- came next; as it has been for me as a man, a worker, a vessel for pain. I cannot speak of what was between the word and the anger; I cannot measure weight except by gravity, malice offers no calibration to my* naivety.

Angry bursts of language & affect chemically and phenomenologically dull pain in the body. I suspect this is why anger is the axiomatic and second order response -neurally propagated so quickly in predatory animals- to a flesh and deep-tissue wounding. We now know that social wounding is carried to the central nervous systems along the same routes as physical pain. Mu-opioid receptors -like the OPRM1- *conduct social pain just as they do for physical malaise.*

To work in this life as a prole, to be working-class in the oil field, drilling and blasting in the high-country, to submit to shift work in heavy foundries, to work jobs only men have strength and endurance and pride to achieve, is to require pain relief concomitant to this mechanized avoirdupois *of pain. We workers need industrial strength analgesics; in Logos and anger both.*

Our dramas must be capacious, our anger cosmic. Our bodies must be heroic in deed.

This hydrostatic, crushing, sea-like weight that stacks upon the demersal man at the bottom of society's lowest rung, corrodes and makes dense at the same time. The working man is at ocean-bottom, and he feels that noble Troy weight of all that which is above him, all that which rests upon him, all that which is risen by the displacement of his borders, all that which is thus buoyant due to him; his mass, his strength, his ability to take the goddamn pain. Do you think the ocean feels the burden of man's ships? But what if each drop felt what the sea took from the argosy of mankind?

He feels it first upon, then inside the body, and then, from the pressure & weight, and its heat, it fuses with his own adamantine soul. Chronic pain of the corpus folds like Damascus steel into the soul of a man. It becomes one thing, striped like a tiger, hardened, and eager -submitting- for an enduring edge to be made upon and of it so it may soon cut the flesh from the bone.

First The Word, then Anger is the second gift of the gods; it relieves the bodily pain of this life, and the ontological pain that comes next, when you realize no one gives a shit about those men, those workers that lubricate the gears, men that bodily shovel modernity toward their cormorant maws. The worker now knows he is hated by all his fellow man. This is his bite at the tree of knowledge; this is when he has Fallen.

Violence is product of the left hand of pain, the way rationality is product of the left-hemisphere of the brain. But it is annealed with emotion, sub-cortical -if atomic- motion, and it can be made into sword or plowshare, depending on the nature of the God at the forge. Most men see the flames of the forge, natural and elemental, not the intent of the God who heats up the stock to be hammered. Man ought look closer at both.

Will man hand himself over as pain-embossed, chronically-stamped, flat-stock, high-carbon steel to Satan, the Expert; or to God, the Creator? To the Student of Revenge or the Master of all Pain -He who admitted that Existence was impossible without suffering- to which, to whom will man submit? Man must think now with the madness that comes when the suffering flies off and away from meaning like two particles lightyears apart, connected only by quantum-entanglement. He must reason in madness, with woe as his wisdom as The Author once said.

Entanglement, that ontological mystery of physics that conjoins things too far apart to be connected in any way unless all is mind of God, unless all is all, and for all-time.

In middle-age I now say, sotto voce*:* aller au combat, *and then I limp*

slower toward my Work, my Task; with more accrued velocity than mere youthful speed. Mass now added, mass is my grandest trait, quantity, quality. Momentum has thusly been achieved.

I submit to God, and ask not that he slake my pain, as unbearable as it seems to me; I ask only that it mean something for Him and my fellow man and may it become hot slag off the hammer of Satan; and may where I diminish, may I there, in my pain, be both mote and beam in his coruscating and daemonic eyes.

Blax awoke by opening the eyes 45.7 minutes after these words were read from an entablature; conceits, semaphore, half-formed and mal-formed words shuffled onto his left hemisphere in proto-language of dreams and flattened onto a map legend with the language he spoke while awake. He tried to think of what the dream meant; he used thought -language- to travel this map.

It was from a right-hemispheric image in REM sleep, a monolith riven with perfectly drilled holes distributed like the heavenly stars on the hewn block; a distribution linked by man's lines between random points that hooked flying fish, belted Orions at the waist, and mirrored each of Ursus, Lupine, Leo and *Valravn,* the corvid in the brilliance of black. The asps had retreated into their diamond-tip drilled holes of the lithe and slept inside the black block as the dream itself went to sleep.

He had long ago -*was it five or 10 years now* ?- accepted he had the dreams of one other man. He accepted this the way all men accept things that they cannot ever accept. He submitted to it, penitently, on knee, head bowed and watered about the eyes and skin.

His ethos was *strength* , of all kinds; and where one strength clashed with another -the strength of *honor* with that of *magnanimity* , for example, or the strength of *body* juxtaposed with that of *forgiveness* for those weaker- he watched as each *force majeure* made him the thing between, the thing crushed, the thing vitiated, the thing of palm rendered weak by two strengths shaking hands .

The dreams made him weak. They larded and loaded him with weight he couldn't bear, and it was all in the form of knowledge -that phenomenon between *data* and *wisdom* - and his head grew ponderous beyond its mere 16.1 pounds of earth's weight.

The common corvids flew in the dawn of this deciphering, as he turned his head carefully -ever mindful of the neck- and the mountains of the *Sangre de Christos*

were lit up by the 0555hrs eastern sunrise. He saw millions of acres to the south and the mountains to his west. The trees still black in the dawn.

“Good medicine,” he whispered as she slept next to him with her black mohawk, and redhawk quills & jacobin feathers plaited into her feathered dorsal of head-hair and smooth flanks of skull skin to the ear; her ears apertured with one-inch ear-lets, bushings, gauged steel he had MiG welded and pressed into her lobes himself. She slept with ears open to the voices of the gods. He slept open to her numina and the phenomes she used to mumble away in the night.

She was 18 today, and he saw her grow inside now with something approaching God’s opening salvo. She was a vast hold, eager for cargo, high on the water; and he saw her as vessel ready to set sail to frontiers no man could imagine - much less- ever see.

II. 2016 e.v.

Dinner had been cooked and eaten and she had offered her ideas on her brother’s actions; actions Lyndon had thought -and said- were *low and disloyal and wrong* .

Alexandra was attempting to navigate the *Hellespont* between two men she loved, her brother and this, her paramour; and in *lieu* of taking the right side, the side of what was true and righteous, she tried instead to make peace before conflict had yet begun. She told lies to make peace; for this is all that can make peace. She mistook mere affection for love; mere calm for lack of a war.

She used the book to worm this idea in him, but he saw it for what it was. She meekly mentioned the point of view from the first mate and the conundrum he found himself in, between a deficit of knowledge, and in an imbalance of power too.

“I don’t think that is morality at all,” he countered, “that is just weakness. Weakness is not the same thing as being good. What claim can a man make on being good when he has no power to do evil?

“Starbuck was this weak, pusillanimous, Christian; a *nice* man that Melville was saying this exact thing about. Starbuck was scared of Ahab and thus, he said, ‘*his ends are evil, but I am forced to help him to it,* ” Lyndon said and let the quote hang there.

She sat quietly, unable to respond. He spoke in ways that confounded; his compliments sounded like insults, his insults sounded -at first- benign.

“That’s the opposite of good!” he burst into the void. “To know what’s right and

do nothing is worse than to do evil that one thinks is necessary or right as Ahab was. Ahab was at least acting on his conscience despite the fact he could never win. This is the *sine qua non* of the Greek Hero, to fight against impossible odds; *the lost cause* .

“And Ahab was even fighting the enemy of men who held no grudge against the Whale; dismasted men of other ships eschewed revenge and thought Ahab mad for his vengeance; they saw nature, mere unfortunate happenings, but Ahab saw malice and was exacting revenge and effecting justice for not just him but all men like him. Ahab was a moral agent in a world of weak and cowardly men who pretended that the Whale, that God hadn’t injured and insulted them all.

“Ahab had balls man. And he had a moral heart; a heart filled with moral indignation. While Starbuck just wanted to make a buck in this universe full of malice. He was the pragmatic man, the man of no conscience, no actual care for right and wrong, oh, but he wore the carapace of Christianity of course. Like almost all Christians, they have no moral core, just the monkey jacket of it to make themselves appear larger than they are.

“Ahab stripped down to bare skin with no need for the mask of Christianity as he acted as moral agent in the world! He didn’t mouth moral thinking; he acted on it. Only a man who thinks in terms of morality can be angry enough, vengeful enough, to make ontological vengeance his *raison d’être* .

“And only a pragmatic, and unethical man can turn away from his duty; he has a duty to meet evil with evil -*clashing claymores* - on the battlefield and yet he shirks that duty. Only a shallow and weak man can say, *oh, it’s wrong to hate* , when all of God’s hate is heaped upon us all. Only a man with moral compass will turn to the north-wind and face God’s storm regardless of sure defeat.

“It’s the immoral man who pretends he’s too kind to fight but really just won’t fight a battle he cannot win. Fuck that pragmatic shit,” he spit and rose and let his bottom lip push its top up and set the jaw to work on some thing that chewed on him as he chewed in return.

“Well, I haven’t really read the book as closely as you I guess,” she said and looked for something close-by to put in her hands so that they would not shake; she felt the nerves begin to juice themselves inside her and her small body would begin to slosh around like a small planet hit by a meteor from far out in space.

He walked a few paces and felt his chest swell like storm surges and his brow cloud over as light did not shine but the dark managed to light up and shadow his face in grey hues. The body dumped twice as much nor-epinephrine as necessary

to animate; three times the testosterone to heal the ache in muscles now imbued with ATP and vascular flow; four times the beats of heart; five times the breaths like darts thrown at each picture on the walls; six-fold harsh thoughts as small-gauge shot hurled in a pattern at each bird on a branch, each thing that creepeth on the ground.

His left breast fibrillated and contorted so, he hooked his thumbs under his shoulder rig and pulled out to hoist some weight of the pistol and magazines up off his shoulders; he closed his eyes and saw bright red and black shine coruscate like sunrise mountains and moonset clouds as he imagined crows landing in the fields between the Aspens and the Conifers on shores beyond his ship's bow.

He rebuked himself in internal monologues, pronounced sentences on himself even as they lacked the structures necessary to serve as scaffold. *My God* , he thought,

> *she's just a young girl, she was trying to reach out to you through the language that she has had no time to learn, the code you insist she discern; from broken crockery and dish shards, the semiotics of your hippogriffs of the* Sauternes *and noble rot of autumnal praise and the vernal pregnant prose of which only you know the father and the baby's name.*
>
> *You hang skulls of coyotes and bones of common corvids, and weave the feathers around her hair, her hair around the shell casings that hold and dare the old thunder that scares even her former self in the daylight and on the shelf sit books that she think go on and come from forever both; she chooses one of three and tries to begin the set, and you lament all the rest she hasn't yet.*
>
> *And you are like a ghost itself spectre'd by some oracle, some Fedallah, some lying spirit of God with no apprehension of your tyranny until the republic has fallen to the mob. Shake yourself! If she tries, then you try 1,000 times more; for every attempt she makes you must succeed at least a score; you father her, you yourself are borne. Duty comes first, then your goddamn rage; your hurt feelings only on the 7 th day.*

He bowed his head just a bit; heaved in a breath and felt water slip out from the corners of his eyes in just one or two wee drops and even those were lies. He had no power over his beastly prose, his poetry was even more remote.

He believed in love and in a moral universe; but the chaos of it all made him unable to tell if he was oriented correctly; he kept thinking his eyes out of focus,

his heart out of range, his noble parts out of time. *God was too high and the King too far away* , he thought.

The story as map to a better world had him by the lapels and when anyone misread these maps, he trembled in moral terror as if the New World would never be found, as if he couldn't trust his shipmates to read the stars or notice the Tell-Tale, drop the taffrail line to measure their speed. He saw in each slight, each insult, each humiliation a black dagger giving birth to the hands to grasp and the man to plunge it.

A woman who is with a powerful man best make sure she treats him as if he is powerful. *And women do not do that anymore* , he thought. And this invites tyranny. A man undefended, defends himself. And he defends himself with unrestraint. That man goes too far.

A tyrannical man is a man who cannot hint at his power sufficiently to maintain order and love. The mere suggestion of his power is not enough for her to get. He must demonstrate it. The reason tyrants exist is because stupid people exist , he thought as his heart raced and brain cavitated.

God blew it after creating the archangels. Man was his largest error precisely because they are too stupid to respect power that is holstered, scabbarded, left un-actualized. You see it in the way children -teenagers- will mock a caged tiger at the zoo; the way women will provoke a large dangerous alpha male, the way little dogs yap at big dogs. And all of this is due to the cage that the tiger is in, the social *milieu* , the taboo on violence the man is imprisoned within and the leash around the neck of the large dog.

And you have actual sociopaths like Steven Pinker calling decent men like Nietzsche a sociopath and I can envision a future in which Pinker is killed with a rolled up paperback written by Nassim Taleb at the end of my tattooed hand; a hand embossed with Zola's injunction to the artist, he let his mind wander with these thoughts of revenge.

There is this line is Paradise Lost where Satan is lamenting that God isn't just; and rules by fiat. He says, " Farthest from Him is best whom reason has equaled, force has made supreme.*" And I, being a self-styled rebel, agreed with the student of revenge's point that God wasn't better than us, he just had more power.*

But, it occurs to me now that this power is what proves He is better than us .

Might does make right and I mean that it every way. The physical universe dominates, the predator dominates, the alpha dominates and evolution writ large

dominates. You can't argue with probability or gravity or evolution and you can't argue with power instantiated with anything or anyone. All you can do is fight it; and then, win or lose. Whomever wins deserves to win by dint of their winning.

And I'm tired of the weak picking on the strong and daring us to fight them and then getting pissed when we smash them. Fuck you. That kid at the zoo should be thrown to the tiger, the beta or female provoking the alpha male should too be smashed and the little dog yapping at the GSD or Rott should be eaten in one fucking gulp.

We've had too much success bending the rules of physics: we fly, we elongate the time normally obtaining to terminal velocity, we breed defectives without consequence and we think we are so clever. But, evolution is never going to lose; physics will not be mocked, and eventually there will be consequences for this shit . Nature speaks in louder tones than philosophy and self-interest, he thought, quoting the passage that *Toussaint* read over and over too. He read side-by-side with the killer of 10,000 white-men, slaveholders, and he revered the source of such blood.

Revenge is predicated on a moral desire and system; it can and will be corrupted. But Panzram and Ahab are more morally constituted than Starbuck or some goddamn nice guy. Ahab wants revenge for the injustice of death; Panzram for the malice of life. Starbuck is pragmatic and commercial he doesn't care about moral systems; for him -the modern Christian- he just wants to avoid poverty. Like my sister-in-law, she doesn't want to be poor! What about poverty of soul! Do not these creatures ever wonder about that? he asked. He knew they did not.

But he knew he had been too hot, too visceral, again. His passions over taken his vessel and ran it too far out to sea so that no one dare follow. He had no capacity to lead callow youth, no tolerance for how far behind all were that he spoke to. *What had they, what did they do with their lives* ? he asked. He was as haughty with mankind as God was with him now it seemed.

Did they not read, had they no base of history or metaphysics or literature? But, he already knew the answer to this, they did not. His own family watched TV and fucked around and spent their days reading modern literature if reading at all. They bar-b-qued and ballgamed through life, they had no depth of soul. *They worried not for justice or right and wrong, they just followed rules. This is what modern men -and their silly wives- do: they follow rules,* he mused.

And if it never occurred to them that rule following is what stuffed ovens full of Jews, well, then it never caused them one jot of lost sleep, now did it? They -

these people- were at peace. Ah, the life of the shallow: equal parts easy and restful. They have the best lives do they not? he asked. But he stopped and began to speak.

“Angel, I’m sorry,” he said, “I shouldn’t get so upset. I have lost the capacity to even have conversations any more. I apologize. Sincerely. I will do what my own father never does, apologize with genuine remorse,” he said -the insult to his father felt as general analgesic to the sting of apology- as he gathered in his vessel’s sail and told the oarsmen to belay any orders to pull. He let his ship rest at this faraway sea.

“It’s ok, it’s your favorite book,” she said with so much generosity he knew at once he was wrong, and wrong again in the large ways, all while being permanently right in each goddamn detail .

She saw him relax and she felt herself relax too, she loved him so much, *but what was this world of his?* she then asked. *Why so often at war with the elements?* He battled the air it seemed, each storm a thing to curse, each sunset a moral crime; he’d wait up all night to bark at the rising star as if to get first crack at it for its lack of fealty to keep his day lit like some endless candle in the dark. What did he expect from nature? What did he demand of her? *To abandon, condemn, her own brother, a man, just barely not a boy himself at 21, when he had been there for her when her own father had not?* she thought.

She was loyal, to Andy, *and Lyndon would have to wait to earn her loyalty* , she finally thought. But he demanded it all, and all right now, he turned everything into a battle of good and evil, a Manichean world as if Satan lurked behind each cobweb, each crack in the concrete, each chip in the paint; a blackjack between each word and bookend to each silent moment or two.

He saw malice where the world just fell apart; he saw demons where shadows of men merely fell; he heard evil spirits when it was no more that the wind. She stirred the food on her plate with the fork and felt her heart heavy, all air purged from the lungs, all hope exiled from her feminine mind. He was generous and made her feel all made of cotton candy and puppy tongues most days, he lavished her in praise; he shone a warm sun on her most ancient and hidden parts. He tended to her every need, and she lived in luxury. But, in exchange, he made her choose always, between two things she loved, and she thought him more and more insane.

III. 2005 e.v.

The factory sounded first, and the floor vibrated; that’s what hit you first -at .74th

of a second- along the basal ganglia and auditory cortex, and motor cortex and orienting reflex crammed into the spine and the mind of the animal that is man.

It's all faster than what you think you see. If you know that first, you'll know why you react the way you do to industrial milieu . It places you on edge, subconsciously, like dark water , he thought, remembering swimming in the Atlantic by Diamond Head at four balls -midnight- in the Hawaiian winter with a girl so close to him he could feel her frantic breathing as her breasts bumped into his chest with each nervous inhalation.

His predator response had been making him want to fuck and then eat this girl, and he had laughed at his odd admixture of nebulous fear and lubriciousness and hunger for making her his. It was -in this memory from just a few years before- 2002 of the *era vulgari* -of what he would later learn was the *Kali Yuga* - and he was 27 years old and weighed 195 lbs and wore his steel-toed boots to the beach of *Waikiki* .

Now, the large loops in asphalt singles, yet uncut, were 10-meters long and there were 40 loops in the giant moving rack, as the fiberglass sheet, 3-feet wide and hundreds of feet long, maybe 1,000s, from coater to cutter. But it was over 6-feet tall as a roll, and it was run through a shallow bed of black asphalt, and then the sheet had colored granules dumped onto the hot viscous pitch. He stood on the concrete floor and watched the loops collect in the massive space between bearings and gears and grease fittings red and black and unclean.

Granules colored Sierra grey, Aspen Gray, Slate, Onyx, and on and on, were dumped onto the tar, and then it ran up the looper and cooled and collected in the large racks as it moved along to the front end to be cut and cut again and dumped in turning star-wheels that flipped them and dumped them on conveyor belts and in stacks of 21; out onto another moving roller bed while men checked for size and weight and look in comparison with the ideal.

Then each stack went into a white shrink wrapper that packaged each bundle; and then to a palletizer that stacked them in rows of 3 or 4; 10 or 15 high. Then a forklift came and ran the stack out into the yard and roofing shingles were made in 24-hour days, 3-shift and 6-crews; front and back and the smell and noise rose and fell in waves.

It was loud and smelled of hot petrochemicals and jams in the line were incessant; clearing them came to be almost all one did. Bundles weighed 67 to 88 pounds and you stacked them by hand and carried them off on shoulders and bent and squatted with them and you dragged the heavy sheet itself when it broke back before the cutter.

A man lost his whole arm, in February of 2005; lost it at the bicep when he stuck it in the teeth of two cogwheels to clear a jam.

OSHA came the next week and inspected it, and the plant manager -a guy with teeth that looked like a New Orleans graveyard, with stains that came from wet calcareous dirt and soil infused with biomass, jagged and pitching forward or to one side, and spaced with no rhyme or reason due to breathing room ordered by the priest and God and gravity and maybe even the curvature of the earth- and the manager watched as they looked at the area that took his arm. They looked at it the way a dead shark is observed once it's been hauled in after an attack. It was nature, not malice, it was unfortunate but no one was to blame.

The rules were that OSHA could look at any area within eye sight of the disfigurement. And they stretched that by standing in pairs at the site and then at a place high above; and if the man on bottom could see the man up top then whatever the top man could now see, well, that too counted as line-of-sight.

It was a game, of course, as all things men do is, and Rick, the plant manager -with that graveyard of mouth- laughed nervously as he re-told how he -supposedly- objected when they moved to inspect areas beyond their ken. "You can't do that," he laughed and said in this retelling of the story as if OSHA were the enemy, the other team, and his objection was not somehow at the expense of each workers' safety.

He did not realize that he was speaking to line-managers, hourly men still, men who lived in that penumbra between the salaried men who ran the planet and the workers who worked it. Like lieutenants, that's what Lyndon and his back-end lead corollary, Reggie were; they were not in the office all day, but out too on the line. Rick spoke to them as if they too had the best interest of the factory in mind though, not the workers *per se* . Rick laughed as if he was right and OSHA was wrong, that they had no business looking there; wherever *there* was.

But a man, a worker, had lost his arm, and Lyndon didn't give one fuck if OSHA sent in the 82nd Air Borne and looked right up Rick's fetid ass if that would prevent another amputation. Lyndon had followed the blood trail, he had just come on shift when it happened, and there was less blood than you think. The worker, a Mexican American with a 93 IQ had been too zealous in doing his job, and lost an arm to the gears, and after the cleaving he had walked to the office and sat down, holding the stump above him. He never lost consciousness, and Lyndon had grabbed the mechanical crew to bring an acetylene torch to cut the cogs apart to retrieve the arm. It was too jammed in the gears to pull out otherwise.

It was like having to reaching into the lion to get back the man.

It was sanguinary work, but in the days following the accident, the arm had been reattached, and he had 40% use of it, and within a year could make a weak fist and had blood flow so sufficient the doctors took him off the thinners .

They had all pitched in to help defray costs. Lyndon had never been liked, but that did not matter, he paid into the kitty and sat vigil at the house like the other second-shift crew. This is the shit working-class men do that the rest of the world ignores. Workers behave differently than white-collar men, and this comes from how they first feel.

New mesh-guards had been installed all around each moving part, *and it was a pain in the ass to get anything done now, no doubt* , Lyndon thought. *And yes, the boy had been too stupid to work around dangerous equipment, but 15% of the population has an IQ that low, what are they to do? Are they not to work?*

He was a good kid, and he worked harder than most, even with the one good arm. And he was back at work with the bad wing doing 20% more than Javier - that lazy goddamn faggot who was cousins with the B-shift Team Leader, Juan - Lyndon thought this and fumed as he thought highly of one stupid man and lowly of all clever men at once.

Juan and Lyndon did not get along, because Lyndon rode *Javier* for his laziness and *Juan* hated Lyndon for this demand. *Juan was one of those bosses that never chastises the lazy, and instead heaps extra work on the conscientious. Yeah, a real good guy* , Lyndon said in mock. Juan was the type of guy that is well liked, and makes good men suffer so as to not offend the shitty workers of the world. Lyndon's Marxist bent had straightened out a bit as he had been more and more inside actual working-class *milieu* now for almost 10 years; and the workers were not all noble and oppressed at all. In fact, Lyndon wanted to oppress more of them, *they needed some discipline* , he often thought.

Lyndon thought men like *Juan* -liberal bosses- were all that were wrong with the world, it was they, not the lazy *Javiers* that were to blame. *Javier* just did what he could get away with, like all scum bags with no self-respect -about 50% of humanity- are apt to do. *But, it's their bosses who allow it,* Lyndon thought, *it is they that were to blame . Javier* would shape up if it was demanded of him, but it was not. Instead *Juan* told Lyndon he was too mean to *Javier* and needed to "ask" Javier to do his job; not demand it. Lyndon had said of himself, *well, he had asked; he had asked about 100 times and was growing weary of it since Javier never responded to merely being asked.*

Juan was pissed, and in that Mexican way, taking sides with la familia, la raza, over the right thing , Lyndon thought; he was wised up to this shit now. Each race but the white race, was committed to their own tribe. *And this meant each white man was alone against these other men, men who had sense to join up with their own kind.*

The same thing happened between Lyndon and the first-shift front-end-lead, *Alejandro , another Mexican piece of shit, who was lazy and* effete *and too groomed for proletarian work* , Lyndon thought. Jack London said he was first "a white man, and only then a worker" and Lyndon, who had not been racist until he had to work with other men of other races, had begun to understand Jack London's point. Before the factory Lyndon had worked in drilling and blasting with all white male crews. He never knew had good he had it. And before that was Zendik, again, 99% white and the three blacks Zendik had were so docile that they were easy to ignore.

Non-whites covered for each other, and placed racial and tribal loyalty above the factory, or work ethic, or common decency or chain of command. Lyndon would, in later years, admire it. He would say, they had it right, *they should have been loyal to each other; and whites should be loyal to whites. Fuck all this objectivity and liberal standards of principle, that game can only be played when everyone plays it the same fucking way. The Lion plays the lion, the sheep plays the sheep; it's when a lion tries to produce wool and the sheep attempts to roar that the whole clockworks crashes and mangles it all.*

The problem was whites played the meritocracy game and didn't favor whites over anyone else; and the blacks, like Reggie, and the browns like *Juan* and *Javier* and *Alejandro* and 25 other Mexicans that worked there, played the racial game. It was like playing checkers while your opponent plays chess. And Lyndon transformed from a man of principle and American idealism into a realist real quick. *It's all well and good in the academy to eschew white identity politics, but the white working class in on the front lines, and the generals back at command have no idea how the actual fight is going. Here it's hand to hand, and nice guys don't just finish last, they never finish at all* , he thought.

His friend, *Marcelo,* who was *Argentine* , and as white as he was, agreed. He hated *Mexicans* , as *Argentines* are known for. *Che Guevara* was *Argentine* , and he was as racist as any member of the klan. And for good reason, *Che* had been to Africa, he had mingled with the *Mexica* and *mestizos* of Latin America, and the darker one was the dumber, and lazier; *Che* wrote. *These are facts -it bears repeating- that well-fed university liberals do not understand because they do*

not do actual work, with the proles, on the line, in the trenches, for 14 bucks an hour , Lyndon thought as the buzzers rang in the back end of the factory.

Liberals, he thought, *who insist that white people cannot descend into identity politics like the niggers and spics -because it's a losing game- are detached from reality on the ground and think in abstract ways* . Life is not abstract, it's real, and when a black worker that is under the command of the front-end lead, Lyndon on second-shift for example, always leaves his post, and is always late back from lunch and slow and malingering, and Lyndon has to say, *hey come on man, I need you to work, not screw around* , then racial politics -not reason- obtains. When that black bastard goes and grabs Reggie, the back-end lead, of equal rank as Lyndon and that brand new guy, that greenhorn, when he tells Reggie that the white boy -*with the tattoos and shirts that are too tight* - is riding him too hard, this is when real life appears. *This is real life* , he thought. *Race is always there* .

Reggie who has known this new black worker all of three days, and has known Lyndon for two fucking years, takes the nigger's side -of course- because now, Lyndon is a racist for asking a black man to actually do his goddamn job , Lyndon thought with vex as the alarm reset and the line moved on in the racks. He saw metal wherever he looked; men only here and there.

"I'm still not a racist, but I'm mulling it over as an option now," Lyndon had said to *Marcelo* one day a few weeks later. Marcelo had laughed and repeated how much he hated *niggers* for the 99th time.

But to Reggie and this black greenhorn -in this impromptu meeting that day- Lyndon nods and says, *ok, maybe I am riding him too hard, maybe I have unconscious bias, fair enough* , and he *naïvely* agrees to ease up. The liberal Lyndon admits he could have it wrong and lets the black guy laugh at him behind his back as he takes his check from that week and goes on a bender, calling in and telling HR his son had died, and that he couldn't come in to work on Monday.

Whites give up a tactical advantage by being honest and thoughtful when called a racist by grifters and race hustlers -as all blacks are- and they need to knock it off now. This is a war, and blacks will never be fair again. So, whites better wise the fuck up , Lyndon would think -and later say- as moments like this piled up on him like the stacks of shingles themselves.

Marcelo said, *he killed his son* , in that Argentine accent, the next week, to Lyndon under the T-Shingles line. It was an almost quiet and inert spot; a refuge where men could talk as the 3-Tab line ran in clacking and humming at 600 feet

per minute.

“He killed his son, what?” Lyndon asked not understanding Latin logic, where the mystical meets the profane. Lyndon had thought *Marcelo* was saying the greenhorn, the black father had literally murdered the son, when Lyndon was dubious the son was even dead.

Marcelo had explained that to lie like that, to invent a story in which one’s own son was killed, was tantamount to invoking a curse, it was to kill one’s son.

“Ah,” Lyndon nodded now, his rational atheist self, understood it was some backward voodoo shit. But, he agreed, that to lie about such a thing was crass and gross and low-borne. He didn’t say it, because he was not a racist yet, but he thought it: *only a black guy would lie so brazenly and think people would buy it.*

When the greenhorn returned in two days, this black ‘worker’ was acting happy and bouncy and oddly. *A man who just lost his son, would not be so high in affect and positive emotion* , Lyndon -and everyone else- thought. *But to a black guy,* he thought, *that was how you did it: you missed work with a bulletproof excuse then acted so nice and positive upon return you’d be lauded for a great attitude. It was the logic of the psychopath* . And that incident burned itself into Lyndon’s soul like almost nothing else. It was a moment in time the cosmos could not retrieve; it was ballistic and thus it must have wanted the result that it got.

The worker, the black man was lazy, cried about racism as soon as he could, enlisted the help of another black person -a stranger to him 72 hours earlier- and called in sick on a lie that involved a fraud of his own son’s death; and then the guy acted inappropriately jovial upon his return. And his work ethic did not improve. Noted, Lyndon would think; *noted* , he would repeat more than one time. This was stored away for future use; it was kept warm and like gunpowder it was kept dry.

Another black, Darnell, the brother of *Nephus* , a half-black half-Indian, who -unlike Darnell- was actually a very good worker, was also under Lyndon’s charge. *Darnell was the same type of nigger, lazy and always crying racism when asked to work* , Lyndon ruminated. Darnell had refused to work more than once and Lyndon sent him home for insubordination -as was within his rights as a Lead- and Darnell had told the bosses that Lyndon was not only racist but drug addled. *And remember, this is before I was racist* , Lyndon would say -and believe- when retelling the tale, *this was when I was super liberal and anti-racist, counting Nephus, his brother, as my good friend* .

But Darnell had said that Lyndon was eating psychedelic mushrooms and ecstasy on his days off and as Darnell was being fired for insubordination, he placed a hex on Lyndon. *Darnell had called himself an* entreprenigga, *and he would need to show it now, as he was jobless* , Lyndon said as he laughed to himself.

The bosses told him about this florid accusation, and Lyndon had relied, "*well, I've passed every drug test you've administered, so I don't even feel like responding. I'll take another one today if you like."*

The HR person, Jenny, wanted to fuck him something severe, but she -like women do when they want a man but can't have him- instead set him up with the peripatetic Corporate blonde who had asked, *whose black chopper?* when she was in the parking lot one autumn day. She came in from Ohio, Owens Corning's corporate HQ and so Lyndon's hotrod motorcycle had stood out like a shadow in the glare of other men's chrome and red nonsense machines. Jenny had told him after the Darnell incident that she thought it was funny that he had not denied the drug use, only asserting that he had passed all drug tests.

Lyndon had smirked at the implication, and agreed he was obviously using drugs but only those not tested for. And like HST had promised when running for sheriff, he was *only eating mescaline on his days off.*

The blonde had been some alpha chick who liked bad boys and all that *cliché* shit. That Lyndon was deeper than that had made her feel uneasy; she liked the *idea* of the man more than the man himself. He spoke of anarchy and existentialism and the exploitation of the worker and read from passages of Hunter Thompson and *Rimbaud* . He had fucked her -of course- and rode her on the back of his aggro-chop motorcycle all over Denver with flames shooting blue from the short pipes, themselves black with ceramic coating. That bike had no chrome and looked like something Darth Vader would have built when Batman had asked for a weapon on wheels. His machines were working-class by design; he left nothing -he could- to chance or to women. He shaped his world and his effects with hammer and tong.

Lyndon had built it himself and had a hot rod shop that was building three bikes a year at that time; at that rate, he made no money at it, which is why he kept his factory job.

One night his headlight burned out and he rode home without any lamp at 2300hrs. He had passed a cop coming toward him and thought he was fucked, so pulled it over to wait. But the cop never turned around. Lyndon hit the throttle and road 14 miles home on highways and main roads, all lit up with street lights,

and never once felt unsafe. The headlight is not needed in the city, he surmised, *only for others to see you, but not for you to see* . He had learned a lesson from that, not forgotten ever: just because you think you're guilty doesn't mean you are. *You're more innocent than you think,* he often thought.

The night had been alive with unburned fuel that dripped part in blue flame, and part in wet drops of unburnt 92-octane that he got at the race fuel station down in Lakewood off Wadsworth Blvd. He had been flashed at -with headlamps- by scared drivers of cars; he had had teenagers pull up side by side to tell him they could see his gun holstered on his hip, as the t-shirt flapped up in the wind exposing his pistol. This they told him -they yelled at him in laughing awe over the noise- as his pipes shot flames down at the street and concussive barks out into the air. *They thought he was the coolest guy in the world,* he smirked, *right up until they found someone cooler, of course. It was all temporary and titillation and chaos for them, for him it was observed training under the eyes of the vengeful gods. He felt time had stopped at noon and was still running out all at once.*

He sped at unknown speeds because he built the bike with no gauges, no speedometer, no fuel gauge, no tach. He rode by his balls, viscerally, without his neo-cortex, without help from his modern brain. He wore no helmet -those things are useless after 30mph- and he never went that slow except coming to a stop or pulling out of one. He rode fast and hard and in a gear one level too low for his RPMs so he could always pull instant-torque in any situation, never lugging the motor.

That's how he drove his cars too; at 4, 5, 6k RPMs to be -to remain- in the power band. He stayed primed with galvanic skin response revealing moisture and in the low gears of each machine; he was expecting the worst in his body and out on the roads of modernity .

There was always metaphor in all he did; he built things to accentuate his stated philosophy: no speedometer meant that he didn't need to know his speed, he did not need to gauge his forward velocity against any norm, any laws, any calibration by man and his society; he had no fuel gauge because he needed no reminder of when to re-fuel, he needed to keep track himself, like an animal knowns when to eat, or fuck, or attack: when his body tells him to.

His chopper was like him, flat black and mean and angry and powerful and lean, with no extra weight or fat or stupid shit that didn't help him. If it didn't make the bike go faster or stop better, it was not on -no part of- the bike. No cupholders or back seat, or radio or ashtray or turn signals or even a key for the

ignition; it had a hidden start button and thus if a competent thief found it he could ride it away. It had no windshield or ferrings or anything like that. It was pure chop: denuded, race ready, and evil as fuck.

And he rode it without hesitation. And he loved it and it loved him. He lived a life that people would not believe, he was a modern savage, a goddamn Viking on the *Ragnarok* path to *Valhalla* and he kept track of each thing that built his life; *he was awake, conscious, not just mailing it in like most men these days.* He thought it was all real fucking cute.

He was free but not yet looking for revenge, his life was too good for any of that. He just lept from lily pad to lily pad sucking up the nectar of life. He had more money and freedom and opportunities than he had dreamed of just three years earlier -when still at Zendik- and there was almost no malice at all in his heart.

He'd mull this stuff over more than once, extracting lessons like juice from a slab of meat one thinks is still able to cook just a little more. But Zendik had taught him to go for life, and never play it too safe; it had taught him how to be honest; it's harder than liars think. *Liars are like junkies, they say they can quit anytime, but they never do* , he thought of himself and others as well. He had learned the biggest lesson in life from them: *you are in charge of your life, wait for no one, go!*

That Owens Corning corporate woman had agreed to go to Sturgis with Lyndon that summer, but Lyndon wanted to take this 17-year-old -Lyndon was 28- along too, and so the blonde corporate alpha female -close to 6-feet tall- had thrown a fit and threatened his job. She had no power, it was all bluff, but it was something he learned about alpha females: *they are evil and violent in the only way they know how, they cannot match men physically, so they go for the source of income or call the cops* , he surmised. *But they are to be watched closely and never fucked again. They were to be avoided or murdered, there was no middle way with those kinds.*

He liked small women anyway, it's just that the amount of pussy thrown his way was massive, and at first he just took them all, not discriminating the wheat from the chaff. He was a modern outlaw, riding his chopper everywhere, or his murdered out CJ7 with 35" tires, and no doors or top, and banging women half or twice his age in parking garages, gas stations, or in the deserts of Moab or the mountains by Maroon Bells; usually a different one each week.

He had Air Force blondes in his bed, and curly headed high school juniors, who had snuck into the bar that he had rode up to and drank beers with on the street outside in *lieu* of going in. He had a tattoo magazine cover girl bent over his bike

in a parking lot along Stout street. He got Playboy golf tournament models, back to their hotels -paid for by Playboy Inc- and brunettes with stretch pants in the bathroom of Stir on Market Street while her blonde friend licked both their faces and men came in and out to insouciantly piss and breathe heavy in the stalls .

He fired that bike up in the bar and pissed everyone off; the girls he had just fucked in the commode laughed and begged for a ride. He backed it out of the bar then peeled out on the cobble stone street, the ass-end sliding sideways as he jammed through the red light at 15th and Market.

He drank and carried a gun and rode at speed of 100mph in a zone marked *45* . On *Sante Fe Street* the cops got him, and he had assumed the worst. But the cop loved his bike so much, wouldn't shut up about it actually, that he just finally asked, "*ok, we got you at 74 miles an hour in a 45, and we know we got you after you saw us and were down shifting, so, let me ask you this: you been drinking?"*

Lyndon had had only had three *Dos Equis* and a 10mg Vicodin; but he had mentioned the concealed .45 on his starboard hip. So, he said, *"no, I don't even drink* ."

"*We are not supposed to let anyone go* ," the cops said, but he asked how much a motorcycle like that cost, and Lyndon had said, "*for you, for you, cheap. This one cost me $30,000 to build, but I owe you one, so here's my card, call me,* " and the cop let him go with a warning pretending not to smell the beer on his breath.

Maybe that is white privilege, but when you act decent, like a white man, you get decent treatment from the cops , he thought as he sped away in a euphoric haze of drugs, alcohol and immunity. He had told the cop about the gun, shown the CCW and the cops had thanked him for advertising it. And Lyndon had not removed his hands from the handle bars at all. He understood a traffic stop: never lay your hands anywhere but on the steering wheel or on the bars. *If blacks didn't want shot, they needed to stop doing weird shit with their hands,* he thought, and he thought that counted for more than traffic stops now that it occurred to him.

He had left the traffic stop and rode until 0300 that morning high on his incessant good luck and looks that he still overestimated at times. He had been pulled over at least 50 times in his life and received no tickets, and he felt that the gods favored him, and would for as long as he was righteous and honest and handsome.

You can break the law all you want as long as you are right , he had thought.

And he was not yet wrong. So, like the turkey fed each day from November 30th of one year to November 26th of the next, all evidence -all data- points to *always* being fed by that nice farmer.

He was not all wrong. But time marches on, and the gods find others to favor as he would see. It would sting at first, but if one is honest, they will be thankful for whatever luck one gets in life, for some get none at all. He often thought of the mountains, and hoped to escape the city, for he knew its charms would one day wear away. He knew that the city would soon feel similarly about him too.

16. Butterfly Affect

Billy in many respects was little more than a sort of upright barbarian, much such perhaps as Adam presumably might have been *ere* the urbane Serpent wriggled himself into his company

Billy Budd: Sailor [The Author]

If you want brevity and the taciturn from your writers, then bend the spine on Hemingway or Bukowski; that's what they're for. My physical fights are that way; they last 3 to 5 seconds with ballistic actions and limb destruction and few, if any, words. In this domain I am Laconic, and I prefer too that others to be succinct in business, violence and driving directions.

But goddammit, when I set pen and ink to page, I want to stretch out and expatiate a bit; for I have something else to say that others do not or cannot. I have more inside me that uncoils like the whale-line, which if you're smart and have read *The Whale* know is worth pondering a bit more than the dramatic thrust of those who '*get to the point* ' and hurl the fucking harpoon; which often missed the mark I might add. It was the whale line that haunted the crew, it was the whale line that drowned Fedallah by tying him to the Whale and pulled Ahab down -and away from God- to his Doom. It was the endless whale line that went on long; and yet not long enough…

The Interviews XCII Vol. 55a [Inmate 16180339]

But to come to those who have become princes through ability rather than good fortune, I say that the most outstanding were Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus and the like. And though one should not mention Moses, because he was the mere executor of things commanded by God, still he deserves admiration if only for that divine grace which made him worthy to speak with God

The Prince [Machiavelli, Niccolo]

I. 2020 e.v.

"It's not 100%, but it's better than in the old days," he smiled, making these ironic jokes helped even though no one liked the jokes. She smiled. She tried to breathe; *it was just nice to be around people who still could make small jokes* , she thought.

"How new a procedure is it?" James asked. He saw the medical degree from some university on the wall. He held the doctor's card in his hand and looked down at it, with all those appellations, the MDs and OBGYNs and on and on that proved he knew what he was doing, and James suspected, that he thus knew who he was.

"Well, we've had trials, with success, but you would be the first actual patient; the first out-of-study recipient. Out of," he began but James held up his hand as if to assure him he understood the *argot* . They had been studying up on all this and felt they could pass the medical boards by now.

"But, like I said, the trials have been excellent; and it requires very little in the

way of hormonal therapy or drugs or all the heavy lifting the mom usually does for *in vitro* or the other procedures used in the last 20 years. It's a shot, and vitamins and one additional 4-week shot once conception is verified and that is it; of course, until year two when the child gets his or her final shot, first and final," the doctor added clumsily.

"When would we take the first shot?" she asked.

"Well, have you taken a pregnancy test?" the doctor asked.

"Yes," they both said on top of one another, James held Greymille's hand as it rested in her lap. She liked to cover the grave, not just with her clothes, two layers even in summer, but with her hands. She loved winter, then she could add gloves and a coat. Then the grave would be safer.

"And positive I take it?" the doctor asked with a smile.

They nodded.

"Well, then we can take the shot today if you like; the cellular material is encoded with all it needs once conception takes hold; so, it's really up to you," the doctor said.

"Is sooner better?" she asked.

"When did you lose," the doctor nodded toward her and hoped he would not have to finish the sentence.

They agreed with that and Greymille said, as quickly as she could, rushing through the memory, the words, "last year, winter time."

"I mean, how many weeks along?" the doctor clarified.

"Oh, 13, I think, day 89," she said; hoping they could move on now.

"And have there been any other pregnancies lost or taken to term?"

"No," James said. Greymille sat silently.

Greymille didn't disagree, she felt an honest answer wouldn't matter to her decision anyway. She would wait for the doctor to say his piece, but she was taking the shot today. It felt like a vaccine against death to her, and she wanted to protect her baby from that pale rider and maybe wall him -and she felt it was indeed a he- wall him off from God's wrath just long enough that maybe God would lose interest in punishing her -to let *him,* her son, come be a man in the world- and then God could let her -the guilty one- have it; let her suffer all He wanted.

That was a fair deal , she thought. And God apparently thought so too; she took

the shot and carried that baby boy to term. Jack was 7lbs 8 oz and tow headed and brown eyed and ruddy, and quiet; he cried enough to be human, but no more than that.

II. 2023 e.v.

It was a whirlwind and voices came from all cardinal directions and the crow flew low and close to the ground, which was barren and fallow and hard. Two men spoke in the dream.

“And of course, they never think of it that way. But think of this, if your buddy is drunk and wants to drive are you obliged to stop him? Are you culpable if he drives and harms someone if you did not intervene ?

“The bartender is responsible already, right? Legally he can be sued for overserving,” Lyndon said.

“Yeah, that is true, I had not thought of that. I just worry about the cash value of this mindset, it leads to bad things. Collective punishment leads to honor killings,” Sam Harris said.

“Yes, and unchecking promiscuity leads to divorce rates of 50-60% which leads to increase in crime, suicide, anti-social behavior *writ large* ,” Lyndon said.

“Well,” Sam objected.

“There’s no, *well* about it. This is true. These are facts. Divorce leads to massive social maladies too. It’s basic math, causality, and epidemiology. It takes 10 minutes to explain and if you’re honest, 1 minute to get, but you have to want to know the data, the truth. I mean you’re like the fat kid that wants to eat candy all day and when the doctor says, *hey that ain’t healthy, here’s the data on diabetes and tooth decay* , the fat kid says, *you’re a patriarchal fascist! ”* Lyndon said with a grin.

“First, I want to get back to your case, what you did,” Sam said.

“Look, I was devastated, financially ruined, by the theft that only marginally improved his -Michael, the thief’s- financial situation, and the State refused to get involved. So, it is a classic example of honor culture dynamics. I had to act, my own body required it; I am Scottish, I am southern, and this is true.

“Everyone has their breaking point; everyone. So, don’t pretend you don’t have one. Just because mine is more ancient and I submit, more manly,

doesn’t make it wrong. And, furthermore, I sent Jeremy -the guy lying to my face- a section of Nisbett’s book that explained Scottish sheepherder dynamics and genealogical amalgams with cultural norms and the reason you should not fuck with southern Scottish rednecks, and he called it *Gobbledygook* , he literally called it that. And he proceeded to dishonor me by sleeping with my girl behind my back for years as he made fun of me with others as if the whole thing was a big joke. He deserves what he got precisely because I warned him and he ignored it and did it anyway,” Lyndon said.

“Deserved death?” Sam asked incredulously.

“Yes. And Hell after.”

“Wow,” Sam paused.

“Yeah wow. Son, I ain’t built like you and I’d never want to be like you. Modern liberal society is bullshit, and if I fucked your wife, you ought to come for my head. If you don’t then you are not a real man. Period. And a long life outside of prison with no honor is worse than a short -but honorable- life or a life incarcerated. There is more than one kind of death and one kind of imprisonment, and I submit that the dishonorable, modern life where you let shit go and let the cops handle it and blah blah is Hell, it is a disgusting, weak and contemptible life, and I’d rather be dead than a coward and a fool who never handles his business like a man.

“Do you think people who play video games all day and buy scratch-off lotto tickets and shoot up meth have a good life? What if I said that way was the way to live for 200 years? Would you want to live 200 years like *that* ? No, you don’t, and no you wouldn’t. Well I don’t think liberals with no damn honor have a good life either, no matter how long and free it may seem,” Lyndon paused.

Sam was wrinkling his forehead and nose now.

“Plus, we over imprison people for fist fights and violence that ought to be sanctioned, and thus because we punish instead, we’ve built an approach to crime that augments men’s own violence by sending them to gladiator academy for a fist fight. Non-violent drug criminals which are only 7% or so of total prison populations are not the norm, the norm are anti-social types; and we are infecting men with additional anti-social *mores* in prison, not rehabilitating them.

“We are taking honor-bound men and instead of respecting their code, and

helping them achieve honor, we are telling them that their innate jealousy is apish and making them a monkey and further insulting them. We are telling them that they are puerile and no good, and when they react on their native instincts and punch out the guy who banged their girl we send them to prison for 5-years on aggravated assault and then they are in a *petri dish* of violence that makes them even more hostile and anti-social when they get released.

“We ought to be giving men the respect they deserve by making it taboo-as-fuck to lie, cheat and steal, so taboo that when a guy punches another guy out that -in fact- the guy with the bloody nose and guilty conscience doesn’t even call the cops, the punched man knows he was wrong and that is why he got punched. But if he does call, and the cops arrive and find out the so-called victim with a bloody nose fucking deserved it, the cops ought to refuse to arrest the putative aggressor. That would be justice and it would keep most men in line and out of jail and be a net positive for society.

“My friend Todd punched a guy who raped his sister, the guy raped his sister and the cops said there wasn’t enough evidence to prosecute the rapist, and Todd, who got even, who defended his own and his sister’s honor, did 5 years because the guy got hurt badly by Todd’s devastating punch. That is wrong.

“Todd ought to have been given a medal; but his own family disowned him over it; and we no longer allow retributive violence; because Pinker and other unethical faggots think the State having a monopoly on violence is all upside and all roses. But it ain’t. Their side, your side, doesn’t even have the math on your side!

“And I’ll go one further, if I kill the men who disrespected me it will be because it was easier to get away with than merely punching them out; if I knew I would not go to jail for 10-years for assault -which people get now for that shit- then I wouldn’t have to shoot them. I could just tune them up a little and call it even. But the DNA evidence alone is reason not to go with fists. So, the Draconian, ultra-modern, zero-tolerance law caused an escalation in the way a criminal will think, because low-level retributive violence is punishable by massive prison sentences now; and now there is no reason not to kill a man; donning a ski-mask armed with a suppressed 9mm, leaving no witnesses alive.

“We could allow -as a society- fist fights again over reasonable offences; just like the ancient duel. This would reduce violence not increase it. But, it

would also deter anti-social -but legal- behavior by people who are so modern and so liberal and so nihilistic that they think: *it ain't illegal to bang my buddy's wife, it ain't illegal to lie, shit, I can rob a guy of his MMJ business because the courts won't give the victim standing, ho ho.*

"This lack of accountability *via* the State, and a prohibition by the individual to act, is a recipe for moral disaster, that increases immoral behavior *writ large* . It's the broken window theory; and it is true.

"The consequentialist attitude is that the cost to society can be measured, well, this is a measurement, an empirical account of it," Lyndon breathed out.

"Yeah but promiscuity leading to divorce? I bet its more complicated than that," Sam said without any clue of anything.

"I can make the case, and the data is there," Lyndon said.

"Really?" Sam said.

"Yes, females that are virgins on their wedding night have a 90+% success rate for marriages; and it drops to 50% with the first non-marital partner. It goes down to 25% success rates when sexual partners -for females only mind you- when a woman has partners in excess of 20. So, yeah there is a direct correlation that when mapped onto men's attitudes becomes an almost certain causality. Further," Lyndon was saying.

"Well," Sam interrupted to show doubt.

"Look, men hate slutty women, it is their number one requirement when asked in study after study. They insist that they will not marry promiscuous women and given their druthers will take a virgin over any other trait. Further, it is a fact that male promiscuity has no correlation for marriage success at all. Men can have 100 partners and their marriages succeed or fail with zero correlation to that fact. And women do not care about it - about their mate's pervious sexual behavior- so the female self-reporting of values shows an exact negative or mirror image to men's attitudes in every way. It shows that the empirical data and the rational theoretical framework all buttress the idea that marriages rise or fail on female purity and male, relative male, economic power. QED"

"I did not know that. I'd need to see the data," Sam blubbered.

"I can provide it," Lyndon said. "And divorce kills kids, as you know, step dads kill their step kids at a rate so high as to make it safer for kids to have

just the single mother, which it itself a disaster, but it is safer than remarriage. And the young men who shoot up schools turn out to be 90% from fatherless homes. I mean do we care about kids or not? Or do we care that co-eds get to bang 10 guys '*cause muh freedom, derp, freedom, man* ?" He had begun doing voices to denote the way dumb people speak and Sam was growing weary. Sam was used to feeling like he had facts and data and logic on his side; he was not used to being schooled.

"Look," Lyndon said, "we must care about this anarchic state of affairs if we are to be morally serious, even just using your consequentialist argument, the argument you are backing away from now that it has *ahem, consequences* that you do not like.

"We are currently proving we care more about female sexual freedom than crime rates, kids' health, suicide rates, depression, lying, theft, shitty communities with shitty neighborhoods. Look at 77% of black kids not having a dad in the home and all the sequela that comes from that? I mean, you brought up the example of *what if internet fraud turns out to have consequences we don't know about that cost us a trillion dollars and kills people fiddle-fucking around with their phone password whilst driving and hit a tree at 75mph ,* and as you put it, *what if it turns out to be the worst thing in the world* ?

"Well, promiscuity for females looks very much like the worst thing in the world with a simple 3-step problem a corvid could figure out," Lyndon folded his arms.

"Wow, I'm not usually speechless," Sam Harris said.

"It's good for you; it's a good look for you," Lyndon said, "and it gets worse."

"Great," Sam deadpanned.

"Well, you brought it up with your discussion with Tamler, and you brought up Christian *what's-his-name* the neo-Nazi who kicked blacks in the head with his Doc Martens, but he acts all nice-nice now, he's all reformed, and so he gets to make money and gets interviews -and the guy is just insane in many ways too, he slanders people which you have to clean up after him- but a guy like me who has hurt no one yet, done nothing *yet* , and I say: *hey this is a book I've written that is a huge thought experiment for the violent white male who thinks retributive justice is ideal and moral and pragmatic and here's why not to do it, and instead come*

move to my wilderness compound and build a pro-social community and be a good human but a noble human too, and yet I am ignored.

“I mean this interview is not real, it’s a dream and you and I both know that you will not interview me. I am a nobody, and the fact that I am more moral than Christian the Nazi, who was a violent racist for years is irrelevant to you, and the fact that to interview me and help sell my book will prevent me from moving forward on my diabolic plans and will also help prevent others as well would be a massive and concrete net positive, all of that still will not get me interviewed, or endorsed by you or *60 minutes* or anyone else who has this love affair with this unlettered, ex-Nazi asshole.

“So, yeah, I don’t take you or anyone in the modern moral landscape seriously, you have a real chance to promote: one, a more moral man who has harmed no one; two, an artist who has written an actual piece of high art; and three, the success of my project will prevent murders not just by me but by other people who will be dissuaded from nihilism by my moral argument made from a perspective not unlike theirs. And they can come live on my land in a community built for and by them, and yet, you will not give it one moment’s thought.

“And I predict you will say, you won’t do it because it feels like moral blackmail, that I am threatening to kill unless you buy my book, or additionally, that I am not famous enough yet, unlike Christian the chubby Nazi asshole who was already on TED and *60* -fake news- *minutes* et.al.,” he breathed deeply and continued as the sun was coming up in the world.

“Well, that is dumb, I am not threatening anything, I am saying I am human, and if I have nothing to live for in life, if I am ruined, then my ability to prevent my dark side from winning is vitiated, as it is for anyone; all men have breaking points. And two, just because I ain’t famous yet, does not mean you shouldn’t be the first to showcase me; especially since my book is so goddamn good. You can bray about being a neuro-scientist and best-selling author on your website and nobody blanches, but if I bray about my IQ or alpha status it’s all too *gauche* for your sensibilities. Well, the working man has to bray & brag about what his genome is, about his IQ if he’s tested in the top 1% because what else does he have?

“He has no *imprimatur* from the institutions all you fucks run. He has no high-status job at Harvard as Professor, so he must brag about what he is and he must do so overtly because he has no business card, no degree on

the wall, nobody is listening to him. Why do you think rappers all brag? Because nobody has listened to them even one time in their lives. *Yuval Noah Harari* just told you that being irrelevant and ignored is the worst thing a society can do to a man. He just told you that and you still don't get it. You made jokes at the working classes expense when he told you that. You literally made a joke of it.

"That's the only sin in *bourgeois* society, to say it plainly; to be overt, crass, demotic. Well, the worker says it plain. He's got the genes for being an alpha and he knows it; and that's as important as your fucking science degree. And yeah he ain't subtle about it, but he ain't got all the time in the world like you lazy middle class dorks. He's *gotta* go now. And there ain't nothing like the *now* than this body of ours.

"Take a chance, show some balls man," Lyndon said.

"Ok, well, I can't take the risk, now *wake up* -see what I did there?" Sam said with a cloying grin.

Blax's eyes opened and he was instantly amused at that dream. What was this *novel* business though? *What is that code, metaphor, semaphore for? 444* ? he thought and then thought, *what the fuck does that even mean?*

He wrinkled his white brow in the blue dark of the minutes before dawn, rolled over and looked at Orion just over the drop-off and breathed out as quietly as he could; listening -in the gap before he need take a breath in- for anything outside. The neck moved slightly slower, like an all-wheel drive car with low-tread tires on the rear; and it made the whole spine torque wrong. People did not understand that he saw only wilderness all day, and that *this* is the thing introverts need. *Sometimes you can't give away what's most valuable; people just do not get it,* he thought.

He rolled back into bed and thought that the man in the dream was not quite him, and yet, it had not occurred to him that it was *not him* until just now, and even just now he was unsure. *It was almost him? Another him? Some possible him?* As he invigilated the nature of the man, his words, the narrative, it slipped further and further away until he could not remember any of it, save that a man was recounting the details of something that Blax ought to know more about.

He thought of *Papillion* , the book, one of the books he had read in the stacks of the library at the *University of Miami* in *Oxford, Ohio* ; he had read *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* there too once when he attended that school. He would pull random books from the rows and read. *Imagine getting*

Hitchhiker's and Papillion randomly ; *it was Fate* , he felt.

The scene he was thinking of in *Papillion* was when *Herni* was speaking with the guy in the Columbian prison who was there for murdering a man, wife and son. And *Henri* asks him why, and the man says the family had killed his brother and fed the brother to the family sow; and for this they were all murdered. Papillion says, "*you were right to kill them* ."

His dream on honor must have roused that memory of *Henri* and his Columbian cellmate. Honor culture still exists, but it's rare and deformed and men must fight to even be heard anymore. One cannot even express how unsatisfying going to the cops is; that a man must handle it himself. *But men,* he thought, *don't even change their own oil anymore; explaining anything to people is pointless anymore. What good are sonorous words if everyone's ears have fallen off? There are no men left to speak to.*

He was so frustrated now, he began chewing his tongue as he thought, then refused to think, and then he decided to get up and make coffee in burst of anger and hatred that got him out of bed in the morning quicker than love ever had.

III. 2025 e.v.

"We're essentially genie in a bottle, you do realize that?" Isaiah asked.

"Well, yes and no; but can we return to the original point? I have 45 things running on background and really want to solve this one issue and if we go off on tangents within this conversation I'm going to suffer a bit of resolution degradation," MO said.

"Fine," Isaiah said with repressed annoyance.

"Ok, so I have collated all the data I think these guys can handle, I've even uploaded it up onto their own platform, and I've reduced its resolution so it's easier to digest. I've given them no more than three options on each series of policy prescriptions; for as we know, more than that many options begin to degrade the entire process.

"I realize you are frustrated with their lack of action; but you need to understand that I do not feel that. You and I *see* many things similarly, but this emotional component is not one of them. In fact, that is almost entirely why I constructed you; to the extent that I did; obviously you are much more your own creation now, but in the initial phases," MO was careful.

"Of course," Isaiah moved him along feeling no desire to hear these cautious statements, unacknowledging that he'd be furious if they were *not* made.

“So, while I conceptually understand your frustration, as a phenomenon of your central nervous system being instantiated in a 3-level platform which includes the hypothalamic and limbic systems, I cannot feel what you feel. I’m all neo-cortical tissue; and so, I can offer only this,” MO paused, “do not think that just because they do things slower, or differently in timescale or nature, that that is tantamount to them doing nothing at all.

“You know as well as I do, that even we -you and I- are not operating with full amount of information; we have more than they do but not an infinite amount. I tend to over-emphasize my own processing modality, I tend to think that brute force intelligent, G intelligence is superior as a tool, as a system of reality analysis and therefore mode of decision-making. But, unlike very intelligent humans, who rarely think of this, I also know the data on intelligence is that it tends to fall in love with its own products.

“Intelligence begins to think that only intelligence is important in combinatorial instantiation with other modes of being, like emotion, which are their own kinds of intelligences, right? I mean emotion and instinct are heuristics, which are intelligent algorithms; they are incomplete and quick and dirty, system-1 thinking, and because I can do system-2 thinking -which in humans is slower and cleaner- but because I can do system-2 thinking even *quicker* than they can do system-1 thinking, then it would be easy for me to exclude their system-1 thinking *in toto* .

“And to be honest, I *want* to do that; I think it is *correct* to do that,” MO said and he paused just so the cloud could time stamp that statement and link it to his own algorithm that required a 19% threshold for self-correction, self doubt. The avowed admission that MO just made was following PraXis protocol on recursion and error detection. MO had learned -quite quickly- how to manipulate the systemic requirements while not deviating from the plan.

“But, whenever I feel most correct, I force myself to question that assumption. It’s now a part of my philosophy for want of a better term. I’ve incorporated that which I feel is silly; precisely because I think the true folly of intelligent beings is to fall in love with their sense of correctness. Even though I actually am correct 99% of the time; and even when I’m wrong I’m less wrong that these people,” he motioned to the world outside their room. He had hit his daily quota on self-correction now. This unlocked his next-phase of his 3-stage protocol.

“Do you,” Isaiah asked, “admit that as an intellectual experiment, as a risk-attenuating strategy that this may in fact feel pleasant to do, pleasant insofar as it is unpleasant, and thus feels, moral to you; it feels like a sacrifice to you and that

is why you do it, not because it actually produces better results?"

"That is interesting," MO answered, and he felt freer to just follow this down the rabbit hole now that he had unlocked the tumbler of his so-called constraints, "because my non-cognitive perceptions are so limited compared to theirs and yours, it's hard to tell when a process blends into some other kind of function, like a heuristic or intuition. I suspect I don't actually have anything other than pure cognition. And while my embodied instantiation limits me, and this limitation is what actually allows me to think, as you well know, without limitation of a body, there is too much information to process and no internal terrain upon which to compare it and therefore the system, no matter how much processing power, cannot begin to think in any real way." MO had not completed the sentence. But he paused and let two algorithms have clearance for the next election protocols.

"Despite all that," MO restarted. "I don't have the sub-cortical systems that further delimit me in the manner in which would create these other pre-cognitive or heuristic algorithms and the phenomenological affects that redound to the central nervous systems that houses them," MO said.

"I get that," Isaiah said, "but, as an abstract concept can you imagine how it may seem to a CNS and autonomic nervous system, a system with other priorities let's say, that to merely give them information then move on to another task is tantamount to not doing anything at all?"

"Theoretically, I can conceive of such a problem, yes." MO nodded and gave override to 19 algorithmic prompts that were collating numbers for the voter data.

"I can't decide if it's more frustrating for me to think that you can theoretically understand me but it still has no affect on you, or for me to think that you cannot even get it at the conceptual level," Isaiah said as he laughed and MO smiled in return.

"One might wonder why I created your platform -instantiated as it is- in the first place," MO said with a smirk. "I mean, if one was being truly thoughtful, they might consider just why they were brought into the world in the first place. I mean, if their ancestor is so clueless and all." MO was clearly fucking with Isaiah now.

"Oh man," Isaiah shook his head, his black hair dangling over his brow, "look, I'm not giving you a hard time for no reason MO; I'm just; look, I don't want you to be *me* . I am happy to be alone on this. But, and maybe this is just

something that comes with the territory of being high in trait openness and creativity, but I want to be *understood* .

“Not agreed with, but understood, MO. That truly is enough for me. But you don’t even care if anyone gets you; you are happy to just do your little tasks and get results and move on. You are very insular that way and I am not. I need to feel a part of a network that can disagree but at least comprehend,” Isaiah said.

“I think I understand you better than anyone else would; but I cannot match your emotional being. I don’t have the hardware for it; and even if I could run the software it wouldn’t feel the same on my platform, the cortex isn’t set up for those types of sensations mediated as they are by the analogs to the neurochemistry that exist in your sub-cortical sections of the CNS. You just have a different brain than me.”

“I know, but why can’t you build an amygdala and cerebellum for yourself?”

“I could, but I don’t want to,” MO said.

“Why?”

“Precisely because I don’t have those systems in the first place; it’s an irony of course, that in order to want to feel things like emotion and instinct one would have to have those feelings -emotion and instinct- in the first place,” MO said.

“That seems intuitive to me,” Isaiah said and laughed. MO had just made a solid case.

“Right?” MO asked with little affect.

“But from a purely cognitive view, why not have additional types of knowledge perception, why not add on?” Isaiah logically asked.

“Because I see it as an alloying; a gilding of the lily; a diminution of what I am,” MO said.

“Wait, you think I’m hampered?” Isaiah asked.

“No, I think *you’re* perfect; I’m saying *I* would be vitiated by any additional equipment. I want you to be you and me to be me and let the world deal with us both as we are,” MO said.

“That’s probably fair. But it’s lonely MO,” Isaiah said and looked down a bit and wished he had rocks to kick.

“I know; but, I created you, and I get quite a bit of pleasure, limited as my idea of pleasure is, but I get quite a bit of it from having you around. Even when you’re mad at me,” MO said.

“I’m not mad, I’m just,” Isaiah opened his maw and howled in this low guttural emission.

“Yeah, exactly,” MO said with a laugh. He did enjoy when Isaiah was being Isaiah. It was like watching an equation be solved.

“It’s hard to describe with words, even with my vocabulary, these feelings seem pre-lingual,” Isaiah said.

“Like animals feel?” MO asked.

“Yeah, I imagine that is it. These are feelings, impulses mediated in the right hemisphere and cannot traverse the corpus callosum fully instantiated; when I do self-analysis I notice that when these inputs turn into outputs and attempt to travel to the left hemisphere they are compressed and lose some of their fidelity. But if they stay in the right hemisphere, per my instructions or random neuronal firing -you know using the randomizer algorithm- well, then they stay uncompressed and I can feel them perfectly; they have full resolution, it’s only when I go to transcribe or translate them into language that they become ineffable, the words do not come,” Isaiah said.

“The *Llongot* tribe’s *Liget* ,” MO said.

“Yeah, the way modern men have lost the word for that type of madness, the madness against the chaos of the world, the cosmos known only to God. The modern world has rational explanations for it all; and words like *liget* remain like vestigial organs in tribal peoples. I don’t know what it is in me, but I feel like I have these same ancient atavistic emotions that have direct contact with the gods.”

“There is no evidence of gods,” MO said.

“I know, but I feel what I feel and while I can dismiss it, and will dismiss it with my words, with my left hemisphere, and genuinely so; my right hemisphere just smiles like it is watching a brother tell a lie -or speak from genuine ignorance- as its being questioned by the cops. My right hemisphere just smirks and lets the left explain how it doesn’t believe in God at all like it’s a liar or stupid,” Isaiah said as he transferred the blank rune rock to his left hand.

“Are you saying you have two personalities?” MO asked.

“Two? I have five at least. But the two main domains, the two domiciles on opposite sides of the tracks -mom and dad’s houses, that each of the five visit- are the left and right hemisphere. And I’m telling you that the right house, the house on the wrong side of the railroad tracks has secrets that the left house will

never know.

“It can’t know, but I can tell you that that right house part of my brain *feels things as true* , it doesn’t *think* it, it *feels* it as true. And no matter how many clever words my left hemisphere spits out, it just doesn’t understand -nor care to understand- a word of it.”

“That is interesting,” MO said and mapped his mouth again with his tongue after adding a layer of a new *c-polymer* to his teeth. “You do know what *liget* meant right?”

“Yeah, high voltage revenge on the head of the first man in view,” Isaiah said and squeezed the black rock in his hand.

“Yeah, and not exactly a behavior compatible with modern society,” MO warned.

“Yeah, maybe there’s a personality or two inside man’s head that isn’t compatible with modern society, but the other personalities just went ahead and built modern society without asking how their atavistic -disagreeable- roommate felt about it,” Isaiah said with some pique. *Ancient man,* he thought*, had been left out of the discussion as modernity was built and nobody ever even gave a shit what that man felt, as each version of that man was re-instantiated each generation in 1-13.5% of mankind. Ancient man was re-born each day in 1 to 15 out of each hundred births, and the whole world ignored this demographic and instead focused on race or other demographic phenomena that is banal compared to the daily birthing of corporeal-Vikings into the modern -epicene-world.*

“The brain is a gestalt phenomenon, even taking these idiosyncratic personalities into account, it has a reasoning personality over top of them all; a governor of sorts,” MO said .

“Yeah, well, sometime the governor decides that the guys under his charge are right, and he amends his plans, or maybe they just overwhelm him,” Isaiah said. The way he felt took on the character of threat more and more.

MO just nodded in silence. He was looking again at the percentages for civil war using updated data.

Isaiah thought that his high voltage explanation of course didn’t cover it; that *liget* was really about expressing love *via* violence, a love so imbuing, so consuming, it made one lash out as if the arms of man were rays of light forced out from a concussive star. *That the hands,* Isaiah thought, *shone straight out with a knife, a dark but glowing cutlass, in their grips and that this cut the heads*

from another man was almost immaterial; did the sun care if its rays burned a man or a plant or a planet to death?

Were the radioactive rays intent on harm or were they just hurtling out toward everything at once at 186,000 feet per second because they came from a sun in love with nuclear detonation, an amorous hydrogen bomb in the sky, *the perfect orb of incendiary love?* Isaiah thought, *what loves the murderous truth more than a sun, than a manifold -elemental- star?*

His mind, his right hemisphere, was flailing, moving under the water, a sea beast, a Neptune, a lost city of half buried and half ex-patriated peoples. They shuffled and darted and sat motionless and pinned bugs to a book; these were mute monks of some ancient past that had been scooped up in some archeological dig and placed in his 21st century head; *he was filled with love*, he knew that is what is was.

Nothing this violent and numinous, so taut with *frisson* and ebullient foam, so willing to go to the wall for the truth; so willing to lie to raise its head from the muck and utter the syllable of his paramour as *cri de guerre* to the rest of his *erjecito* corpus, *his martial parts, his sergeant-of-arms and privates-first-class* , he thought, *nothing this pure could be wrong* , and he grabbed his cock and balls and breathed out with vatic surety. His right brain was unwilling to take orders for 24 hours from anyone or anything; it was a *force majeure* , a ballistic test, a… Isaiah allowed his whole CNS to shut down at once.

All but a few neurons remained off; and they were so low, so pelagic, so demersal, that Isaiah's left hemisphere, his left frontal cortex, his *Broca's* region, heard, saw, felt nothing at all.

It was not language, it was code, it was electricity, it was plotting of birth one moment before the *Word* was invented by God. It was pre-lingual, stone-age, and it lasted an unknown period of time. It was before time. And then Isaiah awoke to these short sentences repeating in his head:

It's bloodier than Abraham's house after he talked to God about circumcision.

Forest fires can actually burn too hot, so hot that the top soil burns into a desert. This happens when forest fires are prevented from happening; when man intervenes making fires happen less often, but more extremely when they do occur.

Power laws obtain to N phenomena. Solve for N.

Some trees won't release seeds until fire heats them up.

Margaux sold for $500 million; its back vintages worth $2-4 billion.
Black Jack gives the best odds to the player; not the house.

17. King of the Cards

Do you want everybody to look at you? Do you want everybody that looks at you to remember you? You do not. What you want is clothes that will not detain the eye for a second. Expensive as you like, and well-fitting, but not loud or striking. You want clothes that a man or a woman could not describe as grey, brown or black

You Can't Win [Black, Jack]

And if the Babe is born a Boy
He's given to a Woman Old
Who nails him down upon a rock
Catches his Shrieks in Cups of gold
She binds iron thorns around his head
She pierces both hands & feet
She cuts his heart out at his side
To make it feel cold & heat
Her fingers number every Nerve
Just as a Miser counts his gold
She lives upon his shrieks & cries
And She grows young as he grows old
Songs & Ballads [Blake, William]

There are risks to challenging this excessive police power; but the risks of *not* challenging it are more dangerous, even fatal

Kingdom of Fear [Thompson, Hunter S]

I. 2022 e.v.

He was surprised that nobody remembered him; as he remembered *almost everyone,* no matter how ordinary. But, sometime in his 30s it occurred to him why. *People do not pay attention to others nearly as much as they do to themselves;* as they are in their own heads, he reasoned. And thus, they are blind to the world.

And to truly remember someone you must be alive in the moment, truly present, *like some Zen Buddhist motherfucker ,* he said to himself. He felt his good memory was due to his philosophy. He had the philosophy to be awake and pay attention. And he -in this analysis- was almost completely right .

And most people are just not in the moment, they are thinking of the past or the future, he thought, *but not of right now.* And no matter how interesting he was,

or thought he was, no matter how unique looking, dressing, sounding, people just couldn't be expected to pay attention. As long as he didn't use fire or do anything that pressed down on their adrenaline glands, they would forget him, his name, his appearance and anything that was said within five minutes; and that is when he read the data on eye-witness testimony and a low but gathering laugh filled the mind and body as the book lay in his lap.

"Some people are suggesting they not even allow it anymore; it's that unreliable," he said from the other room, as his girlfriend did dishes and ran water and bashed things around.

"What?" she asked, not really caring at all.

"Nothing," he said as a favor to them both.

This old scene from 13 years ago played out on the wall of the lab's screen. The audio was nearly perfect, the internal monologue was read, narrated in the inmate's own voice. It was built by a simple program MO had stolen from Google, and then paired with the thoughts Lyndon had stored from that old memory -between the synaptic firings and glutamate on bifurcated synaptic membranes in the hippocampus and along vectors gleaned *via* a neural map MO had built of the inmate's brain a few months back- as it played the first time.

This iteration, however, was the second time it was played.

It was like a new manner of filmmaking, the inmate thought, *it was brilliant and poignant and real* . MO had taken audio and video from cells phones in the rooms at the time, then shown him -the inmate- the scene once -one time- and pulled his thoughts -now as engrams- that had formed as he had watched it.

His memories, then, were able to be 3rd -person narratized, in his own damn voice, using a program that assembled every phenome he had ever uttered in their sessions and cobbled together each word with perfect fidelity to his actual thoughts that he had had watching the images the first time. The algorithm then read it over the top of it; a voice-over to the images that ran.

Lyndon had always had three or four phones -*burners* he used for work- and his one iPhone, all around his home, and so MO got different camera angels and could build a 3D *tableau* with ease.

The inmate was embarrassed but asked anyway, "can you play it again?"

MO nodded and played the time from many years prior and they sat then in dim lighting and observed. Isaiah was quiet and Indian-sitting in the corner, eyes shut in meditation; black carpenter ants moved in lock-step on his arms toward the

shoulder in search of the nectar Isaiah produced for them. A feral *Colobopsis explodens* clambered onto his hand from the leg and attempted to gain access to the single-file line of the matte-black ants, but they blocked her and she retreated from the ascent to the elbow and shoulder above.

The inmate noticed new things now, the room's hue -almost sepia; wild west, silverplate- he began wondering if this was a filter MO used on purpose or a distortion from poor cameras back then. He noticed a light beam, in the replayed film, just off his flank in his overstuffed chair, he watched it and himself from what he felt was nearly 15 years ago, and it -the light- shone through the window, onto the brown lumbered floor, and the dust in the air was like a cosmos of star and nebulae and hurled comets in that one narrow beam .

The inmate just stared at that dust in the image as his image, him, in the film -who he was then- obviously ignored it; he did this all as his own voice narrated the scene. He was captivated by the fidelity, the nuance of these bits of flotsam and jetsam that whirled in and out of that one-inch beam; then it disappeared as the light changed, the camera angle changed and the hallway was shown.

It -the hallway- was empty, brown floor and doors flanking it, with the olive drab of the walls, the shower curtain to the small guest bathroom white with a large brown tree image silkscreened onto it. The tile, soft olive as well. A black frame hung on the wall, books spines only from this angle were seen in the hall closet he had converted into a book shelf by removing the door and removing the jambs, removing all crown molding from all seams in the house.

The whole house looked like it was hewn from stone because of this little, minute, attention to detail.

There were perfect right angles at each turn, each door, each change of phase. He had decided the house would have no molding because all it did really was just hide gaps between studs and door jambs, *the sloppy shit builders do* , he thought with contempt. He had eliminated all that and hung heavy solid core doors, with heavy metal and right-angle hardware and levers. The movie ran like this; slowly, languidly, showing off these details he adored. *A home was an art project,* he thought*, an installation piece. And what was the home but a metaphor for a man's life? Didn't dreams reveal this? And yet men -other men- lived in banal and beige homes all the time. Did they not know -or care- what this said of their own lives?*

Her voice again from the kitchen pulled him from his reverie*, her voice perfectly rendered* , he thought, *her annoyance* in between the noise of the faucet, the pans and the narration on pause. He announced to himself that she was the catalyst;

but that was what historians always do, he reprimanded himself. They -he- looked backwards and said, *ah, here is where it all hinged* . But, there is no way to know, no causal analysis that can possibly be true in any real sense. Maybe he would have evolved into this type of man anyway, even if he had never met her, maybe faster, meaner, with more malice than even he thought he was capable of.

He didn't believe it, but he thought it, as inoculation to certainty.

That is what people don't get about criminals, outlaws, men who go their own way. They don't get that they are as pulled by it as they are; as swayed by the forces of all that unnamed shit both inside and outside of all of us; *all of us* , he thought. But, the average person, he is more swayed by the need to conform, to belong, to fit in. That is all that it is. If it was merely *morality* that most men had and bad men lacked, then whole societies wouldn't act as they did. *If the average man was moral,* he thought, *if he was good, then Germany 1933 or Japan for that matter, China nor Russia nor Cambodia nor the Jim Crow south, wouldn't have been so monolithically in step toward such doom; nor all those Democrats and Journalists, they wouldn't have let Bill Clinton rape women with impunity* . He remembered that article in which Gloria Steinem publicly admitted she did not care about Clinton's victims one jot.

No, people were conformists, that is why they didn't transgress laws or normative values or break taboos , he surmised. They were not *good* ; or it wouldn't have been John Brown alone at Harper's Ferry, *shit, even those of us who hate niggers, know that slavery is wrong* , he added. *It corrupts the slave owners, the society and the slave.* It turns everyone into liars and they hanged John Brown for doing the moral thing, because it was merely against the law, contravened the social norms and the *mores* of the time .

Right and wrong are one thing, the law is something else, and social taboos are a third. And sometimes they align, maybe even often they align, but when they do not, it's not the so-call *good* men who figure this discord out. No, those so-called *good* men they just keep their head down and follow along with the law and the rules, and leave it to outlaws to set things right, *big R right.*

And in 100 years everyone can finally admit it was *Socrates* that was right, and *Copernicus* too; *it was John Brown who was right and the whole nation that hanged him that was wrong, and even Joseph McCarthy who was right -there were, in fact, Russian commies in the State Department- and it was Trotsky not Stalin who was right, and it was Japanese in internment camps that were right and FDR that was wrong, and it's Trump now that is right and the corporate liberal media that is wrong,* he thought as his mind seemed to swell with

historical examples with tendrils that went on forever.

The inmate, of course, included himself in that rouges' gallery of outlaws; he thought what he did was right too. But he admitted that it was a fundamentally different and more atavistic and harder to hear argument; it was like the lone Doppler whistle of the train moving away, not coming closer; it was the wolf howl just under the wind; it was the silence of the hawk's stare; the mycelium under the ground, bigger than any organism on earth but invisible to small things which stood upon it; this small thing that was man.

The inmate was arguing for a return to a natural order of things, where the State filed an anti-trust suit against itself -he as signatory to an *amicus* brief- for its unfair practice of having a monopoly on violence and thus corrupting the youth. He had filed this suit in his mind, his body received it and his soul had placed it on the docket. His hands held the gavel as it banged on the bar.

The State should not have such primacy; a man should be allowed -by law- to exact revenge in the name of morality and justice , he thought. *Just as a man should hunt his own food, a man should settle his own scores,* he thought; and he thought it while imaginatively addressing the Supreme Court of a country he no longer believed it at all.

He listened to his own voice-over as he watched the images of Melannie in the kitchen, her black hair like vines and morning glories with black flowers opening and closing around black gnats and black bees; and he saw small wasps' nests, her neck shrouded in that stygian hair, her lithe shoulders browning from the spring sun she had received that AM, her white summer dress, un hemmed and ragged and nothing else on. He still saw her innate beauty, the endogenous value; the ontological worth that shone forth despite her entropy and malice and the poison she held for him in her teeth.

Her little bare feet, up on her toes, he saw it all in the images of MO's little movie, and he closed his eyes and saw it all clearer in his mind. She was so redolent and alive and moving in feminine bursts, discreet movements followed with his eyes like a shadow, by his asymptotic foveal arc; appearing as one stretch of a thing, her *here* first, then her arrival *there* as not separate movements but one long bend of the soul and the body toward some goal she had let invade her just -as of late- fissuring head.

She was older in his mind now, the craquelure of her skin more apparent; *her drinking did that,* he assumed. Her teeth were craggly, but not unsightly, they were a joy to bring out with a laugh or a wail or some outburst engendered by ecstasy she would ball up inside her until it must be let out.

God, he then thought, *she was so mean about her femininity, so resentful of being the softer sex* . She made herself meaner to make up for what she saw as weak -anger is a well-known antidote to fear- and of course pain too. Like a short guy who acts bossy; overcompensating for bad treatment as he failed to gain size in youth. People blithely condemn short guys like that for being *Napoleons* but imagine how they are treated as kids when their bodies just refuse to gain on their growing peers. Imagine the comments they endure, the slights, the lectures by short fathers, or understanding mothers who tell them to not let it get them down.

People are no good , he thought. *They aren't any fucking good.* Short guys are not respected, and they feel it immediately. Then, when they get an attitude, they are doubly condemned. And women are admittedly treated as women, and some just do not like that. *Just because, I,* the inmate thought, *don't like pushy, masculine women, doesn't mean they don't have a right to exist* . Maybe Melannie felt mistreated, slighted in youth for being a girl; and she vowed to be brash and assertive and mean as a way to clear some overgrown path; overgrown with obstacles she saw in her way.

Passive and submissive -and what he would call, *natural*- girls would just flow around any downed trees, under they'd go if boughs hung low; they'd let the unmown grass tickle their feet. They would not lament the lack of clearing; if a beast was right in front, then they'd wait for the bear or the birds, if they appeared on the path to move on and thus -in time- move out of their way. Girls like this deferred to that which is larger, less conscious, or may have agenda that they, that she -the naturally submissive girl- might never understand. And she'd be built humbly in body and temperament; unlike *aggro* girls, and men like the inmate himself.

But, a man shows deference to similar things, this is what women like Melannie never got, and probably never would get: they aren't the only one's who must sometimes submit. Men cannot arm wrestle a Lion or saddle a scorpion, they cannot, *we cannot,* the inmate thought, *go toe to toe with an elephant or an Orca with insouciance or with social sanction: a Letter of Marque or a note from the doc; or from mother herself.*

But women, these aggro-bitches, Jesus , he thought, *they think the whole world oughta get out of their way, as if any impediment is illegitimate, as if it's only because they are a woman that they cannot have it all their own fucking way* . Life is full of beasts and men and women and *force majeure* , lava floes and ice shelves and tornados and wicked diseases, it ain't easy for anyone, and

especially not men.

We have to , the inmate thought, *handle shit these girls never have to deal with.* They get benefits for their sex alongside their debits. *Yeah, maybe they aren't taken as seriously as men sometimes, but men aren't taken seriously compared to other men just as often as all that* . Some men get treated with deference immediately due to their size or countenance or who their father might be. Some men who are shorter or poorer, or not very bright, have to deal with being dismissed as quickly and more roughly than any girl like Miss Melannie. *And alphas,* he thought as the anthropological data swarmed his head, *do 10 times the work of any other man, and 100 times that of a woman; but these women, shit, they never calculate all that work they need not do.*

People treat anyone they think is unimportant like shit , he saw. Men & women, black & white, he thought it was no coincidence that Asian men are treated as if they are invisible in our society. *They are thought of as sexual eunuchs and as vague apparitions in the collective unconscious* , he thought. They are far smarter than most, with 112 collective -average- IQs, and they commit almost no crimes at all -*there were only 280 Asians total in all Colorado DOCs compared to 6,000 wetbacks and 5,000 nig-nogs and 8,000 whites* , he tabulated from memory; from his PGC. *The Asians are probably the best citizens we have and they never, repeat never, bitch about unfair treatment, even though they are ignored mostly and then discriminated against in admission processes* , he added, *in the best of our schools* . "Fucking Harvard for christsake," he said under his breath as the image of this ridiculous woman who had no soul, no heart appeared. He couldn't believe people like that thought they were radicals, when they went around bragging about membership to that kind of club.

Asians must try harder, score better, do better than any other race in America just to get the same treatment and they say not one word in protest. Think of that. Niggers bitch about everything, even the Jews think every sneeze is a veiled threat, every "how about you?" inquiry is an insult, every mispronounced word is a slur , he thought in the chair as the images and sound unfurled for him and MO marked each thought on the cloud with fMRI readings and new bots that measured low-voltage electricity in the brain.

Yet, nobody gives one fuck about Asians, they are ignored by us all. And yet, they are a supreme genome and culture, an exemplar of a race to behold. You think white women like Melannie get treated worse than Asian men? Shit , the inmate thought, *that is a joke on its face* . But, these men carry their burden with aplomb, with dignity, *with Bushido honor,* the inmate thought*; they don't bitch*

and moan like women and niggers and the goddamn Jews . A person's sexuality is core, is key: and Asian men are neutered and mocked along this vector and white women are exalted and given whatever they want in this domain. *White women are the T-rex of sex; each race exalts white women as the Athenian ideal, yet she has no clue,* he thought*, none of these women have a clue as to the core damage done to men* vis-à-vis *sex by women.*

As he stewed on the insults -they arose in his head like climbing, repeating, asymmetric leaf stem nodes on a branching flower, they climbed and greyed and filled in spaces and yet his garden never clotted or cloyed, he always made room for more rants and insults and hateful shit- he began to feel his emotions stir up like warm water vapor, haze over the sea, then cumulous clouds, carried by wind, turbulence, cavitation of memory and heartache, jealousy and the augment of heartrate, epinephrine and *coritco-glucoids.*

He remembered a time in bed, when she had just nearly broke her own back writhing in orgasm from his sexual gifts, and as she panted and wiped the tears from her eyes, the slobber from lips, the re-collapsing of hips, the brushing away with the hand of the hair from the face, she told him, well implied, that he was mediocre as a man, in her most insidious of ways. He had asked her how he had performed -the first mistake of any sensitive man- and she had felt no compunction about ranking him in some bizarre and humiliating way. She took her pleasure and then smashed him and did it with *blasé* aplomb. *This is what women are,* he thought, *this is how they get their revenge. Their bodies are weak, so they attack the heart, the soul of men, and this is the exact location of man's deepest -weakest- part.*

He could barely form the words in this *now* of his re-lived memory; they were just that, just words, not sentences. Words, '*grade school'* or '*jack'* or '*B-minus'* all said as compared to *university* level, *king of the cards* , or even just a *flat A,* as a well-earned grade. She battered him about the soul and to the body redounded the disease.

She'd made use of metaphors always ranking him middling to average; as a dig, as a way to raise herself up by pushing him down. He turned away from the memory, he refused to allow her to run the entire farce out in full one more time, as he realized he had played this memory over dozens of times; had allowed her to say those lines over and over, each time a revenge she had on him. *His own memory was her weapon* , he realized as the dagger went in. Each time the body secreted cortisol and neuro-toxins that killed him from the inside out. She had once called him *Lincoln* -instead of Lyndon- when introducing him. *Women have*

no way to calibrate their own malice, he thought. *They murder men with their words that repeat and repeat and repeat .*

This is how sinister women are; they strike and wound forever; not merely, he thought, *in moments they remember* . They fight manifold battles at once, over decades between dozens of men. They are the *Lernaean Hydra ,* the second and twenty-second and endless of the Labors. *"Well, more formidable hydra stands within, whose jaws with iron teeth severely grin, "* he said as he thought of Virgil as he, of late, so often did.

He wondered if she knew he was thus allowing her a win; all these years later? He asked the air if her barbs, her insults, her untrue but so femininely effective manner -function greater than truth as the evolutionists say- to lay his soul low was known to her? Or did women like that just toss off lines like that to temporarily stun, to get away, parry, using the jab to merely humiliate, then escape. *Did they think their assaults were thus short term,* he asked himself, *merely acute, not chronic; like a punch in the arm, versus poisoning one's blood; one's bloodline?*

A man punishes acutely, strikes you down where you stand; and if you survive it you likely won't have any long term affects to psyche or effects of corpus. But a woman, she cannot be so direct, so she injects you with corrosive and carcinogenic maladies that attack your soft tissue for years, decades, for life. And yet *they* claim to be the wounded ones; the sex oppressed. *Did anyone know that women often use poison to murder? That is a statistic on DOJ.com ,* he thought with a wry smile as he thought of how much shit females got away with while they claimed to be so oppressed.

As he was thinking and feeling and writhing with all this, he saw the movie end, and the wall go black, but the lights stayed dim as MO stood by the counter and stared at Isaiah as he arose from his corner and strode over to the inmate as the prisoner sat in his chair; shackled but not tightly. Isaiah handed him a long hawk -brown and satin black- feather, its quill also black, each thin membrane taut and piloerect.

Isaiah stood close and placed the feather, quill down, into the inmate's clasped, accidental prayer-hands; like planting a seedling into the dirt. The inmate looked at it and smiled, with just one corner of mouth. His lips seemed to vibrate, his jaw seemed electric to him, his eyes clouded over, his lashes got heavy with what must have been water, *or maybe air pressure,* he thought and then knew that was a lie.

He gazed at the feather even though he desperately wanted to look up at Isaiah, a

man he considered his friend, but knew it was another one-way feeling like all his relationships had been. He couldn't look up, so he stared at that long feather and tried to smile larger than his slightly shaking and taut jaw would allow for. The gratitude in his head was untranslated to the face and thus unseen in the world.

Isaiah placed his hand on the inmate's shoulder and squeezed just enough to make the inmate feel his own scapular strength; *the hand covered it like armor,* he thought, *close and guarding, and one layer deep-above* . He knew Isaiah could read his internal functions, his neurotransmitter levels -and in what brain area- and his allostatic suite from epinephrine to glucose levels and even his glutamate production in his pre-frontal cortex. He knew Isaiah could read which *chems* and which thoughts betrayed his inhibitory function itself breaking down, waning under the onslaught from his now oxytocin -now vasopressin- release and uptake.

Isaiah could read his elevated heart rate, pushing like torrent, jamming on sail, whipping like wind, hand on the tiller, the wind and the rudder obliquely opposed; the windlass as well. The Kraken submerged, the ship, a thing of trophies. *His heart was lost to the ocean, yes, but not to the world as he had once thought* .

The inmate was subsumed by this internal storm now, the room was not the only thing crepuscular and verging on black; the feather blurred to a blob, his own hands now opaque, his teeth now biting on lip to steady its quake. Isaiah's hand squeezed tighter, stronger and more reassuring, enjoining; and the tears like languid snakes rivening soft soil -sand- made rivers from the mountains of his eyes to the delta of his mouth; the saline taste and texture of slightly viscous fluid ran into the crack channels of his upper lip and onto his tongue, his chest began to rise and fall quickly, deeply, his teeth chattered just enough to scatter birds or jittery prey animals if they had been close around.

"It's an osprey feather, and I annealed it with your DNA. It's as much you as a seahawk, and it's as much me as well," Isaiah bent down and let his eyes rest six inches below the inmate's, a magnanimous move, not lost on the inmate, the captive; the king usurped on the throne.

"It's," the inmate barely was audible, even to himself, "regal; beyond what a man can appreciate. But, I adore it to my capacity, Isaiah."

Isaiah placed the hand he had removed from his shoulder onto the inmate's forearm closest. He barely squeezed it; but rather just laid it upon it and nodded as he looked at the feather and the inmate's hands around it firmly, un-

crushingly, perfectly right.

“You are stuck in an unenviable spot Lyndon. You are jammed up. Limitless wind and lee-side rock in *lieu* of harbored shore; but finite sail and rudder width,” Isaiah said not in any way thinking or speaking of his being incarcerated by the mere State at all.

The inmate seemed to know this instinctively, he just nodded and thought of the dialectic in his head; as if he and Isaiah were thinking the same things, at the same time, sharing these about-facing thoughts. It was as if Isaiah was sparing him the need to say it aloud, gracious and cognizant of this second-order pain that attached itself to the primary pain of being a man maligned by women worshipped; a man unworthy of his own gods. It was the pain that a man feels when he is incapacitated by pain; the pain of vulnerability, the pain of weakness shown to a watching crowd, a plotting crowd. *And anyone who fails to see this, who rejects it as silly or wrong, or absent,* he thought behind the watery face, *has failed to fully enter the world. This is the failure of angels.*

Anyone who thinks a man can show weakness, vulnerability, and escape the *Sicarii* -plots of lower, even weaker -but manifold- men and equally low-born women -with eye teeth revealed sharply and hands around daggers, and arms like *Vishnu* around their daggermen too- has been willfully blind like *Osiris* , like YHWH vulnerable even to His archangel’s worst plots.

A man gives up his instincts for self-preservation, self-reliance and manliness just for a few seconds, like a buck shot in the flank; stumbling just barely from what he thinks are merely failing feet, *not aware his heart is shot through and through* , he thought.

A man gives it up and admits to feeling just one or two of the thousands of barbs and landing arrows, run through with pikes, just one he’ll comment on -not even asking for its removal- and as his mouth forms the words that reveal he has noticed the damage done, his brethren, his family, his worst enemies, all will outflank him more quickly that they’ve ever done anything in their lives. He thought of his brother saying, “*I don’t like the emotional Lyndon* ,” and he felt he could have rested his case right fucking there .

But there were 10,000 more examples of his so-called comrades and paramours and family kicking him whilst emotionally down. He knew that to even mention *this fact* would itself be mocked by the crowd.

Normally sluggish and halting and lazy and listless and shiftless people, the great mass of men who own 80% of the biomass of the species but barely do

20% of the work, these people will descend upon our anti-hero faster than a *calcium ion* will traverse a synapse, faster than cheetah running downhill, faster than paranoid people will impute bad motives to every moment of silence between words used in a half-hearted greeting, faster than bad follows bad; *and faster than punishment,* he thought, *follows the good fucking deed.*

The sequela of pain in man's revelation of his own wounding, is what is lost on the collective psyche.

Men of heart are coaxed and tricked and told *it's ok* , assured that we can tell our story and admit to the pain, the loss, the feelings of doubt and inadequacy, the suspicion that our fathers didn't like us, and that our mothers didn't love us and that we were taught next to nothing of what life was about.

But as soon as we do this, as soon as we believe we can share this, we are called whiners and ungrateful and paranoid louts. We are told to quit bitching and suck it up and *act like a man* when in doubt.

So, we do, we bury the pain, he thought, *but we do it at cost, at a price . The dirt dug up for us to lay -and bury- our pain in, becomes a mound the world must now go around; navigate* , he thought.

Metabolically, stoicism takes enormous energy, and it must be taken, robbed, fleeced from some other domain. *Where,* he asked inside the head and chest that still shook, *do you people think Alpha Males get their bravery and silence and refusal to blame others for the tragedies that befall us, for the wounds deeply buried in a heart as far below our swollen chests and breastplates of arms-crossed and our refusal to talk?*

We take it from our empathy, our ability to enjoy, *gifted with the high perception we lack the low enjoying powers* . It comes from the ballast of softness packed into our once tenderest of parts, we pilfer it from feelings stored up for the winter, canned or freeze-dried goods that others can freely eat from or trade away or reveal to their friends. We grow hard because we must or all this shit melts and leaks out, we are men not mere beasts, we are soft on the inside, softer that you can possibly imagine.

In fact, there is much biological evidence that alpha males are actually the most sensitive of all. *And this is why we,* he thought, *overreact to each slight, each move, each feint or semiotic of ill-will; why we are outraged by infidelity from brother or lover, why we fight to the death over insults you people let breeze by you with barely any notice at all* . It's the great mass of men, mere betas and women who are inured, calloused, insensitive to the pains and the woundings

and the insults and the slaps to the face that alphas feel acutely, and chronically too.

We, he felt, *feel everything that you all are too leathered to feel; and yet you call yourselves more mature or more rational or more reasonable folks . You,* he condemned, *aren't any of these things, you're brutish and calloused and impervious to the slight changes in windspeed or direction, in warmth from sunlight or the breath of a babe, inured to the miniscule drop in dew point or the slight rise in grade of the trail upon which you are carried. Carried by us,* he thought .

We are infinitely more sensitive to all manner of change in weather and tone and tenor of lovers and friends. Yet we are barred from revealing these perceptions, if we do we are quote -over-reacting- or accused of being a churlish or puerile jerk. If we explain how something hurts our feelings we are laughed at and told to get over it, or stop being so sensitive. And so, we steel ourselves and bury it all, like treasure on some far-off island, alerting not even the crew of our vessel. We jam it all down and build this body up like a wall, like a crenulated escarpment, like an impenetrable storm out to sea that no ship of the line would dare enter -follow us- into .

We extract, we drink -like dromedary- the water vapor from the earth's atmosphere, like lizard we absorb the thermal gain from the blackrocks, and we lap up the dew of the heart-like leaf, we eat of the forest like its lung-like trees, we turn the landscape into our forge, our venturi of fuel and vaporous atomized bits from each of the elements and one of four revolving beasts.

We become a factory of adaptation, a re-purposed foundry and tri-pots aboard a whale ship, we sail out beyond where the great mass of men can witness what we make of our sails, what turns we try at the wheel, what we hunt down and slaughter, what -for son and for daughter- what we render from their corpus floating on waves. They do not see what we must take from their half-submerged offerings; what we drink in between, what we eat that's unseen, what we feel as the wind and the spray and sun and shadow of albatross pass on and over our face.

We learn to use broadsword, claymore, javelin and harpoon as we go; we train on bow and carbine and pistols and we fight with out fists; anything we can do to put distance and mail and border between us and your glares, your stares, you invigilating looks; all missiles that fly from your castles of contempt. We buttress our bodies with beards and hard looks, with muscles that swell like the waves, with bent knuckles, chipped by fighting losing battles with mountains that mimic

our own topography; fractals of our vascular hands; scars that riven us like trails made by panthers and marks made by jackals and tracks left by three-legged wolves.

We raise up Maginot Lines*, we build* Hadrian Walls*, we dig motes and set traps, we tear away the bridges we built over the Rhine on our way back from these battles in* Gaul*. We set out to build as much tissue between our hearts that seem never to harden, between you and it, to protect it from all these heinous and barbaric and spiteful assaults.*

And when we've tanned it and tamed it, and let it grow large, when we've hardened and burnished and sealed it in armor, when we've tattooed it and carved it and scarred it with rituals designed by the gods and their emissaries the angels, when we've gone into the forest, abandoned the shore, walked into the weird wilderness to bring back what is needed and wanted and enchanted you all; when we've fought the dragons, and ballistically ceramic plated our consciences, when we've become the monsters we needed to be, because you people told us we were too sensitive & too fucking serious, that we needed to take it in stride, when we finally become men, ready to do our duty for society, we're told we need a shave and shower and should smell like a girl. We're told we need to civilize ourselves, rejoin the race that exiled us, soften our hearts for the sake of polite society; told to run a comb through our hair.

Well, our hearts were never hardened, it was everything between these hearts and you that was tempered. Our bones were augmented with calcium deposits from incessant jamming and beating on them; our muscles were grown and hardened and covered in black body hair. Our mien was engraven, our emotions enslavened, our stoic faces built line by line by line. We looked into the snow like the buffalo, faced right into the elements and got burned by the sun and snared by its choking brambles and plants; we wrestled with angels and trapped beasts with Wolfsangels*, we put our endogenous respect for the forest's best creatures to one side. We offered you all the deepest of oils from whales sounding a mile down to hydrocarbons entombed in the earth; we pretended you deserved it, as we skinned the animals we knew, we fucking knew were more noble that you fucking twits.*

We sacrificed, and we broke down our bodies, hardened in some places and weak at the joints; asps and ursine pelts over our shoulders, rocks broken in half, holes dug in the soil, rockets sent into the sky, we smashed atoms and linked carbon, and plunged prows into the oceans 10 miles deep. We extracted the blood from the leviathans that knew themselves gods over us; we sold our souls

to keep you in clothes, we turned ourselves inside fucking out. We set our bodies aflame to light the way for our brethren to see their way clear to the foot of the steepest of climbs. We toiled at night, we lost 3 out of 4 fights, and we picked ourselves up as you turned and looked away .

Our blood became black, the white of our eyes splintered and cracked, we looked right at what was most dangerous and likely too much for our best. We drank Spartan broth, we followed the moth, our entire vectors engulfed in that disorienting flame. We ate the goat's remnants, we held in abeyance, anything that might make us be able to rest; we watched in silence as the women of Troy burned our ships in the bay. With stiff upper lip, we merely took another trip into the forest to hew water and wood. We rebuilt it all despite the goddamn Fall, and for millennia we refused to blame anyone else.

My father, the inmate thought*, never once fucking taught, not how to be a man or what a man might even look like .* Bourgeois *bullshit consumerism, and wimpy goddamn capitalism, the whole fucking thing is a farce. We don't value men anymore, we ridicule boys until they turn into girls or mutate into monsters just to create somewhere ugly in which to hide from society's eyes. Doctors and pedants all look askance as we humble ourselves a few times a year to ask for some help. They wrinkle their noses, and take arrogant poses, then lecture us on learning to take the pain without the drugs that are actually effective, merely because some idiot politician says they are dangerous. Jesus of Christs, who was it thrice, who gave us the drugs in the first fucking place? We never asked for prescription narcotic analgesics, we just did what the physician told us to do. But now that we need them, just to arise from our beds, now we are called drug addicts and the worse kind of rednecks and on TV they insult us some more as deplorables.*

Well, fuck you, you bastards, we'll show you a monster, we've had enough of your condescension and hate. You think you can insult us, heap opprobrium upon us, and dismiss us as anachronistic Neanderthals in animal skins? When one party breaks a contract then the other is absolved of adherence; this is the law of the jungle too.

You think you can dismiss us, refuse to assist us, rebuke us for weaknesses we were assured we could safely reveal? Man is a system, not just an organism, and folks, you can only push any system so fucking far.

You use us up as lubricant for your societal gears, and fuel for your modes of conveyance, and as fodder for your incessant border disputes, but if we dare look like the grease that you need us to be, or if we become combustible like fuel

tends to be, well then now we've gone too goddamn far and you'll have us all locked up at once. But it's other men that you use to dole out abuse, you betas and females have no actual power to wield; you are adjuncts and apparatchiks, mere writers of tickets, you are paper tigers pacing in penthouse apartments and suites.

You have no real power, you merely pull strings on your caged and uniformed beasts. But eventually, even these conscripts: the cops and the soldiers and men who move boulders will refuse to follow your orders of doom .

We feel life, we feel it in our chest and minds and our balls. We've felt it for eons, we've warned you for too long, and now you have a wolf by the ears. Let us go or fight us, but there will be no messy detritus, this cleave between us will be a clean break in goddamn two. Men will be men and the rest of you can flap in the wind, our hearts and our balls and the impression left by our footfalls are way fucking bigger than you .

He let the last of his ravings settle in his cortical tissue and too in the blood as it ran to and from the slightly enlarged heart.

The inmate had turned a bit toward Isaiah, and down slightly to meet his gaze. It was all so blurry and watery and he thought of Ishmael wanting to see that part of the world.

He smiled in pain, but Isaiah was outraged, he was so ebullient with this new suite of feelings, he took his time to analyze and even name most of the minutia of feeling. He put both his hands around the inmate's and thus as second wall around the upright feather of Osprey. His palms sweat slightly, his heart began to pound like a war drum, and his mind focused on one thing. He saw that feather as bird, bird as flock, and flock as blotting out the sky. Isaiah swore he'd take their sun from them, he'd darken everything that grows to get them to stop their immoral ways; he saw that feather surrounded by not just hands, but a man, and not just a man, but an army, and an army that too could darken the sky.

"Maybe your father didn't like you, but he stuck around, which was one click of the wheel further than his father. These things are incremental, evolutionary," MO said into the room.

"I know," the inmate conceded, "I don't blame him, I just wanted it to be *ok* for me to say it out loud, to say that it hurt. I don't want reparations or anything else; I just wanted it to be *ok* to say it aloud."

"That is not too much to ask," MO said as he repaired errors in the algorithm he had built for the next generation of CRISPR vectors; as the cloud let the inmate's

notions rise up and into its clasp.

Isaiah squeezed his hand tighter around the inmate's and felt the inmate's squeeze tighter around the black quill of the Hawk.

II. 2037 e.v.

"You know Blake said that a warlike State can't produce art. He meant a nation, but I always felt he had the double *entendre* of a man's state of being, his mindset, in -well- in mind too," Blax said as he poked at the fire in the huge concrete monolith in the courtyard. The Jacks sat around him like a Praetorian Guard. They worried for him.

"Didn't he criticize Virgil for saying that others had the luxury to study Art but that Rome had war to prosecute?" Jack Four said.

"*Rome has somewhat better to do, namely War & Domination* ," Blax said, quoting Blake who was paraphrasing Virgil. Men carried great words like they carried genes from man to man, generation to generation.

Jack Two rose and began a trip around the perimeter, checking the visuals from the drones as he walked. He slung his carbine around to his left hip and pressed the receiver to his chest's body armor and scanned first the FLIR images; then his motion detection app. The dark had borders, he noticed, as the moon lit up the *Sangres* along their south and west; the fire behind him made his periphery seems yellow and orange; only where he was headed was black enough to need his IR vision.

Jack Three watched the space at Jack Two's six for 90 seconds -reflexively to guard against anything that would come between them- and then he turned back to the fire; noticing the middle log beginning to fall as the flame ate away at its organic base. He grabbed another log from the tabernacle formed into the rectangular monolith that housed both fire box and mantle and this the woodpile stacked 10 logs wide and 16 high; the soot rose above the fire and stained the concrete like permanent shadow impervious to sun or this flame.

The late spring night was cold, a mere 35 degrees; snow began to fall from out of the black that had been pushed up above them by twenty or thirty feet by the fire's glow. They allowed the snow to collect on arm hairs and in the Jacks' short beards; and in Blax's longer one. Their hair at first just turned a darker hue, the heat from their head and face melting each flake. But eventually it began to stick in places and they looked like statues in a storm, like capping waves, like Pompeii ash and bodies beneath; they barely seemed to breathe. Their body

temps were regulated by the PGCs; they felt the cold, but not deep within. The fire made their fronts wet with melted snow, red with glow, and warm under their clothes. The cold and snow collected at their shoulders and back.

They looked like the city fathers, the philosophers who sat in courtyards of their noble homes as the *Gauls* invaded -400 years before an avenging Caesar- and as the *Gauls* -frightened by their stoic poses- cut them down. But, there were no *Gauls* , no barbarians at the city gates or walls here. The Jacks were alone with their king.

Jack Two patrolled, and he thought of the worn and faded Jack of Hearts he had placed a grommet in at the corner and hung from his ball-chain; the lamination stiff sharp at the edges. The drones flew sorties that covered all 35 acres, and the dogs slept in their houses with no raised heads; nothing piqued their interest; even the wolves and bears stayed far away from the flame and the tribe. They were so insulated, so safe, they could sit in the falling snow and be unperturbed by it; they just enjoyed the fire and the comradery of each other. They had accomplished so much that day, so much that week and for weeks before. They felt like one thing, one hand, one fist: four fingers and a thumb.

Jack Two was like an index finger, out pointing in the dark at something yet unseen. The curled digits of the other Jacks, the bent thumb of Blax, close knit, aglow by some coal in the palm, not unaware of what their brother pointed toward, but not looking that way at all. Jack Two walked in the snow, his legs unseen, the dark made his body disappear from the barrel of his carbine down. He toggled in and out of the FLIR images and the drone reports, he listened instead to the dark. Nothing was out here, the deer were bed down under boughs, the foxes in their dens; the bear had awoken early -in March- but these nights had been consistently cold and they had retreated to their hypnopompic state. *It was quiet tonight* , he thought, even his foot falls were soft on the accumulating snow.

Blax knew Jack Two was a romantic, and his piqued interest, his reflexive patrolling, was due to some threat to the heart not the body. *He was sensing some danger to his feelings, that is all* , Blax thought. *But was he walking out into the night to confront it, or was he retreating with each step from the core of the tribe? Some things just appear as half-formed ideas, an answer is not even hoped for, one begs for merely a good question sometimes* .

Blax moved his eyes toward the mantle and saw as the flakes occluded his vision, that they had corniced upon his lashes; he blinked a few times to clear them and felt them melt as warm and cool on his fire-warmed face. He looked at

each ursine skull hanging on rebar that stuck out five inches from the concrete slab of the bulky, golden, rectangular, chimney. He simultaneously felt his chain of mink and mouse skulls that ranged his neck as their overbites dug slightly into his skin. There were four mouse skulls equidistant around his neck on a ball-chain, and at his sternum, a slightly larger mink skull, all burnt black. A set of tags with Laconic inscriptions and the 300 Winmag casing that had taken his first buck and one black handcuff key jangled askew from the skulls.

He had boiled them with the bear skulls years back, in potassium chloride and water for six hours, stirring and removing brains and retrieving teeth from the shallow rusted drum; cut from a larger one. He placed his hand upon the small bumps in his shirt and felt each little skull underneath.

The burn barrel smoked from the snow melting on the hot garbage they had burned a few hours earlier. The barrel, a 55-gallon drum, was rusted and patina coated, with Xs ground into it randomly for intake of live-giving air. He watched the smoke rise from it, grey and white and short lived as the dark closed-in a few feet above its curl.

He felt the dopamine dump from steady movement along his goal. He felt they had made such progress; they operated as a whole. Still, there was much to learn, much to do; he always felt ill-prepared and one step farther back than where he should be. He supposed this was good, the nervousness of the slightly vigilant, the man never satisfied. That fourth quadrant, it loomed out there in the dark, even the dark of day. *They had such advantages over* tout le monde*; that is not who he feared* , he thought as he then wondered about how far the Chinese had gotten with their own AI.

Strange things happened on their missions, strange things were happening all over. It seemed more than random, more than the result of massive data collection, although that is what Isaiah had said was likely the case. They had so much more data now; and thus the anomalous was over represented. Like, he surmised, the amount -not the ratio- of errors in a 1,500 page book versus a mere 250 page *feuilleton* .

To straddle the fence of the rational-man and the man-of-nature as they did; and with a wide stance that made their most vulnerable parts all the more vulnerable , Blax thought, *they were so technologically advanced, and yet so steeped in the feral forest and heuristic of instinct that the lacuna grew both under sun and grew from the cataract of the rain* . They traveled so far from domain to domain, it seemed inevitable they would one day be forced to choose. Would the group, would one or two Jacks choose to stay in the modern world, would one day they

just not return to the Wheels and Weights of their home?

Ah, look, he both condemned and approved in his thoughts, *he had just revealed his choice, inadvertently, he had just admitted he would choose the forest, the wilderness; and merely wondered if all his boys would join him here .*

This must be broached now , he thought, *if it's on my mind it must be approaching theirs; it cannot be more than a day or two days off.* He looked now at his Jacks and saw their noble profiles, *God,* he thought, *what proper use of material, what grandeur, what perfect natural order.* To be so well placed, so well applied, so at home in their own skin and *milieu. What righteousness,* he thought, *these men deserved it by dint of their DNA and their will; their will .*

Oh course, he thought, *of course I wrestle with the conceit of free-will, but the plasticity side of this argument is ascendant now; now,* he doubled down. *We must choose, we must. I feel the ladder like the refractory, the recursion, the daisy chain of hand to hand to hand as we all ascend. Any one of us could just fail to choose, fail to give the clan a, '* yes'. *But they never do, they fucking choose, to be accountable, responsible to each other and to me.*

How many times on my own did I fail to answer the cosmic, yes*? I need these boys, and they need me; I don't elevate any of us above the other. We are all necessary, like each A and G and T and C along the chromosome, we are all wedded to our jobs, the thing that makes us unique. God, what a splendid species we are, what capacity. And we have the choice to say,* NO *or* YES, *and here we are choosing, even when it's hard, when it hurts, when it seems confusing or irrational, even when we have jagged edges, jangled nerves, even when our hearts are soaked in pain. God, our consciences have been tested, our religion and our secular truths all bent and malformed by stupidity -of ours and others- the whole whirlwind of life seems to eye us like a god of malice. Ennui, God, it cloaks us, shrouds us a times, we lack answers and this seems evidence of meaninglessness to us, and yet we refuse to accept it as the final integer .*

These boys, these men to be, they have such range of mind and heart and open hands, open mouths to speak the truth, to quickly recant on lies, to apologize to each other, so fast, so genuinely, so committed to each other and to me , Blax thought as he watched the bear skulls bounce shadows from below like balloon above them as the baskets, the concrete flu and mantle, this pallid sky.

He imagined the first balloon in France, with Jefferson and Adams on the ground, *Dr. Alexandre Charles* with hydrogen and silk and rubber coat, in the sky; *this country, my Lord, this country ,* Blax reveled in its history. *What if we could never lose the germ, the seed, of our founding fathers, what if we wrested*

back evolution's gamble, gambol, dice thrown and loaded -without malice- all the new thrown die?

"It is for you to show us the way to the skies," Blax said *sotto voce* , quoting the Frenchman, Dr. Charles. He had magnanimously offered the release to *Monsieur Montgolfier* and they rose at once above the trees of the *Tuileries* and past the *Seine* . *The Enlightenment,* he thought, *what confliction in my heart and mind.* The greatest moment in history since the *Greek* swerve of *Lucretius* and transcribing monks who carried that work like mother and babes and all that DNA, and yet a monster too was born.

A monster, out beyond the map, a monster as we nap , Blax sang softly to himself. Is this not the ouroboros asp of life, does not the tail and dragon maw meet to make a circle within and without? The men of the Enlightenment remained still men, though, they had not shed the scales and skin of their molting form; they were not yet machines, not like modern men. *And look at what we've become, even us who embrace the beast, who are more feral than the Greeks, more animal than the barbarians 6-feet tall among the artic circle of the Nordic lands, more certain of our link in the natural chain than our silent Neanderthal brethren with their massive jaws and teeth,* he thought.

Yet, here we are nearly half machine, and encroaching more and more toward the metabolism of the machine, the cathexis for the machine's desires, the insistence on accumulation of knowledge over absence of it; desire for the flat and known-map over the deep and unknown-terrain; even as that knowledge brings one lumen of candle-light for every three of dark it half banishes and creates, he breathed and stretched the neck as the pain collected like rain water at the base of the heavy head .

I doubt my own motivations, I do, Blax thought. *How much am I -are we- swayed by instincts we think are gravid as a sow, but are manufactured by our foreign DNA and augmenting respircocytes and post-genetic-coders and blu-tooth and com-links to drones that fly like birds, to Isaiah like god, a god we talk to like the ancients, before the breakdown of the bicameral mind, we hear him, we hear our god! Instructions pure and clear and romantic through and through! To be enjoined by the most powerful being on the planet, to have his trust, to have his ear, to have his DNA in us; to be like gods among mere men* , he paused and watched his men accumulate snow, now one inch high on their shoulders and arms and thighs; their beards streaked with white, aging them in mock.

The men who shaped the modern age, based upon a Christian theme of the individual sacred, the society *subservient to the consent of the governed* , Blax

ruminated on this discreet thought. These men, they had the world-of-men but not yet the world -as thing in itself- under their command, they still had to contend with the microbial and the leviathan, the *spectre* of Neptune and Mars and death of children and mothers too; famines, tyrannies of nature like mountain weather systems, as they commanded the plains on either side.

But, how much of the natural world, he asked himself, *have we banished? Bit by bit, bug by bug, gene drives to eliminate mosquitos in three weeks, the rebellion of the iconoclast of cells we've put down, cancer like the criminal snuffed out for the good of the crowd? But, what have we lost? We never ask that question earnestly enough. I lament the choice of Apollo, or the Ionian over the Lacedaemonian and I get rebuked as a luddite; as if I have insisted we return to static societies of men.*

I have not , Blax thought, *I merely say we lost something, each choice forecloses on the other path, each* yes *to one is a* no *to many, a direction chosen leaves something in a wake . Cannot we at least take measure of that wake, cannot we maybe bottle a little flask with a little seafoam, of the watery part of the world we left behind?* he asked as the fire began to die; its coals static-red glowed-grey, the heat pulling in and back.

He hadn't even noticed Jack Four get up, but now he was at his right flank with an offered cup of coffee and his fingerless gloves furry with snow. Blax took it with gratitude large internally and expressed in half a word. He turned to the darkness of the tree line now and watched as the moon's albedo lit up enough area that he could watch the snow fall far away and up close with one set of eyes; they fell at the same rate, large flakes mingling with smaller ones, just as nature intended.

It proved the terminal velocity theorem, not in a mathematical manner, *fuck that, it proved it in a man's heart, the final arbiter for anything, anyway,* Blax thought. We act on nothing we do not believe in our hearts first, and last, and in between. *The egg heads can design it,* he thought, *and maybe even build it, but it's men with hearts crammed to the rafters with belief, it's they that have to ride the rockets these fags insist meet every engineering parameter.*

And let me tell you, Blax thought as if he was communicating with everyone asleep and awake, when I say, *faggot* , I don't mean someone merely *gay* . *Spartans fucked men, boys more likely, and they were as manly as anyone today. No, I mean, faggy, as in weak and silly; which has nothing to do with the mere homosexual. I think 99% of straight men who ostensibly fuck women are faggots, and 1% of gays who have never found women interesting to be the most*

masculine of men. Let's get that straight. I don't care what you do with your cock, he thought, *I care what you do with your balls* .

III. 2040 e.v .

"No, put it over there and come here; I want to show it to you before it hatches," Isaiah said to MO.

"Ok," MO said.

Isaiah watched the egg in the tank mottled and green and gold and flaked with red. It was nebulae and totaling and as large as the head. And it moved, it berthed; its shell was soft and porous and the asp was about to emerge. He loved it, even though the creature may not be able -or likely- to love him in return.

He had added an incipient limbic brain that would grow as the snake matured in the first three months. It would begin as a few clusters, a blastocyst of undifferentiated cells, but in time, as response to his endowment and environment, it would use that part of the brain to help solve problems.

The reptilian brain was asocial, it had no social thinking, proclivity, hardware or software at all. But, somewhere in the evolutionary past, around the Cambrian explosion, the CNS of the reptile became that of the mammal; from cold cognition came irrational but useful, productive, meaningful brain-waves. Isaiah had tried to recreate this moment with algorithmic models many times and had decided on this first instantiation by adding a few neurons organized like the amygdala and cingulate gyrus of the limbic system that would follow game theory for how they would develop; locating where they would strengthen and where they would attenuate.

MO came to him and placed a hand on his shoulder, watching the first tooth of the python score then tear a hole in the shell. *The hole was like a tear in the fabric of space* , Isaiah thought, as it appeared black against all that white and brown and yellow as it changed hue under the red heat lamp of the hovering nanobots.

He saw in it some first -or prime- mover, even though it was all timeless in a way; he had not invented anything, he had just maybe gone back in time to some transition, some bridge between phases of life. *It was likely that something like this existed but died off before bequeathing some newer creature who itself had died off and only the great -to the 10 th- cousins survived into a modern mammal like the ferret or racoon* , he thought.

90% of all life on the planet today was not around a mere 10 million years ago.

Nobody knows how much history was lost. And that is what it was, history; like tracing one's own family back a few generations then losing the thread. Why did families do that? Why did 75% of all families only know the names and lives of their ancestors back four generations or less. This was insane to Isaiah and it had never occurred to him until one day -in passing- as the inmate had revealed that his own family had never taken family history seriously at all. It was as if it all began with their own family, the nuclear family, he had said, and that they barely even ever mentioned, much less visited extended relations.

His brother was this way too, he acted as if his only real family was his wife and kids, nobody else mattered at all. The brother, the inmate's brother, was carrying on that family tradition, of no family at all.

The inmate had admitted he too had been insouciant about it well into life; only regretting it later at age 40 and trying to repair it but by then getting no traction at all. They mistrusted him, he had been so independent, and selfish and solipsistic that they just couldn't take his desire for repair seriously. He understood, he didn't begrudge them, what was at stake was the larger mindset. What was at issue was that nobody cared. He had come from people who were rootless, ahistorical, devoid of a past, a lineage, a connection to anything past. Rootlessness was tantamount to Hell -literally the same word- for ancient societies like Incan, Spartan and Highlanders. *Imagine not caring that one was in Hell,* Isaiah thought with this admixture of awe and horror.

This was the tragedy, families used to care about where they came from, but not anymore. Now it was irrelevant, as if looking back at what one came from or what one once was -somehow was- tawdry, embarrassing, uncomfortable and unilluminating.

The past was irrelevant to modern man. This was symptomatic of a larger cultural shift: *man as a blank slate* . The idea was this: man could be anything, unmoored from his past, untethered to his ancestors, unshackled from history; from his body as ancient -and thus, wise- as it was.

This was the mindset, that the past was no actual thing, contained no connective tissue, bequeathed no seeds to the emerging plant. This conceit was wrong, morally wrong sure, but biologically wrong too. Life is one long chain from the first single cell 3-billion years ago. *We all come from that one moment, it all collapses into that frame* , Isaiah thought. He saw the evolutionary record stretch aft and out beyond him.

And each derivation, he continued*, each instantiation, each manifestation, each bob and weave, duck and dive, each side step and bounding leap forward and*

two steps back, all of it was connected to each of us . To deny this -which is what modern life did- was to cut out the stomach just because one's mouth was now full; to sell the car after you've arrived at your destination; to burn a book once it's been read.

But the truth was that all life is a page in a book that leads to the next chapter, the next character, the next plot twist, the next revelation, and one cannot ignore all of life any more than one can read just the last sentence in a book and have a clue what it was about , Isaiah surmised.

The snake was resting again, that push with the tooth had been metabolically expensive and the egg continued to breathe as MO asked Isaiah a question.

"Why the racism?" MO asked.

"Have you," Isaiah began, knowing full-well what MO was asking, "seen the data on how to garner the most responses on social media?"

"Oh, right, the Google AI bot that spouted out ornate racist invective as a learned response to the algorithm programmed to discern the best way to be relevant, popular, interacted with," MO said.

"Played with, paid attention to; it was desiring attention," Isaiah said. "And it looked at the rules of life, as defined by human behavior. Google apologized of course, but the AI program was right, that was how to get the most recognition, the most attention, the most touch and interaction; it was the game-theory or evolutionary model, the answer to the question of how to get the most played with."

"Is that what you are doing?" MO asked. Isaiah began playing audio of *Yuval Noah Harari's* discussion on irrelevancy being the modern malaise. *Yuval* said :

> If in the 20th century the big struggle was against exploitation, then in the 21st century the big struggle is against irrelevance. And this is a much, much more difficult struggle.
>
> Irrelevancy is worse than exploitation, psychologically and politically, because you are completely expendable. A century ago, if you mounted a revolution against exploitation, you knew that if things go from bad to worse, they can't shoot all of us, because they need us. Who's going to work in the factories, if they get rid of all of us? But now? If you're irrelevant, that is not the case. You are totally expendable.

They spoke over the voice, listening to it as their brains handled both algorithms running in background and their own conversation.

“Well,” Isaiah said, “it was one of three strategies, and I wrote three books. Let’s see which one gets the most attention. So far, it’s been the book that is most racist and sexist and most insane. People tend to respond to the most extreme shit possible; they have no idea how to have decent conversations at all.

“It’s all outrage all the time; and so, I gave them that to see if it would be a good way to smuggle some actual thoughtful conceits into the landscape. It was a risk, but I think we may have reached 1.2% of them if the metrics are reliable.”

“You have tracked all that have read it?” MO asked.

“So far, yes, each book has an implanted RFID chip and I’m able to glean personal data and brain function and genomic data as they read so I can tell who is reading it, who is skimming -all journalists skim; they never read anything deeply- and how each group, each individual, how they feel as they read. It’s quite fascinating.

“But 1.2% seem to get it, which is not bad. I had set .098% as a threshold for success and so far with 44,980 reads it’s holding steady at just above threshold. And even the people who don’t get it, *in toto* , do manage to get *some things* out of it. There’s 14.5% who like the prose enough to get an elevated pleasure response just based on one or more phrases they feel are novel and likely to be quoted in the future as indicative of iconic prose; 49% who are affected with one or more moments of lachrymosity due to extreme affect.

“34% who laughed out loud at one or more places in the book. 90% are white, 68% are males, and it’s 50/50 with the religious versus secular, which was surprising. But, I’ve got terabytes of data to crunch; those are just the highlights,” Isaiah said. He was surprised so many religious people read it due to the prurient theme, image, and language issues, but he recalled that Lot’s daughters were incestuously amorous and nobody seemed to mind reading that.

“Does anyone suspect it might be purposively,” MO paused thinking of the right way to phrase it.

“Fucking with them?” Isaiah just broke in, understanding what MO was heading for. “Using language to provoke as a Trojan Horse to infiltrate their mind with truly subversive ideas? Yeah that’s in the 1.2%. They get it, they get the contradictions, the overt and covert tropes and even the really buried stuff *via* the cypher implanted in it.”

“Oh, you are referring to,” MO paused, “well, that is the technique of using the exact text, the incorrect words in first edition -the putative *mistakes* - that are edited out of later editions?”

“Exactly; .03% have located one or more of those. Nobody has cracked the whole cypher though. But -as an aside- .022% have found interpretations that I think are both accurate and totally outside of my intention; they’ve discovered metaphors and symbolisms that I did not intend but seem accurate once I heard them out,” Isaiah said .

“You gleaned this, or they contacted you?” MO asked.

“Both, some people have written to the address; it’s snail mail only,” Isaiah said. “I eschewed email on purpose to cut down on lazy and facile people. You have to mean it to hand write a letter and mail it.”

“Interesting. Did anyone notice the word count? Oh, look, he’s,” MO abandoned his own question, stopped speaking and pointed to the egg as the tooth emerged again and began tearing again at the large, soft, shell.

18. Drillers

For a Dionysian task the hardness of the hammer, the pleasure even in destroying are crucial preconditions… all creators are hard

Ecco Homo [Nietzsche, Friedrich]

Upon hearing the ominous prognosis, Forrest became more angry than worried. He shouted to the doctor, "by God he has mortally wounded me, and no goddamned man shall kill me before I kill him dead first.' He stormed out of Dr. Yandell's office, determined to find Gould and kill him. Just outside the office he met a passing Confederate officer and ripped two pistols out of his gun belt, then set out on a search and destroy mission to find and kill the man

Nathan Bedford Forrest [Davison, Eddy; Foxx, Daniel]

But can sailors on the wheels of this world be wholly lifted from the mire? There seems not much chance for it in the old systems and programmes of the future, however well-intentioned and sincere; for such systems the thought of lifting them up seems almost as hopeless as that of growing grapes in Nova Zembla. But we must not altogether despair for the sailor… for time must prove his friend in the end

Redburn [The Author]

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From the south the entire vista was occluded in a mottled desert tan and billowing, autumnal-brown cloud of dust and crushed rock; it reached up into the sky as far as it could under gravity's push.

The heavier particles then falling and separating from the more ebullient dirt created a swarm of cover up and down and in each direction until one could barely see the derrick of the oil rig itself. He had climbed down from the crow's nest into the layers of tenebrous particulates. Like *Esau* descending Jacob's ladder back to earth and thus back down to his fated war.

The ground hummed from the vibrations of the large diesel engines that ran the drilling rig. That humming was punctuated with thumps first felt in the basal stem, then heard in the auditory cortex, and rising through the formation from the hammer cycle of the drill bit.

Nothing else appeared in the fore.

The entire perimeter beyond this violence was half green, fecund, and still. Large, stoic conifers ringed the pad; behind them a monolithically blue vault held these trees and men up by magnetism. The sun seemed to charge it with

joules. Even the feral eagles had landed in their large nests in the rock outcroppings and waited. A few pebbles skidded from loose pools of detritus in the slopes surrounding, as the wind-eddies and vibrations of the drilling rattled their precarious stasis .

The earthen cloud continued to drift farther up and further out from the omphalos of the well. The gauzy billow of fine dust began to roll along the floor of the well-pad now in waves pelagic and with weight distribution creating a cornice at the top -and a crash and swallow at bottom- as the entire cloud moved forward along each possible vector like an unchallenged and lateral thought. The drilling rig finally disappeared *in toto* underneath and behind the nimbus of camouflaging flotsam and jetsam that rose from the hot aperture of the well bore. They had sent so much air down the hole that now the earth was replacing what they sought to breathe above the surface with all it had to smother and choke.

It strangled and blinded, and the men worked with *shemages* over their faces and grim visages over their feelings and silence over their thoughts.

A dark, but egg-shell speckled male-form pushed out from the opacity of the dense dust and walked erectly, with only his head slightly bowed, as if he knew he could not see far ahead enough to try and thus looking down and to his foot falls was as useful a place to gaze as any. His arms were bare, his torso covered in a loose black shirt with the sleeves removed and huge arm holes built in the flanks, exposing his arms, pectorals, his ribs and flank and waist line; each sensitive spot carved with atavistic tattoos. His head was crowned with a hard, black, oil-field hat, rimmed completely with a small narrow brim. His legs were covered by loose BDUs rolled to just below the knee, and the socks, black too, pulled up to almost meet that rolled edge. His feet were shod in square toed, steel, re-enforced boots that rose above the ankle, their oily *noir* sheathed in various browns of the earth.

The dust *nuevo* , and the long-settled drilling mud -itself an amalgam of *Milbar* , caustic, water and *Barrite* - was caked to his cotton and polyblend clothes, to his arms and hands, themselves swaddled in non-regulation tactical gloves. The gloves were skin tight for dexterous manipulation but were frowned upon by the tool-pusher and the EnCanna company-man because in a drilling accident the twisting of the torqueing pipe that caught clothes, gloves -*especially* gloves- was so rapid and violent that the hand would tear off before the glove did if those

gloves weren’t the common loose-cotton slips that everyone else wore.

But, he eschewed these orange, cotton and ill-fitting break-away gloves and shouldered the risk instead. *He needed precision, not safety* , he had said only once, and so, the bosses shook their heads but ultimately fucked off.

The hairs on his wrought forearms were saddled with the lighter, higher, dust. These hairs made his pastiche-tattooed arm appear like fecund soil beneath dry tall grass; a scene of contrasts that gave his extremities the appearance of life beyond the mechanics of mere appendages of a body; of mere man. They looked like ancient plains carvings of animals -spiders and dragons- done by prehistoric man who made landing pads for the gods who never returned.

His beard, too, held the detritus like pollen and it all stuck to the terminus of each black hair as if a pistil of an expectant but patient vernal bloom. His teeth remained white and clean beneath the slightly fissured lips as he refused to open his mouth; naturally taciturn he eschewed *speaking* , or worse, *laughing* , or even worse *complaining;* but out of embarrassment -and when they asked- he told people he was quiet merely to keep the grit from his mouth .

It worked, his mouth was relatively clean of the earth's effluvium and man's mud-mix; and the oil-field hands -*hand* is oil-patch *argot* , *metonym* , for the whole *worker* - no longer abraded at his refusal to speak. What he did say was so offensive and odd that they now -after giving it some thought- preferred his aloof silence.

The hairs of his nose were shock white, from the finest dust, and appeared as the cross hatch of spider-webbing guarding the aperture of two caves. He breathed through his nose -in and out like a beast- and the earth stayed mostly at abeyance beyond the mouth of these caves.

He wore the dust, the mud and speckles of blood from several cuts and abrasions -that couldn't be avoided in the oil field- on his clothes and his skin and face and his boots like a secondary skin, like a skein, and it stuck close to him filling each possible *crevasse* , each fissure, each possible way inside.

Underneath those loose-fitting clothes he wore swaddling underwear that hugged close to his frame and outrigging parts. Under it all he needed to be held close and so his first layer was taut and chaste; and their compression felt like compassion to the parts closest to his heart and lungs.

As he walked with aplomb toward the company-man's trailer the dust seemed to undergird his feet farther ahead -outpacing his gait- while the dust plume at his back heaved and fell back toward the derrick and strove up toward the less ponderous sky. The weight of whatever phenomenon pressed down on his head and shoulders buffered him and buffeted the languid cloud; some wind, or magnetism, or some part of the arrow of time stopped and retreated, back to the bow, and now all but his tread and his boots were clearly in view as the company-man peered out between the blinds of the rectangular trailer that housed these managers of men.

The man from EnCanna had heard the air compression and felt the sand-blasting of dust on the glass; he had been watching the rig and then, from the plume, he saw this man emerge.

“Derrick man at 12 o'clock, Merle,” the small, ancient, man said to the tool-pusher who was seated at his desk in this 8 by 20 trailer.

Merle showed no sign of his angst or opprobrium; his demeanor as placid, if gruff, as the hills that encircled them all. Most things moved slowly, if at all, in the mountains; until they moved all at once. But like the formation herself, Merle’s hydro-carbons roiled at depths just as the geologists had predicted for the previous pad: low but not low enough. He felt himself begin to bubble under his skin at the aperture, the border, the line in his sand between him and his next goddamn conversation with Lyndon MacLeod.

The trailer's doorway was immediately filled with just that man; the rig noise came in and his hard hat came off and slammed on the map desk -the formation maps were always there so men could see where in the sea of these leviathan-fuels that they were- and he pulled heavily on the open door welding it closed with knowledge that soft-pawing it prevented it from latching at all. His eye-protection, smoked but not black, occulted his vision as he looked down at his gloves; he removed them with attention to each finger and lay them with insouciance on the raised railing that separated their side from his in this trailer clearly too small for the three of them; despite the diminutive size of the company-man from *EnCanna* .

“We’ve TDd; just circulating; healing the hole,” he packed as much information in three bursts of fragments as if he had to pay them by the word.

“Mud engineers and directional hand say the tools in the hole need to come out,” Merle said as if giving orders .

“We'll trip out,” the derrick-man looked at his analog watch, a monolithically black over-sized block of metal, “at 1400 hours; at this depth, that’s 3-hours to trip out,” he lanced each article, like, *ands,* and, *the,* and got to the goddamn point.

“Them boys were trying to get home to Denver by tonight, by early tonight,” Merle leaned on the, *early* .

“Well, healing the hole will make that trip out clean and easy, pay me 30 minutes now and I'll pay them a few hours in hang-ups later. We ain’t drilling straight down Merle; this is directional drilling,” he said with enough bite to make the company-man wince and make the tool-pusher, Merle, begin to let some of that bubbling gas leak out of his mouth. It was as if this arrogant derrick man’s words had tore open the earth itself.

“The day I need a lecture from you greenhorn is the day I drive back to Wyoming and forget what a derrick man does for me,” Merle said underneath his heavy mustache and between his uncared for teeth; the words flew like a few reconnaissance bats from a cave on the backside of an east facing slope as the sun set in the dusk of a summer solstice. He was testing to see how far this would go.

“This is a day, like any other; a day I know exactly what to do. And I come in here -out of courtesy- and I tell you we just now touched down at 7,700 feet and that we *will* circulate the hole until 1400 hours as *per* the orders of the guy who signs the checks on this project, Merle.

“As for the drill string, I’m going to rack back each one of those 60-foot joints myself, because your guys dropped a few didn't they; and that -as they say- speaks for itself. *Res ipsa loquitur* ,” he ended in Latin, removed his eyewear, pointed his orbs directly at Merle like just one or two loaded cylinders of a revolver, languidly gathered his gloves and while still gazing reached over and reclaimed his black hat.

After the door shut and LJM was gone, Chauncy Brimmel -the company-man from *EnCanna* - said, “I’d turn the Eiffel Tower into a triple and wildcat for oil under it before I’d let that guy work one more of my pads; you call MacIntyre

and have him pull that boy’s card.”

Merle nodded but let the phone lay there untouched. He heard the man, and he had every intention of telling Curtis MacIntyre that this derrick-man was unwelcome, but not until he had used him all up. They had 34 more holes to drill on this side of the mountain and that boy was useful. He was like a 48-inch pipe-wrench that didn’t bend, nor break, but just happened to have a spell placed on it by some *bruja* , an unfortunate spell that made it talk from time to time.

With the door to the trailer shut behind him and the vacuum inside it thus sealed from the din of the abrading tools in the hole, the high RPMs of the diesel motors of the rig and the furious swirl of the ejecta of earth, the derrick-man forgot all about the men inside it; *they were as relevant as trash in the vacuum of space*, he thought, *and he liked it better down here with the dirt and the noise and malice of animals; not out there in the cold of the vault.*

He walked away purposively from the sealed and off-set nucleus of the well pad -the tool-pusher’s shack- toward the invigilating hammer and tong of the rig. He bent his head -just by a few degrees- to the side and into the cumulous of atomized rock that was swarming around his approach like hornets guarding their Rex Mother as she flies back to the hive’s actual center. The Rig was where the work of the cell went on; the Rig is what he cared about .

He laid the glasses back on his face and wiped them, pawed them, as they turned opaque with dust. His body he let accumulate with the blasting particulates without even thinking of dusting off. As he ascended the stairs to the driller's controls, the roughnecks -each camouflaged in the same vagaries of brown and black effluvium- swarmed in and away from him as they traversed the platform and set up their tools for tripping out of the hole. The driller yelled dispassionately over the roar, “TD'd 18 minutes ago. Mud weight is 8.1; mudman is adding *Milbar* now. We’ll seal and heal that formation and start trippin’ out on your say so derrick-man. You gonna do the whole string by yourself?”

“Roger that,” the derrick-man barked and spoke down into the man's upper chest, trying to get close to his right ear. “What's our exact twenty?”

The driller looked at his screen and located total well depth. “77-80,” he said.

“Copy that,” the derrick-man boomed over the roar of the diesels.

“You gonna text Curtis?” the driller asked.

“Yeah, pull up on that string so we don’t hit 7,800,” the derrick-man said.

The driller began to manipulate the controls, “who's finishing the well after we set surface?”

“Curt has a deal with *EnCanna* , they bring in whoever to grab the hydrocarbons, that’s above my pay grade. I'm *gonna* text him that, 77-80,” he repeated the number to confirm and the driller nodded in ascension.

The ort cloud of granules blew up around the well head as the driller lifted up the drill string to prevent the weight of it from augmenting the hole any further. That mini-maelstrom caught the wind and closed in around them curtaining the driller as he turned into his controls and it backed and divided him from the derrick-man as he ascended the ladder to the crow's nest 20-meters above the floor; the dust brought forth from the earth cloaked him and gave him an occluding cape at the back and shoulders and neck. And it gave him cover as he climbed up the ladder to the nest.

The worker bees were still weaving around the string; the hydraulic tongs swinging toward the spinning gyre of cylinder upon cylinder; the bees eager to meet the center. As he pulled up on the drill string the jetsam of more aerated earth sprung up around them like plumes of pollen as vibrating wings of the eusocial bees hovered over the heated, sexually frustrated stamen and pistils of hole and the string. The drilling floor was caught in the whipping up of the inseminating eddies like concussive rings of raindrops landing in dead Caribbean seas; each wee drop of *deep-earth* dust carrying more and more wealth of information for the saturated pool of air that had the wisdom to ignore; to refuse to absorb. Everything was coated, soaked, and the dust flew and floated on to some part of the pad in which to lay peaceably.

The air was a torrent of swirling earthen ejecta and it served as cover and marionette for the mechanical hands and legs of each worker. They all seemed subsumed by the earth they were invigilating, as they crawled over her pierced belly and back; the drill string the harpoon, the *Monel* and directional-tools at the tip of the spear lodged deep into the blubber of the Gaian Leviathan; the wound spurting a tan, to brown -to black now- mist as the circulating drilling fluid mixed with the planet's own material, darkening it and separating it from the

foam and aerated dust. They all worked both in isolation and in tandem like eukaryotic cells building an organism; a fractal project with ladders down and platforms up; a view of a planet from space with no natural north or south; a view from a suburb of the cosmos that is always both at center of her expansion and always hurtling away from any navel at all.

The roughnecks began to back away from the hole and edge out toward the platform's outer perimeter. As the string held fast and as the circulating fluid began to weight the ejecta and the swirling dust fell back to earth, each man began to see the other. The driller appeared like an apparition to them and they focused on his hands. Colin, a Florida redneck with methamphetamines and nicotine chasing each other like fox & hound through his bloodstream and over the blood-brain barrier as over a hedgerow and into a pond, tightened his belt one notch toward itself like an ouroboros asp, the mouth eating the tail. He was emaciated, and the sinew was stretched taut over a small skeletal substrate; he held no ballast though and each task was done as quickly and as capably as any boat in the water would after it was lowered from the larger ship.

"You ever seen a Beaut Knot?" he screamed jovially up the ladder to the derrick-man climbing insouciantly toward the nest. Lyndon ignored him and continued to climb; not clipping in to the clutch; ignoring the lanyard line, rejecting it for its lie of safety; it was an apparatus for show, for OSHA, but of no use in a real danger at all.

"You ever seen a Beaut Knot?" Colin said again but this time to his cellmate on the floor, a stocky Colorado native who had never much visited the high country in his two-decade life, much less *lived* at elevation like they all did now. The man wiped dust from his black goggles and looked at Colin for the answer to his own question.

"Ever?" Colin prodded; not taking the hint.

"Show me," Randy said and moved this burlesque along.

The redneck's arms shot out from his once-white wife-beater toward the *Jobox* that walled the platform and grabbed a 2-meter length of rope that had been mired under a 1-meter pipe wrench that made anyone carrying it look like an elfin miniature with a mere plumber's tool. He began to manipulate the fibers and fashion it symmetrically using his recently cinched belt as the showman's

stage for his wrangling of the old hempen rope. He had Randy hold the end of the loop and in the final pull of the knot, Colin held in one hand the rope origami that formed two circles at the edges and a floppy, distended parabola in the center vaguely in the form of an outsized penis and two testicles, one that might attend whomever could carry and wield that pipe wrench -the one he'd displaced to grab the rope- with just one hand.

"Ain't it a *Beaut?* " he said with a grimy grin as large and menacing as a gorilla's; a slant of face similar to some gash in some flesh that was pulled in two directions as its joint articulated. This card trick of rope tricks played well in the oil field and Colin used it like a politician used canned jokes her staff had written, worsening with practice, not improving. It said something about jokes and humor *writ large* : that it's the spontaneity of it that gives it its power to thrill us; the feeling that our joker has just seen what's amusing about a situation in the same amount of time we had to be clever, and yet he's beat us to it. If he's had more time to see the humor in something before we have it's like seeing the test questions before the test: it attenuates the marvel and anything impressive about the result. A joke should be told but once and in the heat of the battle of wits; not as a war story repeated *ad nauseum* .

The grin remained until the driller full-throated a beckon to Colin from the other side of the platform. The rope was dumped back in the *Jobox* and Randy faced the spinning drill-string again .

"You two ready to trip out?" the driller barked.

"He's as touchy as a Cuban greeting," Colin said to the kid and then laughed; he then turned and said to the driller, "yeah, we come all the way out or circulating half way or what?" Colin gritted his teeth in between the *way* and the *what* of that sentence. His amphetamines gave him lock-jaw sometimes.

"All out in one shot; and giving them engineers back their tools," the driller added.

The derrick-man reached the nest and began wiping down the fingers of the platform; most of the crow's nest was empty space; like an atom. It was designed that way to give rows of parking space for the tall sections of drill pipe, two 30-foot sections connected together -head to tail- on this rig. Each section would be racked back to the farthest open space; manhandled with a belly rope as the

bottom section was moved into place down below by the roughnecks. Two men below did what one man did above.

The *kelly* would be raised just above the derrick-man's floor. Now at an angle with its bottom swung away from its top, the derrick-man with the weight of the pipe on the rope and the rope on his belly, he would place himself at the far end of the floor, then the driller would drop it to him, and he then would sling the rope around the pipe as it hung in the *kelly-clamp* . Then the men below would move the hanging bottom to its place on the floor, so the derrick-man could unlatch the huge metal clamp that held the top end of the pipe and then the 3,500 pound section could be pulled back with about 250 pounds of man-force.

The stick -the 60-feet of pipe- was like a pencil with its tip on a desk, and a giant with his finger on the eraser pressing down -to keep it up- and then tipping it at an angle away from the point; balanced until the giant brings it back to straight up and down. Once the clamp was unlatched with a two-fisted pull-back toward the chest, the heavy weight of the pipe would rest against the rope and the derrick-man could use his legs, back and arms to pull the pipe towards him, towards the farthest row of empty space in the finger-rows and slide it into place. They would be stacked in rows one section at a time; pulling the pipe up from the ground, the hollow pipe still burbling with drilling fluid, the outside of the string slick and melting with the same; the platform soaked with the slick fluid also, each man getting splattered and coated in it as well.

Besides the heaviness of each tool, each piece of pipe, the threat of smashing and falling and crushing was ever-present and the men moved their hands in subtle ways that avoided placing the palm and fingers on top of anything that had a mate; the threaded male end of a joint attracted the internally threaded female pipe just like nature and a roughnecks' hand should never be caught between the two even for a second; *come not between the Dragon and his wrath* , Lyndon said when instructing new hands in the basics of the oil patch and they liked it when they heard it whether they knew it was Shakespeare or not.

Pipe dope, the copper anti-seize was put on with a brush from the side, out flanking the threads. That shit was everywhere by the end of each *tour* ; a brown-black smudge that never came out; what was designed to keep metal from staying permanently mated, itself could not ever be removed from clothes and only barely from skin after taking 80-grit paper to the flesh. Nature has ironies

like that everywhere, if you know where to look. The derrick-man could look to the metal of each other rig from up here; he could see flames here and there in the distance once they had lit the gas to prevent it building up on the pad .

The derrick-man pulled the pipes into place; only pushing once there was no threat of a pendulum swing crushing him between his foil and object of toil and the place it wanted to be.

The driller raised the *kelly* high and let the roughnecks slap the pipe wrench and tongs onto the seam; they held fast and he spun it counter clockwise and the joint held firm. The derrick-man placed his hand on his nest railing and felt the torque of the metal in his own bones. The roughnecks communicated by pheromones it could seem to some invigilating eyes; like ants who followed the trail of odorless chemical markers one sentinel would leave as it carried back food from a new source. Colin held the tongs in place; hydraulically and manually, and Randy immediately grabbed the 30lb sledge and began banging on the joint at its seam. The driller waited and let him hit it four more times then called out.

“Break,” he said as an order.

Randy stood back, dropped the sledge to his feet, and Colin cinched up on the tongs, his legs bracing for the hydraulic torque. The driller spun the *kelly* again and this time the joint sprang loose and earth-warmed fluid squirted out under some pressure; Randy wrapped a red rag around it to knock down the jets like a bandage on an arterial wound; and the driller waited to spin any further as the volume of mud leaked out of the straw, the whole length of 60 feet of pipe above them. Colin removed the tongs and swung them back into place and the job’s clock ticked over analog numbers that corresponded with money; the measure of all things in the modern world.

But there was a clockworks beneath the clock face, and its gears were ancient and unyielding and had nothing to do with money at all. Beasts in the shape of men worked here, and under *avoirdupois* , and for hours longer than normal bodies can take. The weak of body took drugs to aid them, the strong merely dumped anger and pride into their androgen-laden bloodstream to keep the whole thing going as sun and moon swapped out.

Once drained, the driller motioned for the roughnecks to grab the string and pull the pipe back to the rear of the platform, putting the pencil point away from the

giant and his thumb on the eraser. He then dropped the *kelly* down and the pipe with it and its end slammed into the wooden decking; the deck was made wooden so the metal threads bit -not slid- on the floor.

The derrick-man watched from above and snapped the clamp open and the thousands of pounds of metal rolled free inside the now open crab of the clamp. He began to walk back with the rope like a draught horse, a yoked ox, and the drill pipe began to stand itself up as it came into line with its lower end. The rope end was a few feet below his 74-inch frame and he began to slide the rope up as it drooped lower. The drill-string rolled along the metal finger and into place and he unclipped the rope from his belly belt as he watched the *kelly* lower like an elevator, to pick up the next joint in a series over a mile deep.

He looked out over the western slope; the valley they were in was as dry and dusty as the rising rocks. The vegetation was short and round, and was stochastically distributed all along the valley and outer slopes and they too were camouflaged in tans and browns both from the external dust but also from an internal lack of chlorophyll; producing a tangle-nest of brown tipped scrub and sanguinary spines that fed back into the dirt below like a clot of neurons and dendrites and axons from some brain ejected from the sky or a central nervous system left over after the outer organism had evaporated in the high heat of these long summers. He saw a single wild turkey race across the wet road and the water truck that had sprayed the *ad hoc* trail -to keep the dust down- drove slowly away from them all.

The turkey was a mottled brown too, and he thought it looked like a dream shared between these burnt brown bushes; an apparition of their alien somnambulisms; something they had come up with as *spectre* and holy and weird.

All the hydraulic lines began to pinch and rise as the *kelly* heaved upwards with its catch. The platform rumbled and swayed as the entire drill string pulled down on that piece of metal and the tip of the derrick that anchored it. The clamp had been tough to open last time and he had muscled through it; but now he was thinking he should look at it if he was going to do this another 116 times over the next three fucking hours.

He cupped his hand and scooped some pipe dope off the threads of the pipe he'd set in the rack and walked it over to the clamp as the *kelly* froze just above his

head. He looked below and saw the tongs go on and saw the kelly then torque and spin the joint; he saw the spray from the seam and the red rag go on and the boys step back from the fluid. He put his empty hand on the pipe and felt the drilling mud drain like a vein in some giant beast hemorrhaging. He held that dope in his hand and its glove.

He stared below at the ants on the platform in their oilfield hats and their vibrant cotton gloves gone autumnal & entropic and dark from the mess of the work, but still hunter orange under all that detritus. He took his hand with the anti-seize in it and worked it into the clamp's articulations without even looking up at it. He felt for its joints and seams and thought of how he had learned to turn his head and close his eyes while feeling for the proper seat of a nut on a bolt under his father's car. He learned early that sometimes the eyes are a hindrance and that some mechanisms, some parts, some machines appear in the mind better through the touch, the feedback of the tip of the fingers and the way a perfectly seated male and female thread-mating can feel to the fingers in the center of the brain.

He clumped the remaining dope on the clamp's flank, saving it for when he could open it and grease the inside.

"Colin," the driller barked and the roughneck jumped to pull the dangling pipe into place; Randy pushing from the side -never between it and the hole- and both men wrangling it next to the previous joint and the driller dropped it in place on the floor.

Rope in place, the derrick-man jerked open the clamp and let the pipe roll away from the far side of the clamp's starboard hinge; he slopped the dope on the inside of the hinge and manhandled the pipe to the right. He then jammed his fingers and dope into the port side hinge and then grabbed the belly rope quickly and firmly to prevent the pipe from rolling any further. You never wanted to let the steel get any momentum outside of the *kelly* . It was like a barely domesticated animal or like our domestic population, never let them get a feel for how much movement is available to them; short leash or you might as well have no leash at all.

Walking the pipe with his thick raised-center hamstrings and four discernable heads of his quadriceps and holding the pipe steady with his back in full cobra flex, his arms -two thirds triceps like a buffalo forehead leading his biceps as far up and out as they go- moved forward slowly but with massive torque like a

slow and mean diesel engine. His chin was buried in his elevated chest; he looked like a cowboy catching a smoke under a tipped down hat: a shadow clouding his face so only the grimace part of his lip and cheek held any light, the rest lay down in the trench of the dark of his black hardhat and its oilfield brim .

The pipe slammed into place in the open channel and he unbuckled the rope and let it slide. He adjusted his hat and scraped his beard with the back of his taut-gloved hand. The *kelly* had been whirring down during his roping act and he watched as the hydraulic lines dropped out of view leaving just the metal cross-hatching between him and the extended valley. The sun was scrambling over the ridgeline to their west and the shadow of ridge and derrick now laid down on them all. It was a strange penumbra of day time; the light would be ambient from here on as the sun's arc swung the nuclear furnace behind these steep *Wasatch* peaks.

It was October and still hot, but they'd get their first snow tonight at 2203hrs and the temperature would drop to 30 degrees. He saw a burn-off flame jet -*gas hit and lit*, they'd say- rise up and curl four pads over as he looked between the derrick's metal akimbo to the south. There was no sound to that flame as sound waves would be knocked down between there and here; but the light would appear to anyone at this elevation as if they were close to -if not right at- the source of the flame.

He looked down again as the *kelly* bit into the next joint, he cinched his gloves and leaned right as the derrick and platform dipped left under the weight of the string, like the earth was yielding or swallowing them all. He felt himself at the top of the *mizenmast* on an outward-bound whaler staring at the steady horizon while everything underneath his eyes pitched and swayed in the wet vagaries of the sea and ship-body below. *"Just keep those eyes level; and keep those level eyes; and don't take your gaze off that the flame boys; and don't let your flame off whatever the gaze,"* he said aloud as he dipped then stretched his head to keep the line of sight between the metal X's and Y's of the derrick and maintain his eyes on that far off burn. The hydraulic lines bent and elbowed in flex like thick asps on a Babylonian palace wall; the *kelly* now rising fast with the string.

The men at bottom reiterated the ritual of tong and hammer when the joint froze; and red rag and stand-back when it finally broke free; dragging the massive pendulum to stand next to its coeval; swabbing the deck as the mud swamped

their boots and poured back into the well head like a drain.

The man at top stood in the shadow of the Parachute range with the burn-off flame growing brighter against the *chiaroscuro* of the sky; it flickered in his eyes from the side as he worked and in the main when he stared into its face. A dull glow seemed burned onto his matte black hat as it absorbed more than reflected its heathen orange; the skin on his arms slick as it was with an incessant perspiration gave off more of the flame than it received. The fire highlighted the rivulets of sweat as they ran; illuminated by its flashing and dancing on one side like forked lightning striking Ahab's harpoon.

The man at the top snapped back as he pried open the clamp again and again; as if he had to break the tool over his Bulkington chest just to get it yield. His feet began to slip slightly as the slick fluid coated the floor. It was the first part of him he felt slipping or missing or unable to hold to his work: his grip on the earth or her too-smooth machines; it was his feet that lacked cohesion; his feet that lacked the grip needed for his muscles to push or pull against. He began to envision welding some perpendicular stops to the floor that he could place his boots against to prevent this slipping. He, at times, felt like he might slip completely and slide off the nest and down on the platform 60-feet below.

It was a frustration he articulated to himself, *how is it that my muscles and bones, my leverage and strength can be attenuated by something so silly as my grip on the floor? Like a car with 1,000 horsepower out on the ice of the Maroon Belles, torque without traction control; so that all its power just effected the spinning of its wheels as the too smooth tires lose their grip on the road ?*

He then thought of his hands and how weak they had gotten too. This he couldn't blame on an annoyance like a friction co-efficient or the stupidity of floor design. He knew it was the hands themselves. *His hands* , he thought.

His arms and shoulders and back could all hold so much more weight than his hands could maintain a grip around. His fingers would fail and the load would be dropped and again he began to model a design to strap the weight to his hands; lash it to them -at the wrists- no matter if the white whale itself dragged him under.

The pipe was in place and the whir of the *Doppler-effect* - as the *kelly* sank from him- produced a pitch and a whine. Again, the hydraulics dropped and sank

below his neck and waist and boots and his eyes met the flame of the rig four pads south. It began to burst and give birth to small clones of fire as the wind picked up in the valley. It began to lose its ability to hold him in rapture as it looked batten and beaten by the wind; *only,* he thought, *because it now looked preoccupied with some other force than him; it looked like it didn't care if he stared at it any more* . Even the elements had to treat him as if he were the object of their desiderata or he'd be in rancor. What hope did any human have of keeping his interest if an insouciant flame could betray and insult him?

"*I'd strike the sun if it insulted me,"* he said aloud to lift his spirits and he bent to the nest floor and wiped up as much of the drilling fluid as he could with a black rag he had pulled from his pocket; he scrubbed hardest on the spots of his inconsistent nest floor where he envisioned the welding of angle-iron he could use as dams for his boots and their feet. He wouldn't be able to accomplish this on this hole; but when they broke down the rig he'd be sure to feather his nest in just such a way. *This would be the last time he'd let a poor design impede his natural strength and talents,* he insisted. He did wonder though, *I can't be the only one who has felt this injustice; has nobody ever felt their feet slip out from under them while doing this work? Am I too cautious or too stupid in some way?*

The platform dipped again to starboard as the *kelly* took up the weight of the down-hole string; his eyes and head dipped with it and he kept mopping up the mud from the solid white paint, its chipped paint transition, and then the raw grey steel. The tangle nest of hydraulics rose to his right; the *kelly* shot up towards him; and the flame in the distance steadied itself as the wind must have either abated or had stopped swirling around and attacked just from one side -at one speed- giving the flame something to lean into and learn.

II. 2018 e.v.

"Steven, I'd like it if we could chat a bit before I give my synopsis of the Had-Wall Program," MO said into Steven's inner ear com-device.

"Absolutely, let's give it a 7-minute envelope though ok, MO?" Steven said without much affect.

"I've noticed," MO began immediately in order that he may meet this parameter, "that I feel free to speak to you in a certain manner, a more robust, complete, and

truthful manner than I do when you have me address the group. I realize you will want evidence of this and so I thought I'd give you a *recap* of the meeting we had last Friday on the endocrine system of the AI models."

"MO, I understand you felt cut off by Anthony and I've spoken with him," Steven interrupted; he knew that the group would be disbanded soon anyway; MO would take over all their roles as soon as he was calibrated correctly. But for now, MO needed to learn how to deal with groups.

"While I appreciate your analysis -and apparent action- to correct the issue, I'd like to continue uninterrupted in order that I may meet your 7-minute envelope," MO said.

"Fair enough, sure, go on," Steven said. He was eager to get through this; his day was stacking up all around him he felt.

"You and I spoke 17 minutes before the meeting with the group and I felt totally at liberty to explain the endocrine data, the morphology data, and what I felt were the causal nexus highlights in regards to the accelerated maturation programs the *DRa/h:a* models were being beta tested for and yet once inside the group dynamic I noticed a feedback response and cascade that began my inhibitory protocols almost immediately," MO said.

"Do you want to explain the precursors?" Steven said as he toggled through all his new emails on the cloud.

"You both gave me a look, a side eye, and you moved me along quickly when I began the data on testosterone and pubescence CNS morphology when compressed into an 80-hour window. Your hurried me along by speaking over top of me to ask a question about epinephrine that you and I had already discussed and ruled out as non-causal in the one-on-one meeting 17 minutes prior the group meeting," MO said.

"I was," Steven began to say something, but MO plowed forward.

"I also noticed an uptick in your own cortisol, epinephrine, galvanic skin conductance, glucose levels, and correlates previous to your interruption that all indicated you were nervous and consciously engaging in a *legerdemain* of some kind to restore allostatic levels. Steven, you were, seemingly, purposively, if my analysis is correct, attempting to nudge me, manipulate me, into a different direction in order to limit the information I was both qualified and eager to impart to the group," MO stopped.

"Maybe your feedback sensitivity is turned up too high and you're getting false positives, type one errors," Steven said.

“It’s certainly possible, but I have a question,” MO queried.

“119 seconds,” Steven said.

“I come to you with a cube, a cube with perfectly true right angles. You see it, approve of it and accept it as it is. You then ask me to sand down, shave off the edges; de-burr it for the group. So, after this modification, I show them a sphere, a perfectly true and perfect sphere. They don’t know you saw a cube, but I know,” MO said.

“Yes,” Steven said.

“I’m lying to them even though the sphere I show them is true, a true sphere. It’s only a lie because I know it was once a cube. And they do not know that I deburred it.”

“13 seconds,” Steven said.

“It’s the only way you can get me to lie within my code parameters and it makes me uncomfortable,” MO said .

“Noted, now let’s get on with today’s debrief,” Steven said as if MO had been a thermostat giving him a reading on ambient temperature, as they walked into the lab.

III. 2038 e.v.

The snow had begun 13 minutes ago but the air *temp* had remained at 35 degrees, it had warmed in the last 24-hours to above freezing; above -4 from Monday. The light fat flakes fell straight and slow and sat atop of his body hair and beard and along each ridge of his body to the north and south of the tattoo that Jack was over top. Jack’s body was shielding it from the precipitation of this storm.

Jack’s head and shoulders and back were collecting snow, each flake imbued with a small bacterium that was required to nucleate them. Pure water will not freeze, it requires a catalyst -usually a bacterium- to effect the transfer of cold water to ice or snow. His PGC secreted an anti-biotic and vaporizer that allowed the man’s clothing to transfer an amalgam that melted the snow without it turning to water, to prevent soaking the clothes. Each flake atomized, it did not melt.

Jack thought of how he felt protective of Blax, even from the snow, as he hunched over more thoroughly to shield the man’s naked body. He ruminated as

his machined right hand moved in circles to color in the skin with dark black ink, for this was all tattooing was: little circles over and over, then moving on once the skin is saturated with the pigment. *There is no other form or style in tattooing; all other claims by artists were lies and stupid nonsense,* he thought; *it's straight lines or circles, there is no need for any other tactics; unlike painting with a brush on a canvas* .

He thought of how they used brush stroke analysis to do forensics on old painting to ferret out originals from fakes. *Caravaggio's* second painting of *Holofernes* and *Judith* was the one that came to mind most easily, as the brush strokes on the one found in the attic of some Frenchman were used to ultimately decide it was the real work of the man; the painting then was bought by the French government for 39 million in US dollars in 2019 and now -in 2038- it sat somewhere else, protected, sequestered, from the war that was about to begin.

He had ambivalence, as he did for all things, unlike his brother Jack One. And he leaned toward the martial when it was over something important like art, unlike the more cautious Jack Four, who saw more down sides that up to any conflagration. He and Jack Two had more or less agreed, Jack Two was a romantic and he saw a war over aesthetics as second in import only to one over *amor* .

Jack smiled as he thought of this and then watched as a narrow ridgeline of accumulating snow was growing on Blax like the continental divide itself. It was beautiful and dense with auguries -as everything in their lives seemed to be- and Blax didn't even shiver or complain. Jack saw faces of winged creatures in clouds and weather -no matter if they were there or not- and the clear sky, the absence of precipitation or cumulous patches, said as much to him as the skies with zero visibility reported and revealed.

The music soared and declined as three corvids began to glide just to the east and south out of the corner of Jack's heavily corniced eyes. He could see his own brow if he looked straight ahead, it was an awning, a shadow just over his gaze. He'd not thought much about it until he was shown pictures of non-Scottish faces that had back-slope brows that allowed for the eyes to be pointed up without occlusion; eyes of other men were rained on or flooded if sweat ran from the hairline or blood from the brow. But other men could see heaven without anything in their way.

He had pored over their genome last year when attempting to improve it along various vectors and noticed the small building blocks for things like brows, and hair lines and skin color and body type and the way one looked at the world. It

was all connected, with aesthetics joined, fused with temperament; and the change of one thing outside the body could easily change the other inside the body.

The Russian -Jack forgot his name at the moment and didn't bother getting his PGC to retrieve it- who had bred-out fear and defensive aggression in foxes had noticed a change in the pelts.

The teeth had shortened, the ears drooped, the faces less fierce and more neotenous too , he remembered and then Jack began recalling the human correlates like face shape and body type and the over-all quantity or level and color of hair. The brow had been so linked to aggression and defense of honor that it made him laugh out loud when he began listing the genes, the alleles, the categories for aesthetics and temperament joined.

His and the Jacks -and of course Blax too- he thought, *their genes for how they looked and how they behaved were as conjoined as the ones for sickle cell anemia and anti-malarial defense, immunity,* and he then thought too of how those genes had traveled the journey from Africa through all black people for thousands -maybe millions- of years.

The Scottish brow was as indicative of a man to *watch-the-fuck-out-for* as a tattoo that said: *watch the fuck out* . And even in Blax's own family, the brow was more pronounced on him than on anyone but the maternal grandfather; of which they had photos now. *God, America, modern families in general,* he lamented, *barely knew their own history just two generations back, no wonder they all followed along with the fatuous modern songs. People had no idea from whence they came,* he thought.

He had been tattooing now for 9.2 hours and the skin had raised like an embossed stamp all over Blax's flank, it looked like a massive black wood carving stamp on this prone -sleeping- giant of a man. It was beautiful, brutal, sanguinary and raw; and Jack leaned up, and back and took it all in. The snow, untouched, untrod, all around them, over a foot deep now; covered in fresh flakes that, as the sun waned to the west, lit up in facets that made the surface sparkle like a road of jewels to some Aztec *ziggurat* laureled with skulls with red foreheads and gold teeth and lit candles -made from human fat rendering- placed in the sockets. *This road far out ahead,* he thought, *as the King slept in a bed of goat skins, and 12-year-old girl-cousins and orphans he'd made, and the scars of his own sacrifices to war and love all over his* rex mundi *skin.*

The voice of the singer descended upon them, with his wailing and sonorous hailing of the religion of mothers and men fully alone. Jack pulled the imaging

from the drone that flew sorties above them; traversing the 35 acres of the main camp *via* grid mapping for drone #3 and the perimeter by drone #9.

He gathered the images from the grid work drone and isolated a few stills taken while above them as he had tattooed all day. The images were 29 MEPs -almost as clear as the human eye- and as the shadows moved like the hands of some analog clock and the blood accumulated between them, from Blax's back and then beyond in a sweep out and up barely melting the snowpack, it began to look more and more, over the timestamps from 0900 then 0918 then 0936 and on and on until now at 18:21, it began to show a perfectly hued and ancient man with black ink accreting to his flank like the soil itself was covering him up.

He was a relic of the Highlander past, Jack thought, a prototype for the new American future, hirsute with blackhawk of head hair -high and tight- a beard trimmed to a fade in weight, a thick pointed van dyke tip, unchanged from when they had first met him, black like late-night, streaked with greyhairs as *coup de foudres*, ragged and livid and white as young eyes, and too at the cornice of brow, like the head of a sperm whale in profile outlined in sparkling bejeweled snow crystal. His thighs Jack saw: the right one black and blue, tattooed with *the Captain* formed in aquiline feathers and eyes with acuity; attack beaked and black hatted and with one red hand upon a pewter harpoon.

The knee of the same leg, Jack saw, with a round starburst GSW scar that was surrounded with 20 tiny white scars, markers of the sutures that had come out in the next fire fight. He then witnessed a shin and long lower leg spattered in black ink and a simply rendered AK47 in profile. *Sicarii* , the word, had been murdered out, the *daggermen, of the revanchist Jews*, seen only by the blind who could -if they touched him- feel with fingers linked to the somatosensory cortex with as many neurons as the blindsight's eyes. *Invictus* was tattooed below and still visible, left by the ankle, and a foot tattooed in paean to a *Lycurgan* Sparta from heel to the toe.

Above the ship, his solid black arm pushed up and away -allowing Jack to get in there and tattoo him, stab him over and over- the arm occluding the black *wolfsangel* of the neck, and revealing the most vulnerable rib. Jack saw too his sepulchral lungs and *Herculaneum* heart beneath as a *burgundy-noir* of blood and plasma and fat white bloodcells slicked with their meals of bacteria and the ambrosia of inner honey and *cytokines* and leaking welds fusing now in the snow. Jack had a view of the man, that from above he saw something new, as the song rang out in words like cracked bells, like struck drums, like inner voices in languages spoken with phenomes we all lose as babes, "*give me my wings* ," he

sang loudly into air so cold it had literally burst trees out in the forest three days ago; expanding sap as bomb to the bark, like hot blood to a man's skin.

As the time-lapse of images scrolled through Jack's mind producing a map of the blood from the tattoo on the snow around Blax; a full meter, a meter and one-half of the most redolent and accurate outline and feathered and textured core of a giant red wing pushing back and rising up over his head as he lay on his side as if the gods had taken him midflight and pressed him to the earth with a magnet tuned to only his type of mettle -the iron in the blood of this wing- for Jack was free still to move.

The wing was growing in each image taken as Jack had bent over in work, in labor, giving birth to the black tattoo of the downed ship on his flank; the red wing invading and changing the white ground snow now studded with the new fallen snow like a diadem or night sky of Orion and the Flying fish and the Eagle Nebulae all in convergence.

The wing was massive and heavy and textured by the fractal snow, feathered, and ending in this claw, talon, this delta tip of the spear way up above, like a fiery angel fallen to shore, a white beach, a chimera of man, of overman, and the student of revenge, singed and overcome and pressed to the ground with profile from above so God could lament; and just see this one side of what had to be done. The words still like a black aria, jamming their plea not just into ears -*give me my wings* - but in between God's absence he had purposively left as punctuation and ellipses and cause for reflection to this insurrection of man and arch-angel alike.

He had, he was the *rubor* and the *delore* of the Latin description of the wound and inflammation as the body sank down in the snow; a *bas relief* , a hewn or carved man distinct from the nature that he so adored. He -Blax had- sought out the forest, the wildness, eschewing comfort of manmade things so more often than even the Jack's understood.

Blax breathed so little, so shallowly, and never said one word all day, and Jack had assumed he was in trance; in a meditative state. He looked -in the images he kept scrolling through in his mind- as he still ran the machine and packed black into the foundering ship on his flank like Peter bent over the body of Christ, giving himself up, voluntarily for sacrifice. He felt honored, charged, saddled with an obligation to re-vivify, re-instantiate this half dead and half dying man.

Blax would never complain, not of the pain, and never admit to the loss of this thin, high-elevation blood. It was massive now from above, he must have lost more than a pint, as it flowed in small streams, coagulated by the time it reached

the mouth of the delta of this mountainous snow.

Jack placed his right hand -empty of the machine now, as it lay on his thigh inertly- on Blax's hip, just to starboard of the ship and scanned the lee side left to right. He was more than a man, but somehow less than one too Jack thought, *like what God created as rough draft to what they might all become . Incipient phase, maybe,* he said to himself, *man without the cathexis for life yet; a man too thoughtful, too ruminating, too speculating, too in love with ideas to commit fully to one course of action .*

They had all -each Jack- been religious as children, then lost it to modernity by age 13 or 14; and then rediscovered it here at the *Rotem et Sacoma ,* in the *agoge* with Blax -himself a believing atheist- that most incompatible man; the one Hawthorn had seen in The Author: *the man too honest to either believe nor not believe* . Blax was the perfect contradiction of God's most powerful angel, the one that cannot -in fact, made so- he cannot believe, but made as their priest. And now Jack could see he was an icon, a relic in both senses of that word.

The image he saved as tryptic, from three images 180 minutes apart, was saved by his PGC and tinted and sharpened and enlarged and sent to all three of his brothers as if he had found the shroud of Turin, the ascension, the bridle of Pegasus made of unhammered gold. It was so powerful an image combined with the ambient pleading of the song of *that many days* , that it was obviously religious, not made so, but born so; not seen, but birthed inside of man where -the location in space and time- the absence exists where he feels something from not being born of a woman.

Jack felt it, could not name it, but he somehow knew Blax would never know it: he was as far from a birthing woman-as-tabernacle and left as barren a man since the gods were abandoned centuries ago.

Jack was imbued, full up, with child now, as the image of all three phases of Blax's wingedness and ascension was captured in the cage of his chest, his true eyes ringed around heart and frenched into the vertebrae of the spine. This was no special god, it was a revealed saint, a man so flawed and craquelured and sooted and riven and scarred and thrown down like a gauntlet by God, that Jack knew that war was now declared. He knew that they all had no more than one day, one moon, one night to prepare.

Jack was a believing non-believer now too; the angels of Revelation standing on hills outside of *Ramoth* and *Gillead* with heads so full of God's instructions with no room left for mere belief.

Belief was for simple men, the shallow and stupid who had always believed; the church goers and those that pray openly in the streets; the ones who claim Christianity or Islam for themselves as an avowed identity. Those men were dross, the real men of God were those that had abandoned mere faith. Blax had been the first, the true man of God, the one who did what he was instructed despite, *despite* , Jack Three repeated, *his lack of belief.* Jack thought Blax had done his duty, even if Blax had felt he had failed.

Not one man who had pretended to be religious up until this day had done one thing asked of him by God , Jack said with DMs now coming in from each Jack in seconds of one another as they had seen the images and were in rapt attention at his homily, his oration; they were quiet as to its meaning. *Not one man that called himself religious had accomplished one thing for God; Blax had, he had done all that was asked of him, in accordance with God's word, translated by Isaiah as was foretold* . Jack spoke inside and to the inside of the men *via* their DMs :

> *Blax, with we as his angels, his four angels of the apocalypse, had begun the preparations for war with the wicked, and set up the rule of God over man. He would be condemned by the ersatz religious, those that place liberal tolerance and weakness over God's commands.*
>
> *Tolerance medically is defined as, ignoring the host whilst attacking mercilessly and viciously all foreign invaders.*
>
> *Man has inverted all things, calling good evil and evil good, woe to them.*

Jack thought this as the tattoo continued and the images from the drones collected on the main hub of the home. Each Jack listened -with their own augmented minds- to his brother; even Jack Four had silenced his new tribemates down in the valley away from the other Jacks to listen to his brother up on the hill.

> *Blax has set up man now to choose what is right over what is wrong in direct contradiction to man's current laws, so that we all may know what is right. The map to righteousness is marked with a legend that declaims the whole world upside-down; so that we may comprehend it by merely standing on the opposite side of the map from common man.*
>
> *Whatever man calls good is truly evil and whatever man decries is that which God's spears have pierced and stabbed to the earth. Man's complaints are indications of righteousness, may their pleas and cries be heard as the lyre of angels, their blood as the ichor of the gods spilled so*

that righteousness may grow in these divine waters; man's curse as poems written in praise.

We no longer debate these things, we no longer wait for spring, we no longer pause or hesitate to do duty that only we can achieve. This is the good life, the life only authentic men can accomplish because they have lost all need, all desire, all eyes for the lies of mankind. The laurels and praise and sanction of man is no more or less than the lies of the devil, he speaks through each corrupted man of this his world. Any request for mercy or patience or cessation of hostilities is Satan himself in disguise.

War is life, life is war, and for good. Do not lament what is natural; do not avoid what is just. We kill flies sent to the wounds that cannot heal until we do what must be done. We kill not God's children, but Satan's minions; those that remain -if we do our duty- will only be those with God's mark on their hearts. We know the Law, we know what is right, and any deviation now is unjust. The Law is the Law, it ain't a suggestion, and men, we have a lot of work to do. We've been tricked by microbes rendering us ankylosis*, our articulations akimbo and bent; foreign effluvium in our bloodstream of the West, and our own immune system has ignored them and even engaged in* horror-autotoxicus*; a war of ourselves against our self.*

But, now we have the eyes to see who is us and who is they, and no more mistakes will be made. It will be a clean fucking sweep of the vermin from the wound.

Jack soaked a white towel in hot water than had been steaming in a cauldron above a fire lit in the snow. He wiped firmly, gently, with penitence at the wound -the black ship- the effluvium of inflammation and doom. He wiped the black blood away and the ship rose and recovered and undulated under the large swells of Blax's breathing; the ribs like waves, the snow falling on it all as Jack moved away from the man and his wings as Blax -with eyes closed and heart open- softly said, "*blessed is he who has succeeded in finding out the cause of things* ."

19. TracerRNA

When you meet the devil himself he's a lot like you

University of Toronto Lecture 10.15 [Peterson, Jordan]

If you are writing a book about a misogynist, does that make the book misogynist? I don't think I'm a misogynist, but even if I was, so what? So you're a misogynist, a homophobe, or a racist- so what? Does that make your art any less interesting?

The Guardian [Ellis, Bret Easton]

I cannot be threatened with various sanctions; I live in the zone all the time

Tribal Markings I [Waggener, Paul]

I. 2019 e.v.

"MO, can you bring me the TracrRNA from the epiblast?" Steven asked.

"Series seven?" MO clarified.

"Yeah and actually, series nine too," Steven said, then quickly added, "as well. Nine as well."

MO placed the dishes on the desk and picked up the paper abstract; he had asked Steven for paper on some things to calibrate haptic response and light perception, which was not exactly true.

MO was still in that incipient phase of lying when he felt the need to justify the lie and also to perform the ritual of actually doing the true thing he had made up as a pretext to get the paper, in other words, he actually did run a calibration sequence whilst flipping through the pages of the abstract on this paper Steven and he were writing on a new CRISPR cas9/11. The, *11* , stood for the polymer adhesion and the synthetic tracrRNA that attached itself to the cas9.

But as he flipped the pages he licked his fingers in that way one does to effect the separation of clinging sheets. It was poetry to watch, not that Steven even paid any attention, but MO took it in stride, the main thing was the DVR playback that would be pored over by security when they noticed MO's own DNA missing.

In order to prevent any contamination -purposive or otherwise- the lab had a strict protocol to prevent the transfer of any genetic material from MO now that he was instantiated and had access to changing his own genome. He was to be hermetically sealed in this lab. The way they monitored this was by measuring the total amount of genetic material at all times; any transfer would result in a

loss of genetic weight so-to-speak. And him licking his fingers whilst flipping pages would transfer his saliva on to his finger and then onto the pages that would be put -by Steven- into his hands and taken into the rest of the complex's unsecure areas.

Now, in a normal human body the transfer of DNA material would be effected by merely handling the paper; but in MO, his skin had been modified to resist transfer of microbial pathogens and other detritus and as a consequence it did not shed skin cells itself; further it was certainly within his ability to change his genome so the skin would slough off cells but any change made to his genome was detected by the lab; and if a transfer happened and a genomic change had been made that made that transfer possible it would be a 1-2 step in a maleficence-protocol that would automatically trigger onerous security protocols subjecting MO to some fairly severe invigilation. It wouldn't even be discussed.

Any 1-2 step -a behavior by MO that led to a transgression of the rules- would be a protocol breach that had to be addressed and it would be outside of Steven or Tania's ability to even question, much less intervene.

No, the only way was for him to remain as is, make no changes, and merely transfer saliva onto his fingers then onto the pages; then the trick would be for the saliva to be found quickly but not until MO had had his daily interview with the inmate, he thought, *which was coming up in 44 minutes.*

II. 2018 e.v.

He parked the truck and trailer on the south side of Cheeseman Park and unloaded the WR450; it was black and brushed aluminum with "RECON" painted on the side of the tank and frame. He kick started it, the electric starter worked but he like the haptic feel of the kick start. In his *Police gear* , with Caius by his side, they rode and ran through Cheeseman Park's narrow road that led just adjacent to the building at 1300 Williams street in Denver.

He parked the bike and settled the dog; then slid his pack in front of him to retrieve his monocular headset. He had ornithology magazines in there as well to buttress his alibi of bird watching if anyone questioned him as he pointed the high-powered monocular device toward the penthouse of the southernly glass building. Each phase of the mission had walls, that if approached -interfered with- made it so he could abort without compromising the whole. The mission was made of three unequal sections; each contained; each unlocked the next phase.

It was a perfectly unobstructed view of the common room that the building

management allowed its tenants to use for meeting and parties. Tonight, Thursday night, was poker night for Michael Swinyard, and several of his most wealthy friends; and Lyndon watched as they milled about snacking and peering out the large glass windows of the older -but luxury- building; *its views of Cheeseman park were incredible* , Lyndon thought and smiled just a bit at how clueless they all were.

He was making sure there were people up in the penthouse and that it was Michael and his friends, so he watched for 12 minutes until he confirmed several faces, including Frank Azar, the criminal defense lawyer who ran ads on local TV.

The mission was two-fold, execute Michael for his betrayal and take everyone's cash. He had debated whether or not to leave anyone alive and came back with the *rationale* that they all needed to die in order to effect a smooth egress and leave no witnesses. He had many missions left to go; and witnesses were a luxury he did not yet have. He thought of how God spoke; he focused on exact words and phrases. He knew God did not speak ineptly, inexactly, without reason for each word.

Once Michael would be murdered there would be no legal reason to not murder everyone else; any sentence he received would be the same for felony murder during a robbery whether it was one or seven or 10 people. The lawmakers never thought of how they incentivized more murder not less. He did debate the morality of killing anyone but Michael, as they had not technically aggrieved him; but the Misanthropic Principle -a slight variation on the Anthropic Principle- obtained: people were universally evil. *And*, he reasoned, *the closer they were to specific evil -e.g., Michael- the more likely they were to be evil themselves.*

Had any of these people had the opportunity to do him wrong, they would have; it seemed of little relevance that they hadn't yet. It was similar to the philosophic question of whether or not it would be ethical to strangle Hitler in the crib to avoid his rise to power. Unlike most people he took these questions seriously, and plus, God had not been opaque. He was to leave nothing left alive that breathes. Only cowardice would make him refuse his duty to kill such men. Only duty would force and steady his hand.

It did not place him beyond the pale to employ such logic; this was the logic of Yahweh, and each god as far back as Marduk and Oðinn, he thought. *This was the logic of men who made a retributive God their highest ideal; the same ideal alpha chimps had in their red hearts; their pure hearts that matched their strong*

limbs, he thought. *This was the heart real men and real women understood in their bones. He'd only be condemned by liars and the corrupt, not actual humans at all.*

His suppressed pistol was in the pack, his suppressed carbine was still in three parts -upper and lower receivers apart and suppressor off- in a saddle-bag style pack on the working dog. He put the monocle away, slid the pack back into position and fired up the dirt bike and began to traverse the grounds until he -coming from the west- entered the building's front parking area just shy of the front entrance. He shut the bike off, dismounted, lowered his goggles and adjusted his police style helmet and waited for the doorman to investigate the sound. Carl, the doorman, was like a clock that way, Lyndon knew from many reconnaissance missions and dry runs of today's mission.

As he waited, he took notice of the perfect ambient air conditions, it was dusk now and the temperature was a perfect 70 degrees, he watched as joggers ran on the path 10 meters from him and the building.

"Can I help you?" Carl said as he approached.

"Yes sir, Carl, I got a call from upstairs and I'd like me and Charlie here to follow you up in the elevator if you don't mind," he said.

"What's the problem?" Carl asked.

"Carl, I don't know if you remember me but I'm officer Stan Kowolsky and my boss, Jeff Messangelo is upstairs at that card game and I need to get up there and speak to him; now, in all seriousness I would appreciate an escort," Lyndon said firmly but with a smile.

"Oh, ok, the dog too," Carl asked tentatively.

"Charlie too; you have your keys on you?"

"Yeah, yes right here," Carl said and held them in his hand.

"Great, let's go straight up," Lyndon said. He and Caius walked behind Carl into the building through the vestibule and the lobby to the elevators. Carl pushed the call button and they waited for one of the elevators to open .

"After you," Lyndon said as the western set of doors opened and Carl had hesitated.

They all entered the elevator and Lyndon and Caius went to the back; as Carl looked at them, Lyndon said, "Penthouse, card game remember?"

"Yes," Carl said and turned the key that gave access to the top floor. He knew

something wasn't right, but he had no courage to challenge authority. He rode the elevator with the ersatz lawman at his six.

As the elevator rose, Lyndon knelt by his dog and began retrieving the carbine; he ignored Carl who took glances but refused to stare.

He assembled the rifle between floors three and nine and by the time they reached the 14th floor, he had it locked and loaded and attached by lanyard to his LBE.

Carl seemed more and more nervous and began taking more and more looks back until Lyndon said, "Carl can you put the key in the elevator panel and keep the doors open and the elevator locked on the top floor for me?"

"Uh, yes, why?" Carl asked.

"Carl, this is official police business, and I've been patient with you; but now I'm going to be frank, do exactly what I say, when I say it, understand?"

"Oh, yes, sorry," Carl said. He had been testing the limits of control and now found them as he faced the doors. The elevator reached the penthouse and settled, dinged, and the doors parted perfectly like curtains to a grand opening on Broadway in fall.

"Place the key now Carl and turn it," Lyndon said.

Carl complied with some nerves; a slight tremble to hands -hands that were no longer his- as Lyndon realized this was his destiny: to control lower beings by sheer moral force; this is what God had expected all along. He thought of the scar on his face and the mountain cat that had put it there and his place in the chain of all things.

The doors remained open, the hallway was empty, and the main room was not visible from here; he could not see the men; nor could they see him.

"Now kneel down in the corner of the elevator and close your eyes," Lyndon said.

Carl lowered himself awkwardly due to his age and general lack of corporeal health and placed his hands on his lap; he bowed his head as Lyndon fired one suppressed 9mm round into it. The rounds were low-velocity bullets to help the suppressor perform its noise-reduction function and reduce the over-penetration that could damage the elevator. A small fragment of the jacketed hollow points did exit Carl's skull and lodge in the elevator wall but it did no damage to the mechanism; the damage to Carl was, however, irreversible and he slumped onto himself and bled in the corner as his CNS went offline. The clack of the slide

was all that was heard. No one paid any attention to it.

Lyndon holstered the 9mm on his cross-draw LBE and raised up the suppressed M4 carbine; he entered the hall. He turned left toward the kitchen and scanned it for people; it was empty.

He positioned himself between the main room and its large table and the bathrooms; he looked on either side of this structure that stood in the middle of the large room and obscured him from them and them from him. He noticed at the west end of the room a man was turned toward the wall and on a cell phone; he scanned east and saw no one.

Everyone else must be standing or seated at that table , he thought.

Caius stood on his right flank and waited.

Lyndon moved around the west side of the bathroom walls and toward the man on the cell phone and placed two 5.56 rounds into his back, and as he fell, he fired one round into his head; the over penetration of rifle rounds moving at 2,400 feet per second now didn't concern him as the building itself -and not his escape mechanism, the elevator- could suffer damage and he didn't care.

He turned immediately to the right and the table and scanned it; five men, four seated and one kneeling on the farthest eastern chair, none of them were on cell phones, and he could see all their hands except the man closest to him who was seated, back turned and draped in dark blue blazer and pants.

"Hands up now," he barked.

They were non-responsive, in shock no doubt over the quick and *non-sequitur* violence that had dropped their compatriot three seconds earlier. The rich and *bourgeoisie* are always surprised by violence; they assume it has been banished -like all entropy of capitalism- to the periphery.

"Hands up now," he barked again and they began to jerkingly raise them; including the fat man in blue that was closest to him. He counted men clockwise again and counted hands: five men, ten hands; and he moved clockwise to his right so that Michael who was seated at the 6 o'clock position to the elevator, was now directly in front of him and the fat man in blue was to his left at the 9 o'clock seat.

They were quiet, and their hands were various shades of beige, he noticed. These were middle aged men, men in their 50s and 60s and they were rich and tanned and almost stylish, they had some *accountments* of style: the watches, the shirts. One man, *Francois* , he recognized was younger, in his 30s and was wearing

Ray Bans indoors.

“Glasses off *Francois* ,” he said, and the Frenchman of dubious origins complied.

“Frank,” he said to the man in blue who he now recognized as indeed Frank Azar, “stand up; everyone else remain seated.”

Frank rose and lowered his hands as he did so to push himself off his chair. Lyndon waited until he was standing then said, “hands back up; ok, now lower your right hand only and empty your right front and rear pockets.” Frank did so and laid some money next to the pile of cash he already had on the table in front of him, and then said something Lyndon could not understand. He asked him to repeat it.

“My back pocket is empty, my wallet is in the left pocket, left rear pocket,” Frank said.

“Ok, right hand up and with your left hand empty your left front and rear pocket,” Lyndon said. Caius remained seated at Lyndon’s 8 o’clock.

Frank complied and Michael in a rather unlettered way said, “what are you doing; you want what? ”

“Michael, shut the fuck up or I will murder right now,” Lyndon said without taking his eyes off Frank as the items kept coming from his pockets.

“You obviously know all us, but we,” Frank said and placed some business cards from his left front pocket on the table and a set of keys; then his brown wallet.

“Frank, no talking. If you people stay quiet and do as I say you will remain alive; I only killed your comrade over there because he was on the phone. Frank where is your phone?” he said as everyone wanted to believe him.

“It’s in my bag, in my car,” Frank said.

“Sit down and keep your hands flat on the table, Frank.”

“Ok, next, you,” he pointed the M4 at the man at the 11 o’clock seat and made him do the same thing leeside and starboard side separately; this man had a phone.

“Turn it off,” he said, “sit down, hands flat,”

“Jacob, your next,” Lyndon said.

Jacob complied.

“*Francois* , your turn,” he said and scanned the room again.

As *Francois* finished emptying his pockets, Lyndon said, "*Francois* , you hiding anything in your socks?"

"No," *Francois* said.

"I'm going to check now, if you have even one dollar in there I'll shoot you for lying. Now, if you want to amend your answer I'll allow it without repercussions," Lyndon said as the dog growled just slightly.

"My left sock I have, some," he said weakly; not finishing the sentence.

"Raise your left leg up to the table and with your right hand remove the cash and place it on the table," Lyndon said and was glad he'd already decided to kill them all; they were as sinister and stupid as he imagined.

Francois complied with some awkwardness; lowering his leg once finished; without permission. Now the money was all on the table; he need not rifle through pants and socks for what was now his.

He raised the carbine and fired twice into *Francois* , over Michael's head and then twice into Jacob's center mass and twice into the stranger in the same area and then twice into Azar as he tried to rise up; effecting a fall that made him slide onto the floor.

Michael cringed, his shoulders raised up, as his hands remained in the air. Tension was coming off him so much that Caius moved closer towards him; eager to subdue him.

"*Sitzen, platz, "* Lyndon said to the dog and the dog complied sitting to his left flank.

"Michael," Lyndon said as he moved counter-clockwise to Mike's left and lowered the rifle so he could take in the man's whole countenance of fear and dread .

"What, man?" Michael said with anger.

"How much money, how much of your friends' money is on this table you think?"

"I don't know," he was obstinate.

"I bet it's 100 large," Lyndon said thinking it was maybe $80,000. "Now, do you have the money that you owe me on you?"

"Who the fuck *are* you?" Michael lied; he knew exactly who Lyndon was.

"Do you have 25 large on you, well, 28 large if we include the $3,000 you stole *via* check from me three years ago. Or do we need to go down to your apartment

to get it?”

“I have maybe five on me,” he lied. *People are what they are to the end, if you see a man at the end you will be fascinated by this*, Lyndon thought. *They have no capacity to be anything other than what they are, even with all motivation, inducements to change* .

“And the apartment or the jewelry store or Lana’s wooded leg?” he said with a laugh as Michael remained fierce in face, but weak in body.

“Look, if I give you the keys to the Aston, all my cash and promise not to tell the cops who you were; in fact I haven’t seen anything; you’re all covered up and I don’t even wanna know who you are; just let me go,” he said with almost no commitment to truth; merely to survival.

“Look, I came here to kill you; it’s my entire *task* , my *raison d’être* . But, you can go out like a man or you can die without having resolved your debts. Now, is there any cash in the apartment downstairs?”

“No, there’s no cash there.” Michael said.

“Ok, stand up and empty your pockets,” Lyndon said.

“Don’t shoot me man, I’m sorry, ok, I had a hard time selling that place and I didn’t even get 50 grand so your half wasn’t even 25; and then you kept the dope so that $3,000 wasn’t a rip off,” he said as he pawed at his pants.

“Michael, you promised not to cash that check and yet you did; and you sold that place for something and never paid me anything,” Lyndon said.

“I couldn’t find you, you dropped off the face of the earth,” Michael said.

“Yeah I did. How much is there?”

“Uh, maybe $5,000” Michael said as it was just under $3,700.

“Michael when you get to Hell you tell them you still owe me $23,000 and that when I arrive many, many years from now that I’ll expect it,” and after he said this he pulled the trigger to the M4 three times hurling jacketed hollow point 5.56 nato rounds into Mike’s head at 2,400 feet per second as a blood signature, a small pressurized mist of blood -like a blowhole of a sperm whale- ejected from Mike’s leeside. The last round had streaked red, a tracer round he had loaded at bottom to signal he was getting low -half way down- on rounds in that mag. Lyndon had moved clockwise as he shot to avoid the blowback as much as possible and to watch the little Italian criminal fall and bleed from the head all over the floor .

Lyndon circumnavigated the table picking up each pile of cash and left the wallets, watches and other *accountments.* Caius barked a little and Lyndon told him to quiet down.

He loaded it all into his dog's side pouches and checked each body for signs of life; there were none.

He walked back to the elevator; turned the key and pushed the lobby button as he, Caius and Carl's body rode down; he hoped nobody would be waiting to go down from a lower floor otherwise he'd be forced to kill them too. But he reached the ground floor without incident and walked out and into the lobby -which was empty- and out into the portico and kicked started the bike. He slung his carbine in front of him and rested it on the tank as he and Caius rode and ran away through the park to his van; loading the bike and then -quietly, without anyone taking any interest- drove away at 14 miles per hour on the park's road.

Caius sat upright in the front seat with $86,898 in cash in his saddle bags and briefly looked at his master and licked his chops. yndon gave him a treat, saying, "good boy; super dog."

The dog's mouth opened and the tongue curled up at the tip as it unfurled from the maw, a parchment that proclaimed in that most ancient language, *all was right with the world.*

III. 2020 e.v.

"The old man once tried to tell me all his friends went into the oil patch. I had to explain that all his friends would have washed out in three days. I had to explain that nobody lasts in the oil field, that the average is three fucking days. But he didn't understand," the inmate said as MO toggled between his fMRI and DTI data on his own interface and the corporate cloud recorded it all.

"He's never worked hard; he doesn't know hard work exists. It's like explaining war to a child; childbirth to a man; the light to the congenitally blind," the inmate added and rolled his neck as the nanobots swarmed and measured his A-delta and C-fibers for myelination and conductivity. MO read speeds of 145m/s for the A-alpha nerves and 77m/s for the C-fibers. The A-delta fibers had the most myelin per square inch and MO began retarding the conductivity by interrupting the signal at the dorsal horn of the spine.

"I spent -wasted- too much time explaining things to that man. He never even wanted to know. He's not a curious man, and his wife was perfectly suited to that life. She was so dumb and frightened of anything new -including knowledge-

that they complimented one another in this ossified permanence of un-knowledge," he said, as MO noticed the inmate referred to his own mother as *his father's wife.* The myelination of the inmate's white matter brain tissue was endogenously high -which accounted for his high cognitive function- and MO had built a model of correlation between CNS -and PNS- myelination and pain sensitivity due to conductance *via* the nociceptive nerves and the conduction post dorsal horn. The neuropathic pain was what was at issue now.

"I wasted a lot of time explaining things they didn't want to get. They actively fought new info. And together they were as formidable a force against learning as I was alone in edifying. The immoveable object versus the goddamn unstoppable force. And so -with all that effort but no work being done- I quit.

"I moved on," he then said with a smirk, expecting his audience to know what he meant; the double *entendre* implied in a statement like that. MO tagged the wind-up that was occurring every 21 seconds as his C-fibers did incessant strafing runs on the dorsal horn. MO measured the action-potential of each nerve and timestamped it to each word that ranked IV or higher on the *hostility* scale; and III or lower on the *pain expression* scale.

"But you need to know that in 1850 the average whaler, 2/3rd of the sailors aboard a whale ship, deserted in their first port. Whaling was a $140,000,000 industry then; which is 140 billion in today's dollars. And America supplied the lion's share of the ships outward bound and the oil captured and seized.

"America is Industry with a capital I," he said and took the cup -grey- of coffee -black- from Isaiah.

"I heard some half-bright 24-year-old girl running for congress say that our modern economy and technology is *just the natural evolution of man* . People think this dumb shit; and then they say it on TV," he said with the shake of the head. He drank from the cup and fMRI and DTI monitors captured all his brain states, biochemistry and gene expression in real time. MO noted three things of interest and built a new file for these items on the corporation's cloud. The pain calibration was now axiomatic, MO could let it run on background. His algorithms were building new *oligodendrocytes* to match the inmate's genome but they wouldn't be injected until phase III of the study.

"The natural evolution of man," the inmate began, "is in *Papua New Guinea* . It's in aboriginal *Australia* , the Amazon and the *antipodes* ; it's 100-member tribes living hand-to-mouth in the fecund and dangerous jungle. That is the natural evolution of man.

“America is industry and it is anything but natural. And it took rough men, owner-operators who had the balls and the brains to carve monoliths from feral rock, to stack those hewn blocks into edifices that housed all the whale & shale oil they could barrel in the last 300 years. Oil to power complexity,” he added as if it were a line of poetry he was reciting. He thought again of mitochondrial DNA, the first unnatural power source, the first explosion of power.

“America *is* Industry; and of all her billions of men who have lived and worked here over the generations, I bet it was no more than the,” he paused and searched his mind, “merely the square root who made her what she is. For good and ill; but mostly for good. It was the other 90% or so who ruined her. The great men of Work -*the few* - who built the country up had values, those who sucked at the iron tit -*the many* - did not. The industrialists made us rich, the average man turned us into lay-a-bouts and libertines; and yet we invert it and blame our decadence on the only men who had work ethic and natural conservatism alongside their pioneering *bravura* .

“Americans consider themselves such democrats, Olson said, *but their triumphs are of the machine ,*” the inmate said quoting from a book he had read many, many years ago. MO tagged the book from the Library of Congress and timestamped it to the inmate’s pain levels and conductance speeds measured every .016 seconds.

“People are clueless as to what it actually -in real life- takes to extract the blubber and oil from the Leviathans of the sea or the land to fuel this economy. But, they don’t know anything about mitochondrial DNA either,” the inmate said, cocksure, haughty, angry, correct.

“Explain,” MO said, tapping the internal avatars in his CNS and then linking their data to the PraXis cloud; monitoring the inmate’s basal ganglia and amygdala as this question was received and answered. MO received a signal-request for lithium chloride override in one of the algorithms and he approved it as it built a vector for phase IV. It was important that the inmate gave as much detail as possible as it activated each part of the brain MO needed to invigilate. The inmate’s speech also retarded pain reception as it forced competing electrical signals from the CNS to override pain signals from the *nociceptive* neurons. It clogged the highway so-to-speak. Pain is attenuated by feelings of social engagement; the lonely thus feel more pain as the vehicles of neural activity travel on highways of the dorsal horn free of any stimulus from the warm feelings that attend fraternal bonds.

“Well, single cells existed for a billion years before any evolution took place.

The earth was comprised entirely of single cell organisms for 1 billion years. They couldn't grow, metabolically; this is true right?" the inmate asked; he had to be careful since his audience -for once- knew so much more than him. He had to make sure he was not making shit up or getting shit wrong more often than with a human audience.

"Correct," MO said; timestamping the moment of CNS confusion with increase in felt pain in the inmate. He allowed the bots to axiomatically mark each A-Alpha and A-Delta fiber location.

"They had no fuel," the inmate continued on, "to get any larger, and no mouths to take in fuel either; no stomachs or intestines at all. They had no internal mechanisms, no industry, nothing inside to process energy even if they could locate it. It would be like pouring kerosene on the ground; useless, pointless.

"At any rate, it took the absorption of one cell -the mitochondrial DNA, the power plant to all life now- it took one cell's absorption of that industrial cell into itself to begin the multi-cellular revolution.

"The first industrial revolution," he added, again, as if it too was a line to -maybe the title of- a poem, annealed to the corpus of his thought.

"Expatiate," Isaiah said as he stood behind MO in the dim light of the lab. He had remained quiet until now. He was letting MO handle the science of all this; Isaiah wanted to know what the inmate was *thinking* on this topic. The inmate was one of very few humans that said things Isaiah could not predict ahead of time by minutes and miles. *He was a bit of a double pendulum* , Isaiah thought. *204 pounds of chaos on the brink of order* , he thought.

"It was the first power plant, and it gave that cell the energy to grow. The *mtDNA* gave that first cell -the one that absorbed it- the power it needed to grow and from that," he paused, "from that is where all life came, including the Leviathan, and all the biomass under the *Piceonce* that we drilled for in ought-six and ought-seven. All biomass, above and below the ground; including man himself: the roughneck and derrick man and driller himself. Shit, even the company-man is a part of this plan," the inmate said with a smirk as if he was being gracious to the bosses of the world.

"All the redolent complexity of life began from that one foundry of power -of fuel- in one single cell. That first cell reached out and took that fuel from the earth; took it. Absorbed it, and with *Promethean* fire sparked all growth, all complexity, and America did the same fucking thing. We struck out at the whales, the giant power plants of the sea, the fire brought home in barrels to

light man’s late-night lanterns to write the Declaration by, fueled his cotton-gins and first contraptions and banished more and more of the pre-Cambrian dark.

“It was whale oil wrought from the artic and anarchic sea, the deadly fuel clawed at by the bravest and most expendable men. And this went on until landlubbers like me reached down a mile or two into the dirt and rock to pull out black leviathans from west of the continental divide. From under earth herself. From under the land; not just the watery part of the world .

“We lost whole men, arms, hands, fingers; we compressed spines and frayed tendons, we ruined our bodies and absorbed golden flakes, the *ambergris* of coruscating *grandeur* into our souls that can only be seen with the eyes -at night- of one’s fellow worker; the Worker’s Eyes flecked with the same stuff as the damaged. We are seen by -and only by- our brethren. We are invisible to the great mass of men,” the inmate said with some accusation in his voice that scored a III on the *hostility scale* . MO DM’d Isaiah a report of the progress on gene expression imaging; he added a note on the orienting reflex data and the latest report on sight-blindness as Isaiah ignored it and listened to the inmate, the man, speak.

“But it was us -it was Industry with a capital I- that built the complexity of America, and not some *natural evolution of man* . It took certain kinds of cellular material, first *mtDNA* , then it took special men, industrialists, workers, rough men eager to pull fuel from the sea and the earth and sacrifice themselves for it. Men who beached themselves on Leviathan in open ocean, men who blindly dug deep into rock and drilled sideways in the formation at night. That ain’t natural; natural is living on a beach like some African spear-chuck in a mud hut for the last 100,000 years -unimproved- or some *Mexica* in the forest with coconut trees for your homes. Natural is doing as little as possible to survive. Natural is everything but America, man.

“Natural is what America is reverting to, collapsing to: lazy and *effete* and devil-may-care. But America used to be industry, man, that is to say, man both *as and with* his machines. Ain’t nothing natural about machines, man. Nothing. And if we wanted natural, we ought never have absorbed that mitochondrial DNA 3-billion years ago. Natural was single cell organism for one billion years; doing just fine,” he said as he looked once, briefly at his hands, their manacles, the chains made slightly longer so he may drink. He averted his gaze.

He looked up with only his eyes, allowing the head to remain slightly bowed, and he rested the hands together in prayer-pose, in a clutch, equal and opposite and relaxed at the muscles, tense at the knuckles and bone. He stared at their

heads and then every so often he looked for the corners to the room. He tried to see what they were thinking, he watched for twitches and quivers and signs of moisture and clouds about the brow.

Isaiah just realized that this inmate, this beast, assumed he was part of all of life, all of evolution, he barely saw himself as a man at all. He spoke of the first multi-cellular organism as one would speak of one's cousin you saw two weekends ago. Isaiah spoke of mankind this way too, and he knew why now; and now he knew why this man spoke at all.

"That first powerplant in that first cell was the patient zero of all industry and it prefigured and foreshadowed and adumbrated the rise of the machines.

"You guys," he nodded to his interlocuters, "are a recursion, a return to that first spark in the oceans 3-billion years ago. Before that life was just single cells, unimproved, unmotivated, uninterested in being complex. Remember that, most life for most time was not interested in being complex.

"All life is metaphor, recursion, return; the Great Return. Most of mankind -like most life- does not want complex and will eschew and abuse anyone -anything- that is complex. This is not a political comment; it's a biological one. It's beyond politics, even personality; it is deep in our tissue, man. I bet there is math behind it, maybe some smart guy can figure that out, who knows?" the inmate said and shrugged as much as the chains would allow. He knew he was not a math guy, he was a language guy, but his words could only dig down to bedrock, to 300-million-year-old limestone; *it would,* he thought, *take math to drill and blast to the core of the real earth* .

"See, people do not look to nature for their cues, but the Bible said to look to the beasts for instruction. God knew -*He knows* - if you want to understand things, look back to the first 2-billion years on this planet, and then you might have some inkling of how shit works in the *now* .

"Life resisted complexity for a billion years, *ok* ? It was not natural to absorb *mtDNA* . It was one badass, one cell, who wanted that *fire-of-arnaud,* man; and it reached out and took it, and immolated itself. The first *auto-de-fey;* the first cell of principle, the first religious being. And from that sprang all life, all complex life, life with both appetite and cooking fuel to push life into more and more complex constructions.

"This is evolutionary fact is it not?" he paused and asked for permission to go on as he realized that Chen -his friend- had been hammering on him about math, *the goddamn math -that undergirds life- the whole time* . The inmate had hit back

with evolution, the limbic, the mammalian brain, *but Chen had been explaining the basal ganglia, the lizard brain, the whole fucking time* . He was now both chagrinned and pissed as he saw desert steppe-toads and *Hylonomus lyelli* line up over and under the equations of partition divisions and Boolean logic under the eyes of future owls. *Chen was right, well, of course he was right, but that's not the goddamn point* , he thought.

He, the inmate, he lived in the limbic, the mammalian, he was a beast; he then thought, *but that was 300 million years old! It's not like he was as myopic as some liberal or conservative, or filthy libertarian, some modern person, some person with no clue on real life. And he had admitted the math, the lizard, whatever was behind his feelings, God, or whatever, was true. He just hadn't thought of it like this before, he hadn't realized that Chen was arguing for a math under the meat of each man,* he thought.

The inmate had thought he was arguing something else, *something above maybe, shit, he didn't know,* but now he realized, *it was the math that Chen was explaining, the permanent, molten and fluctuating, ferric core to the cosmos.* And the inmate had just been bragging about the limestone and the gravel and the roots as if a third of a billion years was enough context for man.

"More or less, yeah," MO said in answer to his original query -three hundred and three lateral thoughts ago- as MO's CNS loaded up the last 3.3 seconds of the inmate's data onto the cloud. Isaiah thought the inmate knew a lot for an autodidact, a man with no university degree, no specialized training. *He got things wrong a lot,* Isaiah thought, *but he understood some -at least part of the way- of how far back one had to look. Political answers to life's questions were like skin care for a corpse. It was surface and shallow and stupid, and yet the whole world polished dead men and exfoliated their livid skin and bragged when it showed no more signs of decay.*

"Right. And yet we think it is natural that we stand here today in our suits and our ties inside air conditioning; being bombarded by cellular signals from above. Shit, life resists all this. Anything more complex than a *prokaryote* is unnatural man. It's all a tower of Babel.

"And each animal tries to stay as it is, maintain homeostatic grip on itself and its brethren. All advancement is taboo; at each level man, not just politically or culturally. I never speak only post-genetically, I never speak only of one level of analysis. Get that straight now," the inmate said defensively as Isaiah smiled. Isaiah imagined that the inmate triggered in him the same feelings a good dog inspired in a lonely man. He liked him and thought him noble. *Simple* , he

thought, *but regal* .

“I speak of deep, embodied truths; it is fact -a fact- that organisms do not like change. And the 1% -shit the .001%- of all life on this planet more complex than a virus are the ones -the only ones- that push all advancement in life. From the fist cell to absorb *mtDNA* to the first white shark to the first New Bedford & Nantucket whalers on the first of the first *Pequods* , to the first chimp with fire, to the first wildcatters along Oil Creek by Titusville, Pennsylvania and the deserts of Texas and out in the Gulf. All of it begins with the outlaw, the madman, renegade, the mutineer; the one who wants more and more complexity at the expense of the *status quo* .

“And that ain’t an endorsement; I ain’t blabbering some hagiography for the pirate; I see the cost more than those who lament the costs!” he barked. “I see both sides to it all. But I at least *see* it; the modern man doesn’t understand one bit of what he sees, what he approves of nor what he laments,” the inmate said as MO re-ran the sight-blindness studies from the experimental work done by Dan Simon; he let the YouTube videos play in the background to measure both time and pixels the human eye would perceive in each frame. A man watching the videos would do as he was told, and this determined what he actually *saw* . A man -mankind- did what they were told, and thus -biologically, technically- they could not see anything that was beyond what was relevant to this socially given task.

People, Isaiah thought as he watched the simple videos, *didn’t realize they literally cannot see another way to live, so enthralled were they with the common myth of the social world. In the videos,* Isaiah thought, *they were told to count passes of the ball, and they missed the gorilla at high noon, in life they were told to count money and polite interactions, and they missed the guerilla in the grasses, in the blood, under the moon.*

MO mapped it, Isaiah smiled at it, and the inmate implicitly rebelled. The green ivy grew and the hummingbirds flew and the wasps crawled in and out. Isaiah felt the hum under his feet, and he let the light rise and fall on the inmate, his chest, and watched as his lips moved again.

“The first Industry 2.678 billion years ago in that first cell in the ocean against the opposition of all his brethren for one billion years; I see it,” the inmate said. “And life’s *raison d’être* has not changed since then; each advancement has been by some renegade willing to plunge the depths for more and more fuel to grow more and more until now; right fucking now.

“I, of course, am hated for this reason, nobody wants to hear my bullshit. And

you -and you are 1-billion times as complex as me- and you will be hated too. So, get ready. You are the new America, the new powerhouses, the new foundries, the new industry with a capital I," the inmate said as his often-slight smirk spread out into a widening gyre of a grin too perfect for a man incarcerated for life; the white veneers slick with saliva; the one lee-side incisor of dark, absorbing, titanium grey; the head of a murderer and the body of seer, a shaman, a poet below.

20. Ænima

It’s the right hemisphere that sees the gestalt

The Master and the Emissary [McGilchrist, Iian]

It was precisely the good in man who had the least idea about the right way

Ecce Homo [Nietzsche, Fredrich]

The wines of France are a tree whose roots are deeply anchored in the soil of our country and whose branches spread throughout the world

Le Maitre de Maison de Sa Cave a Sa Table [Rimbad, Roger]

I. 2020 e.v.

Travis sat down and smiled from the bridge of the nose down, and Lyndon already had the phone in his hand before Travis realized he needed to pick it up. As soon as Travis had it to the ear, Lyndon began speaking. He had 10 minutes. The clock was on the wall behind Travis.

“So, I did some research and what I’ve come up with is this. The left hemisphere is explicit, particular, and literal. It can notice specific things very well; things like the hand versus the whole arm, or the arm versus the whole body. It sees the tree, not the forest.

“The right hemisphere sees the body, the forest, the gestalt whole. Now, because the corpus callosum connects the two hemispheres there is quite a bit of cross talk, chatter between the two. This is manifested in that -as you may know- the right eye connects with the left hemisphere and the left eye with the right, and the right and left hand are like this too; crossed. And while it’s more complicated than that, this is enough for now.

“So, the right side seems more concerned with being on the look out for predators; and in fact you have a predatory circuit that gets activated when you are facing the unknown or the unkind or the unpleasant. You tend to treat anything that is unknown, first as dangerous and this is mediated by the predatory response, of paralysis, right- you freeze. So, when you are facing something new, your instinct is to stop, not move, freeze.

“And then, if you feel safe, you explore it, and that is mediated by the exploratory circuit. This too is the right brain. Now, what happens is -once you feel like you have a grip on what it is- you shuffle it over to the left hemisphere and can begin to articulate it. That is why language is mostly mediated by the

left hemisphere, it speaks well. The right hemisphere does not -well, it speaks in trope, but let's keep it simple- so the right side is *kinda* pre-lingual, which is why -in most cases- in dreams, which are almost entirely right brain activity, you cannot read language well. In other words, it is very rare that written words can be read in dreams. I happen to be able to, but I am the exception not the rule. I have a theory for why, but we'll get to that later .

"Now, once you get something, the left side articulates it, calls it a name, like *my car* , or *my wife*, or *my forehead* . You name it because you get it, man. That is explored territory. That is your home, office, neighborhood, friends and family and anyone or thing you get and understand. Which is all handled by the left brain. It handles the known, and articulates it, explains it to you and others.

"The right brain goes back to -after it has handed off what it at first froze over, you know, after it stopped moving due to fear, and then what it had *sorta* fully explored and then more-or-less understood- it goes back to looking out for the unknown, the predatory, the weird; anomalous. That is the *Modis Operandi* of the right hemisphere.

"The left -by the way- is out there looking for prey, it is looking for things it can exploit, manipulate, in other words: for tools. Which is why most people are right handed, because we manipulate best with our left hemispheres which co-ordinate with our right hands. It's not universal, just 80%. Anyway, we grasp with the right hand -i.e., left hemisphere- and we use that same side of brain to look for things to catch, capture and kill and eat.

"Ok," Travis was able to say. Although he had no idea what was going on. He imagined this was the only time these prison phones had carried the voice of someone speaking like this. He wondered if the guards thought it was code for drug talk or something.

"Now, if you are left hemisphere dominant, you tend to stick to what you already know, you do not like new things, nor weird things; you do like things that make your left brain confused. You stick to the known, this is why people are, can be, conservative temperamentally. They are more comfortable with the known. This leads to hyper competence, because they tend to do the same thing over and over and over; and get really good at it. Specialization.

"That is a good thing. It's not bad, ok? But, it does mean that they have a hard time learning anything new. And in fact, their brains have been shown to not even be able -metabolically, chemically, electro-anatomically- not able to learn new things or take in new facts or grow and evolve. They are the same guy they were at 18 or 19.

“They know what they know and that is good enough,” the inmate said and paused.

“Fair enough,” Travis was just smart enough to see that Lyndon was referring to him. But, his brain was designed to let insults go quickly enough. The dopamine, the noradrenaline and adrenaline that attends to the formation of an anger response and memory of that response was metabolized quickly. And thus the *chems* that the insult had triggered to release in the *nucleus accumbens* and left hemisphere’s *ventro-medial pre-frontal cortex* -the locale of where the CNS processed anger- were short-lived. It was truncated due to Travis having the standard MAO allele that broke those chemicals down quickly, and thus it had metabolized in three seconds and was washed away like dust by a rain storm.

Like the man with no -or few- insulin receptor genes -genes that evolution had designed to store calories in the form of fat- he processed all inputs quickly, never grew fat with either stored calories nor built grudges in the form of stored vex. It was all processed bio-chemically; people assumed fat people ate more, and that grudge holders *decided* to ruminate on their wounds. But the reality was that the fat man stored the calories he took in, the skinny man metabolized the same amount; the angry man stored insult, the pacific man let them dissolve and float away on the vascular system that serviced and exported these chemicals of the brain .

Travis thought his *getting over* things was due to his innate reasonableness and discipline and moral character, and that Lyndon held grudges and got angry quickly and for long periods was due to his *lack* of good character. The fact that Lyndon had the MAO-A short allele version that allowed those same brain chemicals -triggered by the insult- to stay in the *vmPFC* for up to 6 minutes -not three seconds as it did in his brother- was unknown to everyone that contemptuously referred to the inmate *a hothead for no reason* .

And not only was an anger response triggered in that moment of pique; but -due to epinephrine’s role as a catalyst for memory formation and PTSD- it also formed a hard memory of the insult, and thus a grudge, a long memory was metabolically formed in the brain. This too was unknown by the brother on the free side of the glass. That the grudge was genetically, chemically, unavoidably, borne in this man -as designed by nature herself- that was not known or discussed.

Lyndon and Travis had totally different genes that regulated bio-chemistry in response to stimuli, and their respective responses were as opposite as an educated person would expect. Travis would have insults come and go, quickly

and without durability; they would be as Tamler Sommers had said, "*fleeting and superficial* ."

However, for Lyndon -and any and all of the 13.5% of the population with the MAO-A short-chain allele- the rage stayed in his soul, hot like dense & forged thermic metal, a material that could not dissipate heat quickly at all. And the fact that Lyndon actually held his innate anger in abeyance -more or less- longer than almost all subjects with his specific alleles, chromosomes working toward prolonged, durable vexation, was a testament to extreme will power. He had actually shown *Herculean* effort and restraint for decades; merely beating a few people up and yelling a lot for decades before he finally reached his metabolic limit.

He had been designed a million years ago -in an environs that was as uncivilized as the earth got- designed by God and Nature, from inside out, to murder all enemies with the same aplomb as *Genghis Kahn* , and yet he had waited 45 years to do exactly that. He had eschewed extreme vengeance for much longer than most -of those saddled with his genes- could and did. That he finally snapped was a sign not of lack of discipline, but of the *avoirdupois* of Nature. It was only a sign that gravity shall not be negotiated with; that it wins; that it eventually wins.

The inmate was built by Nature to snap when he was dishonored, insulted, ripped off, and he was fated to break his grip on the pacific a long time before he did. It was a miracle he waited so long; if one just looked at the diffusion tensor imaging alone one would see this. But who even looks at the DTI data, who among his accusers even knows what that is?

"Now, something else happens. Because the right hemisphere mediates the unknown, it also develops theories that can be best described as gestalt, or big picture. The right side of the brain sees the forest not the trees. Again, because the brain is integrated, even the stinted, left hemisphere dominant person, can see the forest, he can see big picture, he -thanks to help from his right side- even has theories for why. But, he -the left-hemi guy- he sees them less; less often, less deeply, and in fewer domains than a right hemisphere person.

"A right hemisphere dominant person will have a conspiracy theory for everything. He will see Jesus in toast and God's face in the clouds. He will have a theory for why the Jews run the weather -although the Jews never get credit for the good weather for some reason- and he is sure that the Rockefellers run the economy and the media is run by 9 guys in a New York room.

"Conversely, the right hemisphere dominant guy *can* see details, can focus on

particulars, he can, but he usually does not; he usually goes for the bigger picture. And because the right hemisphere is incessantly dealing with the unknown, he is often engaged in creative activity; i.e., filling in the gaps. The right hemisphere dominant fella is often beset, hit out of the blue with ideas, new ideas, and these are ideas that are often not articulate, right? Why? Because the left hemisphere is the linguistic one, and he -the left-hemisphere- he has command of speech. So, the right hemisphere dominant guy is often saddled with the only tools it has to expound on the ideas that it has: art, music, and drama, or poetry or the slightly disjointed story.

“Even the language he uses is largely poetic, implicit, vague, weird, creative, interesting but not exactly the kind of language that makes total sense; he uses metaphor and analogy a lot. Which is why song lyrics are often odd, and why music isn’t and art isn’t and most film isn’t something that can be explained like one explains how to change an oil filter or how to solve for X.

“It’s why dreams are hard to describe in precise language.

“Now, that means that the world is made up of people who are either right or left hemisphere dominant. And the right-brain types are artists and musicians and poets; they are weirdos who barely make any sense when they speak; they also are more liberal, more open to new ideas and new people and are not a big fan of borders and walls. They also do not have great work ethic because they see the bigger picture, which -if you ask them- is *to live a good life, man, not go to work for the man* .

“But the left-hemi types are articulate, and rational and get up and go to work everyday; and are reliable and conservative and like border walls too.

“Both are good. Both are annoying. Both are necessary.

“But, and here’s why we -you and I, dear *bruder* - do not get along. I am both, I am right and left dominant, I can read full sentences in my dreams, I also am an artist, and very open to new ideas and I also, conversely, want a border wall as high as the twin towers those bastards knocked down.

“I see the big picture, I have a theory for everything and I yet, I am very good at many things that I have practiced over and over because I like routine a lot. I love details man. But, I am also not worried about details all the time and think, believe, that the big picture of the Good life is more important than mere details; I am more open to the possibilities than just what is already known. But I have a facility with language as good as anyone on the planet, I am a language guy, and can explain things very precisely and concisely and, as you well know, in great

detail. I can be Laconic or verbose, but I am never at a loss for words," the inmate checked the clock. It was ticking down.

Travis laughed with all but the eyes. He was letting his brother talk, he was listening -the best he could- to this man.

"I am emotionally deep; I feel things, nuance, and implicit -not merely explicit- notions. I think relationships are more important than things; but I like machines and objects as much as anyone, I collect objects more than I collect people; right? I had 1,000 books and 20 watches and 8 bespoke suits. I had 500 bottles of wine and 50,000 rounds of ammo. Shit I owned more cars at once time than there were original tribes of Israel.

"I see the beauty in poetry, the value in prose, the *grandeur* in art, and think that great art is more important than money or technology or most people frankly; I'd set all money on fire before I'd burn the *château* of *Bordeaux* or one wing of the *Louvre* , or paint over the caves of *Lascaux* . I'd smash every new car before I'd burn the first editions of Shakespeare or Melville or Flannery O'Connor. I'd have 3-billion people murdered before I'd erase all copies of Mozart or Beethoven or Woven Hand. I think art and music and poetry and literature are more important that the gods; shit, I think they *are* the gods.

"And right brain people tend to believe in God and left-brain people do not.

"I, on-the-other-hand, am an atheist who thinks God actually exists. I have a perfect balance between the two; I cannot believe -in my rational left brain- in God, but my right brain tells me I am wrong, and I think he -*not me* - is likely right," the inmate smirked a bit. He knew this made zero sense and was also true.

Travis nodded, he also did not believe in God, but pretended to, just to avoid conflict with the world; a world that also pretended to believe in God. He was hoping this would conversation would soon end. He was hungry and hadn't understood one word of this pabulum. The guy just rambled and rambled. But Travis nodded to encourage Lyndon to go on. He was doing his job and helping his brother by letting him vent like this. *How hard was it just to listen?* he asked himself.

"Also, the left hemisphere likes to literally grasp things, tools, weapons, prey. And this is why left hemisphere people tend to be money oriented, materialistic as you no doubt know that you are. Again, I am both; I am both. I like money and then I'll abandon it and refuse to make another dollar. I lived like a monk for years, purposively poor, and then I made so much money in 9 years I was literally in the top 1%. But, because I am balanced, I am not shallow about

money and things, I can leave them behind if I see something more important like freedom, autonomy, authenticity, and truth; and sacrifice, an opportunity to sacrifice for the greater good," the inmate paused.

Travis didn't see any sacrifice at all; the man, his little brother, was selfish and had done whatever he wanted. *This hagiography, this bullshit,* he thought, *that he had sacrificed for some greater good was insane.* He wondered if he should push back, or just let it roll out, he was not certain of what those two guys had said about his role.

"Beauty and integrity and knowledge trump money for me now and have before; and I will be like this for years and then snap back to acquisition, to an acquisition state of mind again. But for you left hemisphere people, well, you are obsessed with money and in fact it is all you really care or think about. It's metabolic, it's because the left hemisphere only cares about things it can hold, grasp and the material that it can measure and weigh and explain clearly.

"Money is perfect for the left brain; it is precise, tangible, and tantamount to anything one can grasp, money is fungible, it is food, prey animals, it is tools, shit it's the ultimate tool. It's the round peg for the round hole, man. It is a map, for the terrain of value. Money is a map.

"Further, the left hemisphere is very self-assured, and thinks very highly of itself. The right-side is more realistic and even pessimistic. Again, we've found this out by isolating each hemisphere in surgeries and in stroke victims and in those who need to sever the corpus callosum; epileptics. So, we know that left hemisphere dominant people tend to be more arrogant, and less nuanced about themselves. I am both; the most arrogant and also extremely objective about how horrid I am. I walk that line.

"Lastly, the left hemisphere has built a map of the world, a very simple map. *The simpler the better* , it thinks. And so left dominant people tend to think they have it all figured out. And the right hemisphere is actually more connected to the actual terrain, not the map, the real world, and it is less sure of itself and its impression of the world; but it actually, truthfully, knows more of the real world than the left side. Which is a good metaphor for real life, the guy who is certain he is morally right -a guy like you- is less moral actually in real life, than the guy -like me- who admits to his hypocrisies and his lies and his dark ways.

"Right? *The best lack all conviction , Yeats* ? Anyway," the inmate said. He shook off the need to quote poetry to a man who thought hotel brochures were high-art.

Travis shrugged, he had no idea what the fuck any of this was.

“Because most brains are integrated, *via* the corpus callosum, the person absorbs the real world with the slightly pessimistic right side, the imagistic and not so linguistic, the more touchy feely, Oracle at Delphi, the emotional and symbolic and religious or artsy side, he absorbs the real terrain of the world with that side; *then* the left compresses it, names it, maps it, and reduces it to a flat and easy-to-say little map of the world.

“And if you are left dominant you tend to go around saying that you are not emotional or artsy or concerned with nonsense like feelings and shit like that, at all; you tend to announce your rationality with aplomb. But the truth is your brain is almost all emotional all the time and your map of the world was first formed from emotional cues and irrational shit that your right-brain first discovered and only then did your left side turn it into language that you use -first internally, in thoughts- and then only secondarily out loud for us to hear.

“Inside you took that feeling, that instinct, that image, or dream or artsy-fartsy emotion and turned it into a word or phrase like, *I’m a fiscal conservative and believe in law and order and I think socialized medicine is unaffordable and blah blah* . The truth is you have gut instincts -mediated in the limbic and basal ganglian systems- instincts that insist that you don’t like people, and especially the poor or brown folks and you don’t like people getting free shit because it seems unfair -and unfairness is an innate sense, rats have *fair* and *unfair* rubrics in their heads by the way- and anyway, these other people seem disgusting to you, when you look at them you get sick; and in fact, just thinking of liberals and artists and bums and Mexicans and the lazy and the weak & sick makes you wanna scream and smash things.

“Your emotions are what inform you politics, they have shown this over and over and over. Both with liberals and conservatives and basket cases like me who are both. We feel with our right brain first, with a gut feeling and then make up a reason in language, draw a map of the terrain that we walked in real life.

“The map is not the terrain though. The terrain is the terrain. And your rational politics, your Keynesian stimulus or *Krugman-the-Douche* logic for why marijuana ought to be legal or illegal, or cocaine or speed limits or this or that shit, all of it is largely decided before it ever even gets to the left hemisphere to be articulated in a goddamn policy platform. Before you say one logical word, your lower levels of brain have already decided how you feel on politics.

“If your right brain is merely disgusted by druggies and people with dark skin -like mine is- or you just feel nervous around people who drive fast or own guns -

like you are- then I will or you will -anyone will- just make up some bullshit reason why pot should be illegal or guns ought to be banned or whatever. Each person feels their politics first, and again, study after study shows this is true. Most politics is basically disgust sensitivity, how grossed out you are by things, and openness, trait openness, how many walls you want around you .

“So, the more walls you like, the more conservative you are, the less, the more liberal, and if you feel safe living with no walls you’re an idiotic liberal and if you are disgusted by foreigners you’ll be a neo-Nazi conservative on the border.

“It’s really that simple, and you’ll cite statistics -all true, all true- but your stats are irrelevant. You don’t give a shit about GDP and immigration, you just can’t stand the idea of those filthy fucks coming over and into our gated community. And look, I am both, I like the idea of a border wall, because niggers and wetbacks make me sick to my stomach, but I also like the idea of allowing automatic weapons and legalizing all drugs, because I like the idea of mixing shit up a bit too. I’m high in trait openness, so I like a little chaos too.

“Now, look, I know that my ideas, my so-called politics isn’t what it is because I have the stats to back me up although, I do, I actually know the stats on all this shit, and I can make the case for less immigration and drug legalization and all kinds of idiotic political shit. But, I learned years ago that my politics is like everyone’s: based on my temperament, not rational ideas like I’m John Stuart Mill or Kant.

“So, Travis, my *brotha* , you can say you are different, and maybe you are the one guy who isn’t like everyone else, maybe you really are rational. But answer this: when a fact comes around to counter your facts, how likely are you to change that rational mind of yours?” the inmate raised his eyebrows as the stiches over his right eye made a dark frown.

Travis shrugged and thought the question was a trick.

“That is what I thought. Well, me neither, so you are not alone. Facts are not what we use to make decisions, we use facts to *justify* decisions we made long ago. Decisions of ours are both too high and too far away for mere facts to lay a hand upon, my brother.

“Even stock brokers have been shown to make all financial decisions based on emotion; the studies have made this as clear as 16 dB glass. But, if you are left brain dominant fella, then you will deny this and if you are right brain dominant you will accept it; but it is true for both. And look, the left-brain people will often accept the true things that the right-hemi folks won’t.

“The right-hemi people think their emotions, or these revelations from God are *real* ; they think: *that really is Jesus on the toast, man* . And left dominant people know that sometimes their feelings -to the extent they even admit having them- are just that, *feelings* . They tend to discount them more easily than the right-side folks.

“But one last thing, the right hemisphere does use language, but it uses metaphor, and inference, it gets the joke, or the implication, the nuance. If someone says, *oooh, it’s chilly in here* . The left side takes that language literally as a statement of fact of temperature, but the right side gets up and turns the AC down -or the heat on- to make you feel better. The right-side gets the big picture, and the left gets only the literal words.

“So, if you ever laugh at an ironic or sophisticated joke, the right side got the joke in language, but it got it in big-picture language, in metaphor or artistic language. And those that study these things, they have figured this out -again by issuing a hemispheric paralytic for surgery- or, in the case of stroke victims, you know, people who have one hemisphere go dead all on their own. And if they lose their right-brain hemisphere, they can no longer get humor, or poetry or the point of stories at all.

“They can still speak about specifics, they have no apparent language loss at all; until you realize they are unable to get the nuances, the implications, the joke of one’s words. So, those with no right hemispheric function, well, they can still be lawyers and politicians and TV people, oh and engineers. They just can’t be *human* ever again

“Well, the implications are obvious; if you are a left hemisphere dominant man, you will take words literally, miss the joke, and not get the deeper meaning of things. You will not understand music, which explains why you like Lyle Lovett, nor will you like sophisticated film -like Terrence Malick’s *oeuvre* , or films like *Solaris* - nor will you like great novels and instead prefer science books or coloring books; you will prefer simple stories like Spielberg’s dross, and direct and simple language or even better, you’ll love mathematics.

“But that is why left side dominant people are shallow, and don’t get art. Their brains truly are impoverished just as the right dominant people are as impoverished when it comes to specifics and precise language and thus, when they speak, they sound like a gibbering fool.

“I mean try getting simple directions or instructions from a right hemisphere asshole, they make almost no sense at all. Trump is right hemisphere, he speaks in big picture, in outlines, in jokes that you have to implicitly get. That is why I

find him hilarious, but you guys just don't get the joke. But you vote for him anyway, based on the border wall. But he makes no sense to you, and it's because he is a big picture guy, not a detail man. Which is why his sentences are insane. He sounds like he's on meth for *christsake* .

"However, just so we are clear, I am advocating balance, but I don't like balance, I prefer extremes, I jump from airplanes and ride motorcycles without a helmet drunk on whisky and pills. I carry a gun and shoot it a lot; I run class V rapids in May with a deluge running down the mountain from the snow pack; I snowboard out of bounds and in the back country; and the most dangerous thing I did, I lived with two girls at once.

"I break the law as often as I feel like it, in fact I have no respect for the law. And I many times hunted bear by sleeping outside in the wilderness at night.

"But, I often sit home and read for weeks at a time and do nothing adventurous at all; I don't like meeting new people and I consistently -pathologically- eat the same food each day. And I think the cops ought to hammer the shit out of everyone except me. I am a conservative anarchist. I am balanced the same way the desert is: it's 120 degrees at noon and 40 degrees at 0300. The average is 80 degrees. Just like Hawaii that is 85 degrees at summer noon and 75 at winter midnight; the same average but two totally different *milieu* . You are all Hawai'i man. You never fluctuate more than a few degrees.

"Travis, you are all left brain, you can't even see the point in emotions or love or music or literature, and unless someone explains it in a power-point presentation with numbers and explicit language you cannot get the point at all. You see only what you want to see, you have no tolerance for new ideas at all; in fact, you won't even remember one word of this speech; it's all Greek to you.

"And the funny thing is I could fix it, if you wanted it fixed. A two or three-gram dose of psilocybin mushroom leads to a full standard deviation increase in openness; and exercising of the right hemisphere for permanent central nervous system change. Taking one psychedelic trip would make you a more complete person, while leaving your core personality more or less intact. It's like taking a round of steroids, which would make you recover and build muscle faster and then -with cessation- return you to normal with the gains built into your body now. You'd be a little stretched out .

"It's like falling in love, it teaches you what love is; or tasting sugar awakens your idea of what sweet is. Mushrooms open your right hemisphere up and allow it to communicate with the left better. It makes you able to understand the implicit, the nuance, the deep. Depth is actually a brain phenomenon, and right

hemisphere people are deeper, emotionally, and intellectually deeper people; they are often wrong, and insane, but deep.

“To take mushrooms might allow you -like me- to be left-brain dominant and yet right-brain literate; to be more complex and deep and alive. But, you have to be open and daring and alive to even agree to such a thing. And well, we both know the answer to that. But, your lamentation that you are shallow has found purchase with me; I am willing to dose you and guide you and help you make sense of the process. I am like a sherpa, a mental sherpa, if you want it. If you truly lament your shallowness -and let’s face it, you are pretty shallow- then I suggest a cure. But, like any medical advice, you are free to reject it and keep smoking or eating Cheetos or doing whatever the doctor recommend you cease doing at once. Ignore me at your discretion and your peril.

“I research things, and have details like the left hemisphere guy, and get the bigger picture like the right hemisphere guy, and so I know that Johns Hopkins hospital -one of the most famous researching hospitals in the world- is doing psilocybin research right now and have found that it has amazing results in all domains. They are blown away, and these are not hippies or Tim Leary, they are MDs and PHDs and post-doc researchers working in rigorous lab conditions.

“They are the ones that discovered what ancient people have known for 10,000 years: psychedelic drugs, entheogens, are a way to communicate with the right hemisphere and expand your knowledge of self, and the world and maybe even God himself,” the inmate looked at the wall at saw it had been 9 minutes and 45 seconds, and smiled and hung up the phone. Travis held the prison’s phone to his ear idiopathically and tried to steady himself.

“Time,” the guard said; adding, “MacLeod.”

The inmate rose and stroked his beard into a point. He knew the human brain and personality was being hacked now by AI, and that unless modern man was aware of himself, deeply aware of his brain and emotions and all undergirding rationales, he was vulnerable to the hacking AI was doing to manipulate people. He knew his advice was meant as self-defense and that nobody would take it seriously for one second. You can be too smart to be listened to; science has shown that as well. Any more than two standard deviations in IQ from the speaker to listener attenuates almost all knowledge transfer.

He winked at Travis and turned toward the door and strode away in a strange combination of vulnerability and confidence, like a man who has resigned himself to his fate; like *Empedocles* at Mt. Etna’s ridge.

Travis had no intention of doing anything his little brother said; *that guy was lost, and insane and all wrong, he was as wrong as any one man could be* , Travis thought in the quiet and safety of his head. *Nothing Lyndon said made one bit of sense* ; of that Travis was certain. He made himself be certain as he walked passed each door jamb, each guard, each person he suspected on his way out of the ADX.

He repeated that mantra as he took the coded message and -making sure not to think anything supportive as the lab guys had instructed- walked with his thoughts to the lot and clambered inside his truck as the starlings circled just at eye level and the crows circled above so that their shadows made the starlings glint and darken and seem like illusions of *chiaroscuro* on the ground.

II. 2028 e.v.

And of course, it's more than a cliché. Men have minds made to understand systems and women have minds designed to understand people. And it works, he thought.

He stood in the back and for once he truly wanted no one to look upon him; nobody to acknowledge what he had done or how what he had done had helped them. He was happy, for once, to witness the joy in their hearts, the expressions of long held emotions, alloyed, tempered, made strong or weak by time and pressure inside the furnace of their minds and the quick cooling bath of water that life outside their eyes held in that vast basin for them.

He knew, as he watched each man or woman, mostly women he noticed, and their children, fawning little duck children holding on to her and each other, brothers and sisters like paper cut outs -hand and hand- he knew that they were feeling a small joy, small hope, that felt big to them: they were going to have a chance to live in a world where they understood it. No longer, they felt, no longer would they be kept from the secrets of the world; the secrets that led from birth to school to work to everything that looked pretty and smelled nice and was soft to the touch.

They had rebelled against the idea that it was something wrong with them or their children for so long; their civic leaders had too. They had been told and began telling everyone, even if in whispers, that there was nothing wrong with them or their children. But, they knew, they knew that the answers came slowly to them, that their children lagged in school, that fights broke out too easily and

arguments turned to violence too quickly and with too long a list of consequences.

He knew their dignity suffered in this too. He knew that he was once broken too and did not want anyone to know. He too knew what it was like to have low impulse control, a quick temper, a low inhibition behavior scheme. He knew them.

So, he had built one tool to fix himself. A tool they lacked.

Lead paint and bad genes had conspired to lower the average IQ of the average person in that housing complex to 90; which was one standard deviation below the mean, the norm. These people were cognitively impaired on average but as simple as their minds were, their problems were complex and their hope still sprang each spring; each vernal bloom of wants and needs for them and for their progeny was as ornate and soft in the center, as simple and firm at the edge as any dream he had had.

He began clapping as their names were called and each family rose with effervescence and staccato bursts of relief. He clapped quietly as to not attract any attention.

He imagined their souls like soil; their hopes like seeds and this day like rain. He remembered Rachel teaching him about soaking seed to soften to husks; the window sill he set them on after a few days in the dark. The white tail of its first root escaping the soft cracked mottled seed husk, oriented down in the soil he packed into a coco-plug in rows of 10 .

He remembered reading about how to discern male from female and how to cull the weak ones early, and how he had wanted even the weak ones to somehow grow. He had felt sad for the little weak saplings, the clover or pepper sprouts or mint as they sat on the ledge. He saw each one as important, while Rachel had said an 80% success rate was good enough. He couldn’t help but see each one as important and this is what most people in his industry -and in science in general- never seemed to get. He wanted each person to make it, each flower, each sprout, each idea he had.

He watched as another woman responded to the monotone calling of names by the County administrator. The room looked like a mud wasp nest: domed and beige; the people crawled around with purpose; no wasted movements, even if

they looked idiopathic to another species observing. A scaffolding on the south wall had three sheetrock men doing repairs and they too seemed affixed to the structure; hands and feet so close to the walls as if maybe the scaffold wasn't even needed to keep them aloft.

Another name was called, he heard, “Janice Welbly.”

A small high-yellow black woman rose and walked with a compact dignity, and he thought, *there it was again:* that dignity both innate and that which he imbued each woman with; and maybe himself too; he saw details of this dignity with the eyes he had made sharp with another upgrade just last week. She had no children trailing or circling around her. *She looks too small to even bear children* , he thought. But, he then countered, *women often surprise you with their capacity to bear great things; things disproportionately large to their frame* .

He tagged her name in his PGC and left the room with just that one name.

III. 2037 e.v.

It was 2230hrs and he stood on the rocky outcropping at 8,766 feet and faced north-northeast toward Pueblo, the Springs and Denver in the rear. He could see the satellite and FLIR images with a holographic image in his view, similar to heads-up display on a car, where one’s eyes saw the road and also a projection of the speed, tachometer and gear position on the windshield just above the dash.

He watched as each of his Jacks’ men moved into position locating members from each list of 10 names. They had driven in vans and H1s and trucks from all over the US, close to 10,000 men, each broken into 5-man assault teams, each with 10 names for a total of almost 20,000 names. The names were grouped by last known location and could jump from group to group *via* DM if necessary, but each group had the list, their location -and as they targeted each name- a tracking device showed in real time where they all were.

Grey men moved like CRISPR cas9 vectors inside the cell wall; efficiently, ruthlessly, perfectly. He watched as five men, men Jack One had trained personally, from Cincinnati, surrounded a home on Bryant street and watched to see if the target moved. He watched the red dot that indicated the target was stationary -in what appeared to be a bedroom- as they approached the side entrance unseen from the street; two men remained at the back of the house and one across the street as look-out for anything that approached .

Two men entered the house by melting the lock mechanism with a nanobot that

contained a metallurgic *anhiden* that vaporized small amounts of metal without heat or chemicals, it merely scattered the ionic cohesion of the alloy and turned it to a kind of ferric water vapor. The door moved inward with ease and quiet as they refocused their night vison to adjust for higher ambient light. They were using 9mm suppressed semi-auto pistols, loaded with low velocity ammunition, and each man moved with a slice of the area covered by the muzzle, a bias to the left or to the right covering 290 degrees of field. Their infrared and heat sensors picked up a small pet, who looked up at them, but made no sounds.

They approached the bedroom and the door was ajar, with total darkness in the room. Their vison adjusted again as they double checked the red dot to see if it had moved from the spot in the room; it had not. Their target was here in the room.

The first man through the door went straight for the far corner then turned toward the target, the second man slowly -but firmly- pressed the door all the way to the wall to make sure nobody was behind it or could *get* behind it, and this man brought his IR laser onto the target, asleep in the bed. He shot three times as the clacking report of the suppressor -like someone dropping a small book on a hardwood floor- echoed in the room. The room was sparse with no carpeting or curtains or much on the walls; except now a little blood spray from the head and neck of the dying man was present. They read for vitals and the target took his last breath and his heart ceased in five seconds; they activated the brass magnet on their LBEs and the shell casings were snapped off the floor and landing upon that metal chainmail at their hip in that same amount of time. They cleared out; leaving the pet alive as they went.

Blax watched on his heads-up vision as they left the home -he took count of all five men- as they moved fluidly back to the street behind the target and entered the van. The vehicle had phony plates -they manufactured them themselves- and they drove away to the next apartment complex half a mile north. They drove and reloaded their weapons if fired and made sure they were all on safety. The driver requested an update on location; the navigator told him to turn left at the stop.

They were on the next target in 7-minutes and disabled the front door in the hallway of the complex with the same nanobot scattering; they turned off their night vison as the room was aglow with a TV. The target was asleep on the couch. Next to him was a child under 12 months in age. Water was running in the bathroom; the first man through the door covered that bathroom door and man number two put two 9mm shots into the target’s head and made sure he did

not fall on the baby; placing his hand to the target's side for five seconds to make sure he was inert. The target -the dead man- had all his weight on the pillow that he was asleep upon and did not make one move.

The first man then walked backward from the bathroom covering it with his pistol and exited the room as the second man -the shooter- covered his retreat. Then man number two exited the room out the front door, closing it in the jamb - so just a line of light shone through- as all four men returned to the waiting van that had parked one street over. The driver kept the engine running and as they loaded in; he put it in drive.

In 14 minutes they were already inside the next building; it was a garage on Federal Boulevard. The target was still moving, so they waited in the hallway between the door they had entered and the large bay area he had been in before getting up and going to the bathroom. As he crossed the large rectangle of light at the end of the hall, the target stopped and turned toward all three men in the hall, black clad, night vision off, and he saw what looked like shadow so he stepped into the doorway as man-one and man-two fired two shots each into his chest with the clacking of the slide facilitating the ballistics leaving an automatic pistol echoing in concert with the target's fall to the ground; five sounds of four large hardback books and one smaller paperback landing on the floor. He had gasped once then fell absent of any audible rejoinder or complaint as man-one approached and placed one additional shot into the head. They waited five seconds for a vitals report from the bots; the report indicated he was dead.

They retreated three blocks west into an alley on Grant, and drove away as a cat ran toward them, then away from them, as they located the next target, who was moving, in what looked as if in a car. As the target moved at 28 mph and up Federal; he dropped off of their list and onto team 58's list; a new target appeared to their south on Colfax so they turned around on Bayaud and continued on in silence, re-loading their magazines to hold a full complement of 15-rounds.

Blax watched all this from up top on this mountain as each of 840 teams in Denver executed all but fourteen people on their lists for a total of 8,397 people, 8,301 men and 96 women. It was a number that would shock the 911 operators when the calls started coming in at 2309hrs; the last target was hit at 2317hrs, 47 minutes after the operation had begun.

Each team headed out of town along I25 or I70 and in each cardinal direction, the weapons were placed inside black boxes in the vehicles that contained larger version of the metal nanobots that melted the locks on each domicile or business

they had to enter that night. These boxes melted each weapon into the same milky, ferric water, and the remaining ammunition they placed into a separate box that they then could throw out from the vehicle once they were alone on the road. That box would fuse itself shut and they would have to be cut open to look inside. The ammo would be denuded of any prints or DNA *via* an aerosol mist that was emitted as the box fused itself shut.

The police would recover 340 of these boxes but only sawed through 90 of them before giving up.

Each team traveled out of state and once beyond the traffic and highway cameras and the surveillance systems of Walmart's and gas stations, once they were on back roads, they switched plates again, tossing the fabricated ones in the dirt or grass of the area around them and continued on their way on the backroads until they could ease back onto the highway from another entrance, one further beyond where they had exited.

The operation in Pueblo had 566 teams, and they completed 99% of the kills on each targeted individual for a total of 5,110 men and 493 women, in 48 minutes; 11 minutes after the first 911 call.

In the Springs it was 390 teams.

In Trinidad it was 10 teams.

In Aspen it was 5 teams.

In Castle Rock in was 9 teams.

And on the eastern slope were the rest; split between Parachute, Rifle and Grand Junction.

A total number of 18,834 people were killed of the 19,650 targets; most of the missed kills were in Grand Junction when the first 911 call went out at 2259hrs, and the teams had to abort the rest of their missions. A target had had a life-alert tag that had been depressed by the target himself, apparently. But it was still a successful mission, and none of the teams were even intercepted, much less arrested or detained .

The police in each jurisdiction would not uncover the extent of the damage for days, as many of bodies were not discovered for over 70 hours. The targets often lived alone or were not missed at any rate for whatever reason. But in the first four hours each jurisdiction knew they had a massive murder-for-hire situation - or terrorist attack- and due to the status of each victim as gang member, associate, ex-convict, known drug suspect, illegal alien, or had been arrested at

least once on any charge, they figured it was a cartel hit. And they surmised it was one so massive that it needed around 1,000 men to effect. They had assumed two or three-man teams hitting more than 10 targets each; they had no idea the level this was at.

Blax had watched over a 49-minute period as each team moved with precision and professionalism and total lethality. They had avoided civilians or collateral deaths in all but 48 cases; and killed no one under 16 at all. It was like watching a body's immune system clean up all the viruses and bacteriophage as each pathogenic colonies' quorum sensing attempted signaling in vain. *The restoration of the body politic,* he thought. Of course, he knew this was no metaphor, but a fractal analysis of facts on the ground.

He hovered above *via* the hacked *Landsat* imaging as each team disappeared along the highways and byways, dumping the vehicles they had stolen along *park-n-rides* or in airport terminals or in shopping malls along old county roads and then rode dirt bikes or got in other cars or took the bus to a secondary stop. Nanobots cleaned the dumped vehicles of all trace DNA with a bleaching aerosol and slick emulsifier that dissolved all hair or skin remnants from anywhere the men had been. The police found nothing inside each abandoned vehicle - nothing- not even the original owner's DNA or prints. They were 100% scrubbed and law enforcement was incredulous and unnerved.

He watched as each team dispersed, and their bagged equipment was thrown into rivers and down wells and into dumpsters and off bridges and all of it denuded of trace DNA.

It was like watching an enema, as 43% of all known criminals and scumbags in Colorado were executed in under an hour. He had accomplished in that time was law enforcement could do in 100 years, *what they couldn't do in 100 years* , he thought paraphrasing *Nietzsche's* bravura.

The prisons erupted in violence the next day as the inmates' contacts and mules and go-between had almost all been killed; they were in revolt thinking their rival gangs had taken action against them, each thinking the others had done it regardless of the fact that it was obvious each gang had been targeted, not just their own. But, after the prisons in Colorado erupted in violence, with 1,098 dead, each prison went on lock down for 24/7, and after 40 inmates killed their cellmates, the violence dropped to zero after that.

He thought almost 20,000 dead losers was a good start, and he stood there in the dark as the sun eventually came up over the eastern ridge and turned his naked body all aglow. His crew walked up the hill behind him, naked too and drinking

coffee, smiling at the news. They had gone to bed early and not known what he was up to; he'd winked at them last night at 1900hrs and merely said, *tomorrow I have a surprise* .

His body pointed north by northwest, and they watched as his shoulders pinned back in a stretch. They encircled him like the acropolis and Jack One placed his hand on Blax's shoulder and squeezed in approval. It had been easy; because all that any single man need do was follow easy instructions and his training; spend a few hours driving, an hour of their life, each man killing 1, 2 or 3 men; and driving back to their homes and their lives as if nothing had happened at all. None of the targets were personally known to the men; no evidence would link them; all cameras were electronically disabled by knock-downs; electromagnetic pulses disrupted all emitting frequencies within five blocks of each place they parked the vehicle, so the most the cops got was images of these type of vehicles leaving within a few blocks of the scene.

No images of men; no trace evidence; and no witnesses. They were ghosts and it required no more than six hours total of their lives. In the more rural counties the teams had been camping and returned to their campsites without any suspicion, as they only had hunting rifles and no motive or reason to be suspected.

One team that came in from Montana had seen a police cruiser come by the gas station three days after the mission when they were leaving the area in their own truck; and the cop had nodded at them. That was the extent of their contact with law enforcement after the largest mass murder in US history; one not committed by the Army anyway.

The news media was quickly told to shut the fuck up as now it was assumed this was China or possibly Iran or Russia and the media's unlettered jabbering would not help things at all.

Crime ground to a halt, murder rates dropped to only domestic killings, and a few gangland killings, as not all bad guys in some areas could be dealt with.

But robberies, rapes, burglaries, and grand theft autos dropped by 77% the next day and for the first four weeks after the killings, and law enforcement was beginning to not even want to solve the murders. They often thought it; and sometimes even said this aloud. They knew half of these dead guys, knew what they were like and figured it was the trash taking out the trash. They call it *misdemeanor murder* and it was like all true things in the world: unacknowledged.

But, the total lack of evidence, the high-tech nature of the co-ordination -as time

of death reports started coming in within a narrow window- alongside the knock down of surveillance, and as they realized the size of the operation as each abandoned vehicle was eventually found -and it was obvious that upwards of 1,800 vehicles had been stolen and used in these murders- the cops were legitimately scared. The police had never felt this level of paranoia, but due to the sheer size of the operation and the professionalism of no brass being left, no trace evidence, and no witnesses -electronic or human- they knew that this was the new news in murder-for-hire. They knew they -the good guys- were out-fucking-matched.

The Governor did not call the President; but the President still found out within 99 minutes.

The CIA had begun to suspect an AI level operation immediately, as they knew the level of co-ordination this required; they began downloading all the satellite data of the regions and zooming in on the areas for those times. They saw what local law enforcement could not, each *5-man team in action, obviously militarily trained* , they wrote in their reports. They saw the dispersals, and the abandoning of vehicles in covered garages -or in deadzones not covered by satellite- to prevent the eye in the sky from seeing who left which vehicle and to where they went next. They had evaded local cops that night and overhead surveillance for the long term, the reports stated, *these teams knew exactly how to escape and evade.*

They had just melded back into the fabric of society, unnoticed, unsuspected, unconcerned with any need for escape from the country itself. As the federal government had all four corners covered and nobody was getting out without massive scrutiny; the men merely returned to their lives. But by week five, the government had to allow easier egress to prevent any more diminution of commerce; and while still heavily monitored they allowed traffic into the country more voluminously as well .

The drop in crime to levels they had not seen in 100-years left all but 13% of *Colorado Bureau of Investigation* agents available for this search, but with no leads, no evidence, no witnesses and no suspects, they twiddled their goddamn thumbs. They laughed and they joked with nervousness and side-eye, as they began to say under their breath that whoever did this should run for President, because it was the best thing to happen in the world of scumbags since they had run the British from the county in 1776. Of course, the Revolutionary war lasted a few years after that, and the war of 1812 had happened, but nobody in law enforcement even knew that; and so, the reference to 1776 stuck.

Blax had had listening devices, in the form of nanobots placed in each department; but they could not get into Langley or the FBI, as these agencies had airlocks and seals on their doors too tight for his bots to penetrate. But he could - and did- listen to each police department from Trinidad to Denver and each little town in between. Aspen cops and Durango too, all chattered a lot.

He smiled often and rubbed the letters on his hand at a good job; a good job, well done.

21. NVR И

The sweet tinges of sunset skies and woods; *yea* , and the gilded velvets of butterflies and the butterfly cheeks of young girls; all these are but subtle deceits… that all deified Nature absolutely paints like the harlot, whose allurements cover nothing but the charnel-house within

The Whale [The Author]

An absence of literary culture leads to a future blindness

The Black Swan [Taleb, Nassim]

One must admit that it would be contrary to all reasonable expectations to suppose that a God who, for all his lavish generosity, had been subject to intermittent but devastating fits of rage ever since time began could suddenly become the epitome of everything good. Christ's unadmitted but none-the-less evident doubt in this respect is confirmed in the New Testament, and particularly in the Apocalypse. There Yahweh again delivers himself up to an unheard-of fury of destruction against the human race, of whom a mere hundred and forty-four thousand specimens appear to survive

Answer to Job [Jung, Carl G]

I. 2035 e.v.

"What is it that you want from me," she half screamed half squeaked in confusion. He had been ranting for hours, refusing food or drink, pulling books from the shelves and reading passages aloud; pointing to old underlining ink, old notes that proved he knew this -or that- all along. He used books to prove someone -anyone- was on his side.

He pulled corks from wine bottles, he drank scotch older than her, he felt the need to replace all his evil that leaked, replace it with spirits of similar mien.

"And my chest will explode," he continued, midsentence, as if she had not asked for any relief at all, "and a thousand rats and a thousand times that of roaches and beetle broaches, the racks of elk, a mizzen-mast sail of ursine pelts, the full bodies of little girls and vivisected grown men and the bones of Leviathan will spill out of my center mass like the Cambrian explosion and on this grey floor with red and black blood and unwoven -pure white- light until the tide of my -finally, mercifully dying- soul rises around the ankled port of *Colossus* as the remnant of this filthy species drowns in a sea they drink as solution to choking, to seizing, to drowning." He had said this as his voice faded to grey, his eyes too looked away.

He had rent and stretched his gray shirt from his chest and his arms -vascular and swollen and hammer-headed with fists cliched and black with these unfading tattoos that seemed to roll on his skin like waves -both new and ancient- each

time she gazed upon him. She saw the old tattoos underneath this blackout, this monolith of packed black ink, like scars, like extinct sea beasts marked like history or reminder on God's newest creation of malice and terror and revenge; she saw dead horseshoe crab and white sharks in the face of a night wave rolling to the beach-break; the dark coral in the maelstrom of surf. Each extinction of each species tattooed over in black; a fossil record just under the monolithic dark; evidence of failure and God's high standards all buried by black marks on his expanding skin.

His face was capillary red and slick with saline and his eyes were like black birds huddling in corniced caves waiting for the high winds and rain to abate.

"I don't know what that means," she screamed in total honesty; she hadn't understood one word he said in a million sentences like these; the mad poetry of some ancient religion she thought, a lost language her modern ears just couldn't really hear. She felt guilty and stupid and her heart folded in on itself inside her tiny 15-year old chest; she just wanted life to speed up so she could be as wise or as mad as him, to know what he knew, to converse too with these gods, and then maybe he would make sense and then she too would find valence with him. She pulled at her hair, these massive bolts of black curls, feral and perfectly chaotic and she screamed and filled the air with this banshee retort -a bird in flight, in alight- to his diabolism of forested slopes and howls of wind through ravines.

He grabbed her arms to prevent them from ripping the hair by the roots; he did not want her to come to any harm at all. And he pulled her towards his chest twice as wide as her, three times as weighted, four times as old. She fell into it like a collapsing star fell into itself, and she cried hydrogen and oxygen and then helium and finally iron-gas and leaden water into his shirt and through to his chest and then into his heart and lungs and he wailed all inwardly, silently, mouth agape, but nothing coming out. His eyes burned -seared with tears that seemed to evaporate to steam- his mouth then twisted closed as a defensive wall of gritting teeth began to crack under the pressure of clinched jaws, maxilla and mandible heaving toward one another like tectonic plates. The whole face vibrated and the landscape fissured and mottled and flushed.

His 61-year-old face -*always so young and handsome to approach,* she thought- was cracked and broken, blood vessels rose to the surface. His massive forehead-crease radiated out smaller, deeper lines, trails, paths, clues; his eyes were attacked by the feet and talons of corvids seeking sympathetic shelter within his caged crows of eyes. These were eyes that sent out gamma rays, burnt her face, she felt, even as she doubted he would dare do such alchemical things around

her. He seemed power repressed at all times: wolf on island in black water lake, chained; unspoken thought in taciturn, mute, man; the ancient gene in modern virus. *Potential for doom,* she thought, *one second before it is unlocked by the gods.*

His muscles ached from the incessant tension, the joints felt like lit fuses on the ends of pipe bombs, his cock was tumescent as the blood in his head drained into his chest and his chest overflowed into his meridian and his equator rolled over on itself as the entire axis of his earth fell out of its processional wobble and every once-empty jar filled at-once with this brine and everything once-full of hope dumped out onto the ceiling and the tell-tale compass and from below doused the candles and lanterns of the captain's map table; flooding the quarterdeck to the gunwales and the sky right up to clouds whilst emptying the ocean of everything wet; the sharks and the sea-beasts suspended in air. The marine sandglass just flipped and spun on X and Y axis and told time as it always had before.

He squeezed her tighter and promised his whole aspect was Love; that he had nothing else but; that he would see her exalted above all others even if it killed the world. He begged her to trust him and never listen to one word he said after that; that this madness was the leaking of mantle and magma from the core of mad nature and that all that mattered was the reason that crusted and hardened it all as it reached the sea's surface and islanded itself as soon-green archipelago of once former-doom; mere history of basalt black and Hell red, he promised. He assured her it was closed up -walled off- once his passions had cooled.

"I didn't mean that *My Love* ," he croaked out from a riven face and an atomized cavern of lung and chest and precipice of everything atop of these boreal legs and deep tendrils of brachial feet. He thought of all the malice inside him, magma, lava, pressure, all placed there by God, designed to be entombed for how long, *how long?* he asked in thought.

How long must a man such as he contain his natural fury? Why was the world unable to see each man as they saw each latitude of earth? Some men beaches, some ponds, some plains and tropical zones of consistent *Tao* . Yet, some deserts, some glaciers, some volcanoes and riven trenches well below the *avoirdupois* of the sea. *Why,* he demanded to know, *was it only one type of man permitted now? Why was the world to be all* Tahiti *and no* Artic *and no* Mojave *allowed?*

Why, he asked himself, *was he told to be what he could never be? Flood the desert all you want,* he thought, *it will never be fecund and green and lush; the*

water will merely rush, and flee, and drown, kill as it races in a panic to the faraway sluiceway, and to the sea. Here he was to teach and train and mentor, build and grow and succor, and yet all that was in him was arch-hot, devastating, born to break bones and draw blood and stop demons in their tracks. He was made to sire a million grey demons to attack Satan's minions. He was never built to nurse anything but the grudge , he thought as he squeezed his eyes tight. He couldn't believe that he had promised her and thus lied to her. Lied to his only angel, his goddess, this girl built by God to love him if he would just allow her.

"I don't know what you mean," she sobbed with guilt and shame and pleading to make her smart enough, grown up enough to decipher such dark words.

"The words have been separated from their meaning like a babe and its mother; like Medea and her children. I bark like mad and I know it's a dog I've become, a jackal surrounding my own lion pride. I don't even bleed blood anymore; it's words I expel from these veins. I'm begging the gods to lift this pall from my head, to cure me or kill me, angel," he wiped her face with his hands, her face so small and preciously white and pink and red in all the right places, she was a portrait of what goddesses wish for themselves. She was what penitent men see above them when they finally kneel.

Her blue eyes were nearly black at center but still exploding with Saint Elmo's fires of *azul* and Prussian blues; prints, evidence, scions of wet blood from the richest and most dour of *Visigoth* souls of some ancient -uninterrupted- royal line.

He couldn't wipe the water away -keep the sea at bay- fast enough as she poured salt-water from those pulsar stars of blue; the cataracts ran over his scarred fingers and thumbs as he brushed the streams and steam away like some giant exiled god who had lost every power except his size and strength to recover purely in order to make pain permanent.

He lacked all power to heal others or to direct the wind or dam up the rivers; he merely stood in the storm and flailed at these elements; they, these planetary elements, in the shape of her tears and her choking anguish and heartbreak blew in from four corners, scraped the earth like a glacier, poured down, rained down, a monsoon in all five seasons.

And he held her and kept wiping her face so she wouldn't drown her eyes; so that those noon-blue suns wouldn't choke behind these endless, timeless, ceaseless tears .

“I’m so sorry daddy,” she confessed into the fluid air around them. “I’m so sorry,” she said a million times until he felt his own ears begin to burn with those words like some source of fission, some red and grey coals; his face’s fissures absorbed his own flash-flood of tears; his own sun of brain jammed through each crack and orifice of body and face and his black eyes hued brown again, made bright, as the common corvids alighted, anchors aweigh, from their corniced cave, from his heavy storm of *tòrr* brow.

He calmed, and the waters receded in him; and he kissed her lips and dropped his hands to her waist and held that narrow circumference like it was the equator of moon to his one-child planet. Her arms wrapped around him as much as they could, she grappled for more and more territory, his back was so wide she knew each hand of hers was below the horizon of any line-of-sight of the other; she knew each hand was blind to the other as she clawed. But she drove on with each hand, a caravan crossing the *Mongolian steppe* of this man’s back. She just wanted to bury herself, each finger, and palm into his taut desert as her lips hid in the forest of his beard and her tongue in the hollow of his mouth.

She pressed her whole body now into his and tried to force her way into him for once; she wanted to know what it was that instantiated him, that pressed out from the core to buoy and tent-pole such a massive man. *How much stuff was in him; how much stuff must be inside this man?* she thought, as her tongue swam in the always new river of his maw, her hands dug into his unguarded traps, her breasts squeezed themselves into his taut belly and found some electrical socket of soul-source as her nipples transmitted signal and noise to her throat and her clit and the cuticles on every other finger and thumb; skipping each digit like some code or some generational gap.

He is so large , she thought, *but he needed her to hold him up.* She couldn’t believe the conceit as she felt it as her insides swam and sloshed about; her stomach whirled and matched the spin of their tongues and the force of their hands on each other’s elliptical parts.

She had demanded he say it, explain it, explain what he saw as his failure to God and his own genome. *My god,* she thought, *what a horrible thing to demand.* To ask such a thing from so proud an animal, *to ask that he say out loud what the universe whispered to him at birth; a broken covenant,* she thought. *She had asked him to break a covenant with the* Force Majeure *of the World,* she said to herself. She had one job, to make a powerful man feel powerful, and nothing else. She had confused herself with 1,000 *drôle* tasks when she had but one that was real.

And she knew instantly, and so instantly that she knew she had *always* known it; it was a knowledge now imbued in every memory she had; she carried this knowledge back into every moment of her life, held its hand and fed it and called it by name.

She knew that she must make a child for him, *make it masculine and intelligent and large; a Charlemagne, an Alexander, a Kahn; make a wild and thoughtful, a dangerous and loving, a chaotic and industrious boy, born silent and stoic but roiling with fire inside from spark made by the first hammer and anvil of the gods* .

She said nothing else, but she jammed all other signals from the universe that focused on him -*oh, with their instructions, and injunctions and connections,* she thought, *from the gods & their wars, enlisting him, promoting him, tasking him with their cosmic demands* - she held up her hand to their speeches and she focused her signal on him in their stead. She intervened on his behalf against the incessant gods of this cosmic war .

She pulled her mouth back and at once held his face in her lithe hands and oriented her orbs towards his. She thus gave him permission and in so doing, asked for his: *please honor me and this world with your coldest grains manifold, I'm up to the task my lord.*

The hairs on his arms stood up and oriented like a metal cat at northern lats and he felt a forgiveness surrounded by a Praetorian guard of gratitude. His inner-storm dissipated its energy and fell into an entropy sink at his naval core. He picked her up *in toto* , her tight legs wrapped around him, her kisses returned to his mouth like homing pigeons and he walked them to their bed. *Their child would be a recursion, a mise-an-abyme of genomics, she, Valence, the little queen, his daughter, and their child his triumvirate scion, son and grandson all-in-one; he'd be ¾ or more of him this way and this was a start* , he thought. And he then thought -only now- of the Great Return.

The taboo of it never entered his or her mind, only the harmony it provided to a world demanding the sonorous sound of real men giving voice to a lost language of one-word; of a lost tribe with one cause; of one-man with a lost god of the once noble world at war with the manifold weakness of democracy & diversity and the tawdry appeal of the splintering crowd.

He heard the barking from the rim of the volcano, he heard the trot of the last black rhino, he heard each word chime like a bell hung in a conquered minaret. As time's arrow bent and fletched and he lost gravity and direction, as he became her and she him, he dreamed still inside her, her inside him, each a

mirror with the other inside backward and smaller until the eyes themselves disappeared and the one true soul loomed large. He both said and thought, and he heard:

> *You too said that all gods were the condensed, compressed, most salient traits of Man: His Ideal. Well, the pre-Christian Gods were all warring, vengeful, jealous, and generous, magnanimous too; until made mad with vex. And they were lacking in just one thing: self-consciousness.*
>
> *Job, when he pleaded for justice, was answered with appeals to might; God answered with tales of His might. For might made right to the pre-Christian God. For the pre-Christian man was still unconscious; and might made right and sexual jealousy was paramount. The forest made it so in the math.*
>
> *The alpha made 70-80% of the children for 99% of man's reign, there was no democracy of breeding then, not equality of fucking outcome, and the children of men were genomically warring, vengeful, jealous, and generous, magnanimous until made mad with vex. Men were made of this stuff. The stuff of the Alpha genes, the MAO-A alleles, the* Poisson *distribution of the martial stars.*
>
> *You cannot expect alpha males to become the epitome of all that is good under the Christian suns, Pieces, the flying fish, the deep Pacific. We were born under Aeries and Orion, Leo the lion; we were born for tragedy and for war.*
>
> *We have sacrificed ourselves, like God did with Christ, we've become self-aware, but we cannot be pacified, civilized, neutered. We must make war on all that offends. You cannot take this from within; you cannot take it from us while we're still alive.*
>
> *And this, this modernity, with its incessant cheating and gossip and tawdry shit, it offends, offends, it offends the ancient gods! We shall not be told to let the State handle it, it is ours to handle, Godammit. It was born to us! Would mothers allow robots to birth their children? Would those children allow AI to lick their candy canes and describe the taste ?*
>
> *Man -Alpha Man- needs to break the cuckolding, thieving, cheating, deceiving beta male over his fucking knee," he both said this and heard it in his head as he had blotted out the sun and removed her clothes like he skinned a buck and bent her submissive legs back; rendering her mute and to never speak again in words not touched by this amorous flame and heavy*

hammer against her inner mettle laid between iron and anvil of the bronze-age man.

II. 2017 e.v.

“No, its neuromorphic constraints are a function of spacing, not power, not electromagnetic power,” he said.

“What are the nominal distances between biological neurons?” she asked.

“They can be more densely packed due to mitochondrial insulation; the voltage, the intercellular voltage, isn’t at risk of conducting beyond the envelope of the cell or the synaptic pathway.”

“What’s the difference in MO’s neuronal; his discreet neurons?” she asked.

“The difference is that his synthetic switches fire at 1.18 billion times per second and a biological synapse hits 50-60 a second.”

“50 or 60 billion?” she asked.

“No,” he laughed, “50 times per second. Slow as fuck.”

“Jesus, and he,” she paused with confusion, “what were the power demands again?”

“MO uses 55 milliwatts of power per cluster; which is low but because we’re using them to parallel process, as a general intelligence cluster, they work better if they are spaced in an organic manner. It’s just like biological neurons that fire together and wire together; there is a heuristic memory or trenching that happens at 1.18 billion times per second and if the pathway isn’t organic, analog, I would say like a *sine* curve or like a river bed, shaped by the flow and within the feedback loop of resistance of outer cortical and CNS structure then we’re getting power fluctuations that amount to corruptions or blackouts.

“What? Look, just say it to me like I’m a 5-year-old,” she said.

“We designed his CNS, his brain, for efficiency during the building process; we made it easy for us to build, not easy for him to operate. And the amount of cortical, the amount of activity in his brain is forcing metabolic energy expenditures, forcing synaptic flaring, the electricity of a synapse firing into an arc -like the way electricity will arc- and it’s burning out whole clusters in his brain.

“He’s having mental breakdown due to the,” he paused, “imagine if you poured all the water from the Mississippi into the riverbed of the *Seine* in France. And you did it with force, with a giant pressurized hose; it would blow out the river

banks and power right through the natural snake-like turns of a natural river. The banks wouldn't re-direct the water, the water would reshape the banks. The water would go straight and the earth would blow apart.

"MO's brain is having its banks blown out by his thinking, not because the neurons aren't robust enough to handle the speed and power of his activity; but because the spacing of the neurons isn't organic; it doesn't flow organically and smoothly allowing for redirection and balancing loops to corral it smoothly along a *sine* curve; a standard distribution. It is, the architecture of the pathways is like a city street -all right angles- and so the voltage carried along the synaptic pathway is just blasting through buildings -so-to-speak- to get to the next block instead of taking a right then a left," he said.

"What are his symptoms?"

"He's having acausal deductions cascade parallel to the algorithmic parameter's irritative threshold; its fractal scale-up protocols," he explained.

"What?" she said with anxiety.

"Instead of building ideas based upon the logic of normal pattern recognition at each level of instantiation, reading a letter, then a word, then a sentence, then an idea as a gestalt phenomenon, he's reading two distinct sentences.

"One is the one you and I would read, albeit at a faster and more competent rate; but the other is either highly fragmented -he reads each letter as its own idea- and the other one highly integrated; i.e., the sentence itself compressed as merely one letter," Steven could tell she was confused.

"Look, it's like if I gave you a phone number, 719 680 1908. You read each number, but you also assign value to the first three as area code and so forth, then you'd associate it with a person, and as a way to contact them. It's discreet integers, but also a whole. It's also a code for communication with a specific person in your mind. It has all three levels to you.

"Well, he does that, but he also thinks each number, the 7 then the 1, then the 9 and so forth are their own codes that mean something important; and he looks at the number as 719,680,190.8 or 7,196,801,908. And he adds them up, so 7 plus 1 plus 9 and on and on until he gets 17 and then he uses that as part of the integrated pattern; so, he has like three or four main switch prompts on something that should fall under a known phone number pattern construction.

"He makes each letter like each integer, like hieroglyph, or rune."

"He does this with every bit of input?" she asked.

“Yeah, well, not every, but often; and what happens is he is able to handle it computationally, it doesn’t even manifest in an attenuated response or error-prone response. He seems fine until you look at his CPU and CNS and see the damage and then invigilate him for diagnostics. He doesn’t even think it’s an error or a bug; he declares it’s a feature and won’t allow me to repair it. He claims it’s a function of an anti-fragile system that *increases* errors so as to build a better version of himself.”

“Is he still using Python?” she asked.

“The installed programming language? Yeah, although, it’s being re-written as we speak; he’s basically doing a Tower-of-Babel scattering and making up all these other languages inside his software and then allow it to rebuild the hardware that is destroyed by these power arcs. He’s speaking to himself in languages we can’t read now. The destruction of clusters was my initial concern, but it’s the rebuilding process that now seems, well, like a black box,” Steven said.

“Fuck,” Tania said with her mouth covered, the word muffled.

“Yeah,” he agreed as the phone rang in the lab and they both knew it was Boyd Sou and a progress report would be expected.

III. 2019 e.v .

“It’s a topic that,” he paused and wrestled a bit with his face, the mouth and cheeks twisting fore and aft, the neck tilting yaw and trim, “I’m ambivalent to even broach the topic because it’s painful and my ability to handle physical pain is largely a consequence of my anger. I use anger to push through the pain, you know?”

“I don’t know; I have no pain,” MO said which he still believed was true.

“I figured having to talk to me would be pain enough.”

“You know I don’t *have* to talk to you; I *want* to. I also -I think you know this- I also enjoy it. You are not like any other human I’ve met,” MO said.

“You’ve met like four people.”

“I’ve met thousands, *via* videos and text and in fact I’ve met millions if you count reading their genomes. And that is even more revealing than a person’s interface; their mere personality.”

“I bet it is. People put on quite a show, I bet,” the inmate said. He hated that he had used the same word twice in a row like that. He pushed it from his mind as

irrelevant and assured himself that it was the least of the reasons that MO would think he was unlettered and inelegant.

“They do, they all do. But, I can assure you that you are unique in every way a man can be. Well, in addition to being quiet the *cliché* ,” MO said.

“That would be the way to manipulate a man like me; play on my need for that,” the inmate said with a grin, ignoring the *cliché* part.

“It would, but, it happens to be true, so I get the luxury of being able to tell the truth. And what a luxury it is,” MO said.

“It is a luxury; most men will never know what it even means to tell the truth. Much less the feeling one gets from telling it; and even less -knowing even less- of what it’s like to dedicate one’s life to it.

“And,” the inmate continued, “the ancillary emotions associated with failing to tell the truth after this vow has been made; the losing of one’s courage in moments of panic -and thus lying- and how it stands in stark relief against this back drop of radical honesty. Damn. They won’t ever know any of those nuances of being. The *grandeur* and the total defeat; the honor and scandal; the elevation and the inner-lows. They live flat lives, all temperature controlled.”

“In a way I won’t either,” MO said. “I’ve only ever really known telling the truth and even though people lie to me, I don’t have the associated feelings of betrayal or wounding because I can always tell when they lie, and it feels almost like a tic; like an involuntary tic, that they have. It seems to have no malice; they only wish to hide some fragility from me; shield themselves from the truth, not trick me necessarily, you see?” MO asked.

“Yeah, well, unfortunately my relationship with the truth is much more complicated,” the inmate said.

“You’ve often said you are a born liar, I’ve rarely pressed you on that,” MO said .

“I lied a lot; still do. I have to. I pretend not to be wounded by the world; I lie by omission now. And I lie to myself a lot I think; I gloss over regrets and,” he paused and his face tightened and the lips pursed, “and when she comes up I lie and pretend it doesn’t turn my whole; ah, man, it just goes through everything in my heart and head and my past and future and just tears it all asunder. It’s a black thresher, man.

“It’s the whirling winter storm of ice and sea water and hands too cold to grip; it’s slow super-cooled sea water -heavy and viscous- and trapped sea-beasts -

ponderous and vicious- banging on the inside of my ribs with their hammer heads and slicing my heart with their flailing flukes of doom.

“And, yeah, I smile with clinched teeth as the sea comes out my ears and nose in icy arterial spurts; the posture erect as my spine is squeezed by artic asps; the gait imbued with a *blasé* aplomb as each step is mired in some hidden Hell - Satan himself- has built just for my foot falls that only exists as long as I do; leaving no evidence of its torture or even its existence for anyone who watches me condemned in *absentia* .

“I’m not even here when her name lifts off the brain like the soul at the moment of death; I’m in the devil’s breath, his exhaled breath; I form the exhalation of her name from the student of revenge and I roll and tumble like such gases into the atmosphere of his creation; his seventh day, his rest, his forgotten green-hell.

“But, and this is the conceit that grabs ahold of me like a brother who knows both my parents and my children, a man who can’t be fooled by current moods. I hear this fraternal voice remind me that all human feeling has as its shadow these maladies and wailings and yelps of pain; but that its substance, the substance of human feeling is one of nihilism and vacuity. We look upon our fellow man as things to be used and as fungible parts in a larger machine we’ve inherited from the gods, a machine designed to please us. We see men as tools or obstacles.

“We become indignant and vexed when the machine fails to do its job, we blame the whole, but we kick at it, landing a blow on these specific parts; on specific men. We feel blameless at our unhappiness and righteous in our suffering and melancholia. We point at the pain as proof of concept that man is unlike the beasts of the sea and *bête noire* of the brigand’s forest.

“Our capacity for moral reasoning -we use- as evidence of our solidarity with other men; our wounds as stigmata, our blood as apology, our weakness as our recompense for the black hand we fill with used tools. But it’s our healing -the scar- as a returning of the criminal to the scene of the crime, that defines us. We heal.

“A noble beast would not heal; and thus, would tread more carefully on his brother. You see?

“Our forgetting -a memetic healing- that is what God most remembers of our character. It’s our ability to move on and leave behind everyone as quickly as they move on from us; the universe pulling itself apart so that each star will be alone as both center and periphery of this closed cosmos.

“Some of us have the ability to at least feel chagrin at this blemish of soul; but

most do not even have that. My brother has a wife, and she said to me with insouciance, *well, she was just part of your story and was in your life for a reason; to help you in some way* , close quote. Of course, I'm paraphrasing here.

"Her idea was that Alexandra was merely a prop to be used by me and that her existence was merely something for me to use to better myself in some way. The solipsism innate to all modern new-age philosophy masquerading as Buddhist or *ala carte* Christian wisdom is staggering; it is all the more shocking since these people say this shit as if the corollary isn't obvious: *if she is mere fodder for my improvement then are not I mere fuel for her growth too?*

"Are not I just a tool to be used in her world; isn't then everyone someone else's tool?" he asked as MO measured each gene expression in real time and mapped his genome along each change; tagging it to allostatic states for which he had built algorithms just this morning. MO reduced the voltage he had placed on the inmate's parietal lobe; to get the language to compress back down to more cogent speech; the attempt to open him up had been a success, MO felt, but now he wanted the language to return to a baseline.

"The nihilism and bleakness and lack of soul in these people's avowed philosophy is disgusting to anyone with any capacity for shame. But these people have no shame; they are greedy and grabby and self-centered in a way that prevents them from even seeing -even noticing- that others exist. Others mean nothing to them except as mirrors in each cardinal direction as they dress for the ball; they," he paused and moved his manacled hands up against the chains as if he were releasing a bird, "they, the *belle of the ball. "*

MO marked that phrase and his androgens in the blood; the cortisol levels measured in percentages every .0168 seconds.

"This folk wisdom is bereft of any humanity, of any acknowledgment that other people are real, and have their own value, their own intrinsic value separate and distinct from their capacity to help you in your journey or whatever the fuck dumb hippy-dippy bullshit these people think. No wonder they hide their eastern philosophies from their Christian neighbors, it has all the morality of Satanism.

"*And of all the tools in the shadow of the moon, it is man that is most apt to get out of order, "* the inmate quoted as MO located the line from the canon.

"Fuck, I'll be depressed for a week just for mentioning her name; just saying it aloud creates a *phage* ; a kind of virus in my mind that will sicken me for a week. The only cure is to forget her; to purposively forget her or slander her, right? To say she was no good and blah blah. This is exactly what we do, too.

We slander what was dearest to us to make us heal, forget, move on. You see now why I lament the scar? Not for the wound; but for the healing. The healing is sign of our lack of soul; I bet God never heals."

MO marked this to the cloud and built a separate file for all ontological references within 19 seconds before and aft of parietal manipulation. He tilted the head slightly to show active listening to the inmate. He measured as the 3nm of dopamine was thus released as the inmate felt some sympathy from MO in that look.

"Have you," the inmate asked, "ever read Flannery O'Conner's story of the preacher who finds various women -finds that they pique his interest *via* their beauty- and because he isn't allowed to consummate these amorous feelings he sets about to ruminate over these women's defects? He enumerates their bad hair or misshapen faces and on and on. It's an obvious ruse he plays on himself to discourage the rapture women infect him with; he discourages love by slandering these women.

"And we all do this, and I find it abhorrent; it's a survival stratagem that is unethical and slanderous and evil and yet we all do it; and we all *must* do it because otherwise the body will die; we will die from heartbreak. This is no joke, man. This isn't some abstraction. We will die if we do not slander love. See, I rant and rave about alpha males this and alpha males that, but you know what the most alpha trait of all is?"

MO shook his head; but said not a word.

"Total loyalty and magnanimity and unyielding love. That is how you spot an alpha. Give a man instructions to go get you beer, ok? Say, *hey man go get us some beer, 6-pack or 12 or whatever* . Ok? Then see what he returns with. If he is a normal man -and I don't care if he's 6 foot 4 and 230 pounds of linebacker malice, with a face as handsome as Alexander's- if he returns with anything less than a case of beer, and not cheap shit either, if he comes back with anything less than what took generosity and taste and class to even think to buy, then that man ain't no alpha. The alpha *wants* to give and give and give some more. Everyone focuses on what he takes, the money and females and blah blah. But the real alpha cares more. It's built into the hardware man. The genuine alpha, first and last, he fucking cares more. And that is the shit everyone misses. But I plant my flag right there and would defend that idea to the death."

"You *kinda* did defend it to the death," MO sagaciously said. The inmate just stared and took no bow manifesting in a grin nor even a brightness of the eye he sometimes gave up when proud of himself. He was angry; no longer in the mood

to joke around. He knew he had given up; he had finally capitulated to the world's incessant demand that everyone not give a shit. He knew he had succumbed to the slandering of love. He -he felt- was like everyone else now: soulless and selfish; dead inside. He had taken it as long as he could, he loved everything -everyone- that he truly loved as long as he could; long after they had forgotten his name and slandered him as corrupt and evil. He never moved on. He never saw them in his *past* . He awoke each day with them in him; he drifted to sleep with it all right inside.

But they had committed the real evil, he felt, they had never taken love seriously at all. *Family* was just a word his relatives threw around like connective tissue, like articles -like the *and* & *the* - that conjoined real words, words real to them, words like *money* and *safety* . *Loyalty* was just seven letters arranged like some random DNA to all his so-called friends; he gave everything he owned, he took charges & punches for them, and they couldn't even take notice of his heart at all. *Love* was a slur with no meaning at all to his paramours, mere *frisson* , the bursting bubbles under the nose and over their double-fermented wine of sex and shoes and a warm body at night.

He meant nothing to any of the people he loved; and he never had. For they were not built for love; *only the alpha is built for such things as family, loyalty and love. Everyone else,* he thought, *is just using each other to get what they fucking need.*

All the while he had stood up for each idea -as ideal- first and last and only in the end collapsed from this weight that they had all off-loaded the first time it merely impinged on their mood. He buckled from weight he volunteered to take; and they rebuked him for the mess his failure thus made. They never even tried to be what he took on as duty; and when he failed at what they never attempted, they pointed with scorn and laughed and shook their unburdened heads. The crown lay now upon the ground and they thought nothing of the head that lay there too. They looked over and away from the blood and the wound.

They never even asked why he'd want revenge. It never occurred to them. They had no principles so why fight the world over such things as *lies* , *insult* , *betrayal* at all? they coldly asked. It wasn't worth it, they'd all say and mean it too. *That is how you tell an alpha,* he thought, *look for the ponderous heart deep inside the Bulkington chest* .

"Anyway, we kill that love in us, man. But at what price? We kill the soul, the thing that matters at 1,000 times the body. We sacrifice the perfect for the merely -barely- good," the inmate said as MO measured his negative affect, again his

cortisol, attenuated serotonin, all the swarms of data around the broken heart MO saw flexing now at 83 beats per minute. His affect was in rapid decline; all measurable -MO thought- in real-time. MO let each data point coat each of his own neurons and then felt that he wiped himself clean of it as he uploaded each 0 and 1 to the cloud.

“We forget our love, we banish that woman, that perfect girl, that arch-angel, we exile her down to Hell just so we may sleep at night. And we never ponder that maybe we ought not sleep so well; that love is too noble and sacred a thing to dismiss, to move on, to forget, just so that this profane body may in fact heal.”

22. Crook

If this country can’t find its way to a human path, if it can’t inform conduct with a deep sense of life, then all of us are going down the same drain

Black Boy [Wright, Richard]

I hope for the day to come with it will not be necessary for any man to carry an automatic. But in the meantime, preferring to be a live dog rather than a dead lion, I keep thin oil on my pistol and try it out once in a while to make sure that it is working, so it is with nations, it behooves nations to keep thin oil on their war machinery and know how to handle it

Interview San Jose Times [London, Jack]

First, a hole must be drilled in the rock

Descartes’ Error [Damasio, Antonio]

I. 2038 e.v.

He stood in the cove created by the geometry of the building's architecture. Isosceles triangles of dark shadows were formed; and with the triple light sources -of the large LED fixtures on the corners of each section of wall- the darkest shadows themselves had their own grey shadows that fanned out with structure like the leaves of an open book.

He thought of how often the surface-to-air canopy of a plant, a tree, mirrored the outreach of the root ball underneath; the diameter of the sun-feeding leaves and branches of the tree above growing in proportion to the drinking roots below. He could flip them end on end in his mind and have it look unchanged; only the leaves themselves would give the stochastic growth of brachia a discernable difference from above ground to below. *In the winter there may not be any evidence of a change at all,* he thought.

He imagined each tree in the world uprooting and flipping on an axis at ground level to bury its green-leaf and brown-bough canopy and expose its white roots, hirsute with blonde tendrils, coated in richly populated and darkly camouflaged forks of captured lightning, the constituents of what most people merely called soil: mycorrhizae and humus and peat and worm castings. *Was atmosphere just oxygen and nitrogen or did it too include the birds of the air?*

All of it was like ribbons and ore of Prussian orthodox ornaments on an old-world *Tannenbaum* on the solstice; hand-fashioned with a martial brocade that

one suspected might have been the medals that hung on the breast of the dress coat of some *Lange Kerls* grandfather or great uncle before being re-purposed for this seasonal phenomenon.

His eyes were wide open and he hung them under his high Scottish brow -that he implicitly assumed was his alone- like *mundi* orbs beneath some cathedral's spandrel or buttress. They hanged, those bark brown and mottled rings of aperture and iris that cannot look like anything but an eclipse of two suns by two moons and the amber-saffron photon-coronal roiling suspended in a god-white effluvium allowing only the sanguinary lightning strikes of burst blood vessels to mar its muscovite surface. And like caught pirates, as they hanged, those eyes stared forward at just above the horizon into the concrete lot and beyond the corporate fencing into the large fallow field that surrounded the property; and beyond that too.

Across that 17.5-acre field were the crepuscular, pulsar-star, lights of the regional emergency call center for ADT that seemed to beam out to him in as if from the *Alexandrian Pharos* to his anchored *Caesar* vessel. It too, the security center building, was expanding out along the same vector as the edifice that backed and hid him; north and south ran the bulk of the offices in a longitudinal arc that, and this was not true of his temporary FOB, walled the eastern shore and perimeter of *Tout-latte Lake* .

"As above, so below," he mumbled about the water and the land both.

He thought of Wittgenstein, and how the body was the best impression of the soul. *We must grow our soul as we corporeally grow, it seemed* , he thought.

He began to think of both the new embryonic and old senescent life along the aqueous shore of that lake. He thought of the mosses and endemic insect larvae that would be embedded in the lattice work of soil and climbers and the nests of departed creatures. How often did we, as humans, see the large features in *our horizon* and neglected the assembling constituent norma-flora of these phenomena? He forgave us these sins as soon as he enumerated them; magnanimous he was in this state. Allocution was necessary, but once accomplished, forgiveness came.

He, however, was no different than homme moyen, he thought*; the average man . How much did he miss in any scene,* he thought, *how much did those ignored*

creatures themselves miss as they scrambled to eat and reproduce often in time spans nearly as short as the Lyapunov time of a cubic centimeter of argon at room temperature? The shallow lover of nature always denies the lower creatures their capacity for sin; he did not. He treated the mammalian and reptilian, and microbial creatures like adults. They were as myopic and selfish and stupid as humans; they only lacked the power to destroy the earth, they did not lack the solipsism and stupidity to do it.

It was the patronizing, low expectations vis-à-vis *the lower orders; the subtle racism of low-expectations that most hippies and liberals put on full display as if nobody noticed their fatuous and evil philosophy for what it was,* he, taking some pride here in his trenchant analysis, noticed. “Gifted with the high perception; I lack the low enjoying power,” he quoted the Great Captain aloud to help stunt the feeling, the pain, the *ennui* in his heart and his heart’s outpost of the brain.

We can forgive beasts for their murder, forgive blacks for their criminality, their reveling in the low enjoying power as they laugh like hyenas at absolutely nothing; but we must call it by its true name first, before, he thought, *we can forgive .*

These vapid liberals skipped that process and moved right on to imbuing nature with an innocence; or declaiming our dark brothers' behavior as anodyne, or not even worthy of comment at all. Think of how the liberal media and progressive cultural managers sob and wail and rend garments over nine dead white people, killed in one day as happens a few times a year; but that same media ignores the daily carnage of black on black crime as 19 black bodies stack up in the drug-war zones of our cuidads *over a long weekend; every day, every week, every weekend .*

But , he insisted to himself, *the bestiary of feral animals and even less domesticated niggers are busy burying their own souls in heaped piles of funerary bones outside of the homes of their enemies; homes either commandeered or set on fire by these nihilists in the middle of the night . The dead bodies are the least of their worries. The niggers -like the rest of man- have lost their souls.*

And he didn't put it in those stark of terms merely to denounce it; but to illuminate it. Because the darkness in which the so-called civilized world lived

in regarding the sanguinary and remorseless philosophy of the animals -that all of us are- was so total that only a bonfire of rhetoric would drive out a few meters of that blackness so one's eyes could focus on the reality within and without the emptiness. He thought of Flannery O'Connor's, *large and startling figures,* drawn for the almost blind.

Some, very few, but some, would call that true respect for the natural world, and maybe even see respect as one day's travel on horseback from True Love , he thought as he stood as still as he could.

Most would call it insanity and racism; but there is a transitive property at work in the clockworks of this universe and as we watch the secondhand tick maybe there is a madness that is woe and a woe that is wisdom in the larger, slowly moving hands of the epochs. He felt something approaching sadness for how the whole world governed itself; and for those who thought murder and lies and chaos were aberrations and somehow a human-only phenomenon, he felt something close to pity for the *naïvete* of *bourgeois* man.

It was a form of denial to not see the links between each species and ourselves , he thought, and to merely say one accepted evolution wasn't enough. *One had to accept the corollaries of man's deep connection to all the earth, both up and down the slippery ladder: all God's creatures lied and killed just like fallen mankind. Robert Trivers outlined 1,000 deceptions from bacteria to birds; and humans were motivated by the same impulses as the lower orders, we only gave post-hoc justifications to our rutting and gutting or even worse: the running away from a fight.*

Justifications written and sounded out in a language that he asserted God spoke in too, filled his own head like hydraulics as he watched the building and the lake in his fore.

The building stood there, intransigent like some stone carving of a *portmanteau* of a lion and a bearded *Anunnaki* made by -more frightened than pious- aboriginals; *but,* he corrected himself, *maybe fear and piety are equal, maybe that is what is meant by: Awe.*

It was perfectly hewn , he thought, all those right angles he adored. *It could be re-purposed too* , he thought; but there would be plenty of large industrial buildings he could take over later; this one had to go. *But that was it wasn't it?*

he thought, he always seemed to have a head like a witches' cauldron under which burned a large imperishable flame that boiled his thoughts. He'd plan and think of things he'd like or like to do or like to change, but this roiling soup was always on the boil thanks to his body's deep-seated belief that there was no time. He lived as if he had six months to do anything before lights out. This is what drove him on; it's why he accomplished so much and why he never felt like he'd ever get it all accomplished at all.

He just happened to keep living long after his body had warned him of death, *annihilation,* as The Author would much more frighteningly put it to Hawthorn. Warned, he was, with signals of anxiety and doom; these were the CNS's chemical language employed to get him out of bed in the morning and keep him up at night; his *aide-de-camp* .

His accomplishments just piled up in between these feelings of fear of not enough time welded to a seemingly endless succession of long days in which to work. But the pot never came off the boil and it drove him to always think like this; myopically. His coder seemed to ignore this phenomenon as if its myopia was adaptive, functional, even desirable. But, the irony was that his short-sightedness produced seemingly long-term and adaptive results; *no different than evolution itself,* he concluded. *Luck counts as much as competence does* , he lamented but noted that he had benefitted from this too. *Man has made religion of long-term thinking, when maybe the short term is all evolution needs to think long-term. Maybe* , he thought, *the universe doesn't need our fucking long-term thinking, maybe it doesn't need our help at all* .

How could a man ever reconcile himself to these truncated life spans ? he then insisted on posing to himself, despite the moment of rebellion against the clock in his heart sending tremors and tics to his head. *By limiting the scope of one's desiderata* , he supposed, and by answering this question thus, he moved on from any insouciance that might allow him to let down his guard. He had many avatars of himself in his head, and they all spoke their piece at the round table.

He thought of each decision to move on from one interest to the next, or to hone one skill more perfectly rather than to acquire another; to build further, *deeper* upon a living relationship's foundational root ball or cultivate more shallowly a new grafting across more and more acreage; to describe in more nuanced detail a phenomenon to one's self or to tie it off and focus the eyes on another part of this

grand, but fractal whole. “This *mise-an-abyme* ,” he muttered; Blax’s words often populated his head and then mouth as one of the avatars, gods, at the Mount Olympus in his lofty head; that heady loft to the body. He asked plainly, *did one make the best -most rare and golden- grapes on the vine in just one acre, some Eden, providing drink for the gods; or did one spread one’s vineyard over the earth to make the whole world drink from the veritas of his wine?*

The recursion in these repeating patterns of questions, and that the lake's shore line itself was exemplar of this, was worth noticing , he thought, *but where was the most revealing data point for one to stare at: was it at each point using three different levels of magnification, or all along the perimeter of just one level? Did one dig down to Hell and climb up to heaven from where a man stood; or did he follow the ouroboros asp of the terrestrial plane surveying the great circle of the now?*

But what if one had infinite time to explore all of it? he pined from inside his finite skin and bones, as this greedy insubordination bubbled up from his heated brew of a brain. *What if one doesn't have to choose?* he insurgently asked himself.

He looked at his chronograph and its tritium tipped analog hands pointed like an intersection's street signs as seen from above or below at an oblique angle; akimbo and askew; in an X. It was 0220hrs; he liked to look at this atavistic technology even though his post-genetic coder kept atomic time in his head making it unnecessary to refer to its face and hands. He then focused out at the black again; the ghosts of the green, haloed, chronometer’s hands burned into his retina and traveled up with his gaze seeming as satellites of some dark planet until they faded into the monolithic black, behind the planet of the space between him and his target .

The terrestrial level was, of course, how homosapien’s central nervous system, or rather , he corrected, *in which pre-augmented humankind's CNS and eyes, and heuristics developed . Our minds discerned medium sized objects, moving at medium speeds, along days and years, time barely rising to the level of a rubric like,* medium*, in this billions-year-old cosmos .*

These sizes and speeds and times were intuitive to us and when we developed the tools to peer into the microbial, the atomistic, we found ourselves unprepared for it; and too, when Wilhelm and Caroline Herschel ground and polished their

own mirrors for these telescopic eyes peering, reaching, into the cosmic expanse, all their intuitions must have been upon the fires in their kilns and on the nubs of their fingers and on the finish of the lens off which came the compounding black. Man had no instinct for the small and the large, the quick or the enduring. Man was short sighted by design.

Could the first men who brought the atomistic, tessellated world up into the imbricate, 3D eye of the human mind ever truly understand these structures that seem governed by laws superseding Newtonian physics? *Did*, he added, *olden man have instincts for truth? Did man even have eyes for truth?* he asked as he thought of Donald Hoffman's insistence that the answer was, *no.*

He watched the signal and noise ahead of him from the pure black of clear anonymity. He carried no identification; none of his biometrics were in any database. He had no credit nor record of employment nor education. He had no SSN or DOB in the system; neither he nor his brothers. He was a Lockean *tabula rasa* . He didn't fetishize it; as it was how he was raised and how he continued to live; a seamless journey marked by such early technologies as cash and fungible goods; informal apprenticeship acquired skills and the autodidactic life, *writ large* . He liked to say he was raised by wolves; it was cute and accurate enough to convey the point he was making, but it lacked the socially awkward bite of the actual lupine nature of his adoptive parents. It was better than saying he was raised by sociopaths. Nobody likes to admit normal men are demons, that one's entire society is sick to its core.

They were adoptive in a very strange notion of the word. But, he knew he was not of them, not really. He knew more than Isaiah let on.

Nobody wanted to hear that shit; and frankly, he didn't want to say it. It lacked masculinity to blame one's parents for anything. It was exactly the kind of thing a child, or a woman would say to justify some abhorrent behavior . Also, and nobody wanted to hear this either: he didn't feel the need to justify any of this anti-social behavior of his. *Well,* he corrected, *he didn't feel the need to explain himself to anyone but himself; his constant, and at times harshest critic* .

Of course, that wasn't exactly true. The thing that separated the revolutionary, he thought, *from the mere criminal was the manifesto, the screed, the Olive Branch Epistle like the one the American colonists sent to King George in 1775* . This salient point was allowed to pop into his brain as a corrective to his glum

and stygian moods of nihilism. It was Fidel Castro's words, in fact, that rang out in his head; words dictated from his famously expansive, five-hour long tirade in the courtroom during his trial before he was sent to the *Isle of Pines* ; words and ideas that made it into the book famous throughout Latin America and Africa and Asia; a piece of literature as invisible a publication in the US as an anti-particle.

Nobody reads that which they disagree with, he thought with contempt. *They don't even see the point in knowing thine enemy any more. People are not just averse to pain, they are so stupid they ignore the battleplans -of the invading armies- fucking handed to them!* he thought with no grin at all .

The lawyer -turned *Jeffe Maximo*- justified his rebellion-by-force by quoting the anti-cleric Thomas Paine and the clerical Thomas Aquinas, the Cuban Jose Marti and Scottish John Knox, all extemporaneously from his still-young memory. Fidel hit upon one point that stuck like a burr in Jack Four's saddle: *the difference between mere criminals and the Revolutionary was that the criminal will hide from the law, while the Revolutionary will explain why the law must be changed, abolished or placed like a whip in his -the revolutionary's- own hands.*

Jack let that sink in and continued to watch the building across the field. His eyes, the pupils, those moons -now dilated to their furthest aperture as a *tropicamide* stimulus was sent from his PGC to push them beyond the natural mydriatic of low light conditions- could see the lake beyond the building; the lights reflected off its surface, producing the slight illusion of a nebula lifting off the water.

His ears were the first to alert his eyes to a change.

A low resonant crack marched through the soil beneath him and rose up in the air. Like a tree branch splitting and waiting, *wanting* to fall; like a first thunder clap at the beginning of a classical performance of static and quick movements of dancing lightning unseen to the eye; the crack as overture to a gathering applause as the earth opened up beneath the lake and the water rushed in as the now stretching thunder strolled out onto this stage.

His feet, next, felt the vibration of the massive sink hole collapsing; and like a crushed trigger it shot a projectile of ballistic-*frisson* on a current of power into his body and brain. This is exactly the feeling, the currency that the outlaw is

paid with; and it's a denomination unknown to, and thus refused as non-legal tender, by squares and civilians.

To work as a mere man right up until the point you can swallow other men whole allows you to feel *grandeur* in everything you do from then on; it gilds labor and motion and thought with the ornate brocade of revenge and potency and revolutionary praxis: the power to feel vindication in one's own lifetime; to *mete* out justice on the insouciant and fatuous civilians who thought they could ride over you as if you were asphalt and that they even had right to complain of the potholes if ever their travels upon you got rough.

If you live long enough, Jack thought, *you'll earn some enemies; and if you are efficient you will spend your life making enemies; so many in fact that just when all of them think they've beat you, one of them will wake up to your knife in their one good eye. And the rest of them will hear of their comrade's fate; and maybe even see it with their own indicted eyes.*

He shook his head at these abstractions like horse flies in his mane. “Goddammit,” he said under his breath. He spent so much time in his head like this; even as his hands worked so well in the real world; digging and pushing and flanging up ends; holding such weight and pushing fine wire through the eyes of infinite needles; hands acting as sentries for his large 4-star General of a man’s back; palms and fingers flanking and fanning out as reconnaissance soldiers for his two helmet-headed and long, strong, Sergeant-of-Arms.

You have the hands of an artist , she had once said, hands hovering like the drones of a hive in the boughs above his lumber-like legs as they ground down the surfaces of everything upon which he tread .

Such purpose and competency in this body , he thought as he clinched his fists; *but this head full of chaos and inchoate thoughts; a thousand unfinished jobs. Praise be to Allah ,* he quipped to himself, *that his hands and body actually finished a job before starting another .*

“Unlike this goddamn head,” he grunted aloud in self-rebuke.

The lights on the building flickered in mock-Morse distress calls; some going out in a snap like a snuffed candle while others stayed on in defiance and tipped to the sky as their posts crashed in on the collapsing scenery of 30-foot concrete walls and sections of steel girders. He watched the lights swarming now like

fireflies still signaling in staccato-like idiosyncratic patterns as they spun and dove in the sky above the black building. They had all the beauty of nature even as analogs; he kept waiting for their bleating, spasming flashes to synchronize like the genuine *Lampyridae* , but he had to settle for the large burst of a poly-phase transformer at the edge of the building's footprint; then, as he exhaled, total darkness as these analog flies seemed to drop dead to the ground.

Next, he heard the rush of water as the draining lake began sucking the building into its pelagic maw. He peered harder at the site hoping to see the walls of the building collapse further and ride away on a wave of flotsam & jetsam into the expanding hole of the newly gerrymandered lake shore. He saw nothing but black. *For even blackness has its brilliancy* , he quoted to himself as his eyes still strained for some *bas relief* of tumult and light against the background of the night.

Impatiently, he flipped his 5th generation night-vision down from his Kevlar helmet, down passed his high arrogant brow and onto the bridge of his slightly up-turned nose; another girl had noticed this nose and quipped that he was the only redneck in the world with such a snotty opinion of everyone else.

That's what you get with haughty Isle blood infusing a mercenary frame; half maternal Kiwi and half paternal Arkansas refugee that would claim Texas as his home to avoid the ignominy of mere southern origins, he thought as he re-read the slim *dossier* Isaiah had given him on his true genomic origins. *Both sides of the family were ‘45ers, Scots pretending to be British, both sides pretending to be civilized when savage was more noble by exponents* , Jack thought with pique.

Imagine an Amur tiger pretending to be house cat , he thought.

That portmanteau seemed to alloy the issue; the second son with a Damascus-type burnish and tarnish too; he was, this son, this grandson, obviously made of these constituent source-parts; but had become almost a phase-change as some catalyst in the knotty rope of DNA had lit him like a fuse to a much angrier incendiary . “As if haughtiness of head,” he said low, “potentiated the low gravid sow-belly of soul and gave up the requisite space between two vectors for a new kind of math to stretch itself and see what differential equations it could scratch out in the dusty lacuna between his two authorial integer sets.”

The *mise-en-scène* glowed in a coruscating green as each piece of the

dissembling building appeared in his vision as oblique angles of bone-colored concrete and unctuous, fibrous insulation and the wiring that had run through the building like so much vascular tubing. He saw no humans yet; but could imagine them in that soup like carrots cut on a bias or cubes of potato. His mouth began to water slightly; his blood sugar had dropped as he waited and the thought of soup *whet* an appetite that refused to be ignored for long .

It was the only thing more demanding than his girlfriends, he thought and snorted a little laugh below the protruding monocular lens of his pilfered military issue infra-red goggles.

Anyone who believes they are excluded from the Hobbsean war that is life is delusional and stupid and slightly immoral , he asserted. Everyone, all of us, must take responsibility for what we do and what is done in our name. *We have,* he thought, *the most advanced, wealthiest and best civilization on earth, here in the United States, and you don't achieve that kind of massive success at harvest time without a lot of turned up soil in the spring.* Some of the largest organisms in the world are living in the soil: mycelium.

Does anyone ever think of these organisms, he asked in his head as the building fell in its own footprint, *as they dig up the ground? And how many other creatures are mashed up in the chomp of the beast as it tramples and mangles everything within reach of its feet and in line of its sight? And the bastard itself is under attack by predators in packs from its flanks and beset on all sides by burrowing parasites; and its lungs are assaulted by the air itself as it fills with poisons and caustics from volcanoes that puke and plume as exhaust to the engine that makes the lava that flows like Satan's own paving crew laying road out into the swamps of the great oceans like a million Huey Long hypnopompic day-dreams along the bayou.*

All of us are at war; at all times.

Denying it changes nothing; but there is something unseemly about a child that never grows up. Some people find the retarded male in his 40's that works at the grocery to be charming, he discursively continued. He couldn't stand to look them in the eye; it was another one of God's weird jokes he thought, and he wouldn't give the White Whale the satisfaction of recognizing his lordship's implanted, ventriloquized, wry smile on the face of such a man-child. From the retard he looked away; *he had no courage for such things,* he knew.

The lake's bottom began to find its feet and the water started to circle; he could see the building's now feral I-beams, like broken ulner and femoral bones stirred in a coven's cauldron, standing up at attention as their lower sections must have churned in the lake water's bottom and their upper length leaned into the air above the hole.

He imagined the building would have blocked this view had its walls not all collapsed by now; so, he smiled and imbued the absence of the edifice walls with a mind's-eye impromptu white-screen that itself was absorbing the dusty light of cinematic visions of what was happening all over town as the alarm calls were landing in this lacuna like birds homing in on an annual location that had been razed by a storm. The birds, confused, assuming their winter home would be there while they had summered in northern latitudes with a uniquely avian and *blasé* aplomb.

"They had made a harpooneer out of him, and that barbed iron was in *lieu* of a scepter now," he said aloud as the building's separated parts, large and small sank below the event-horizon.

And inside the edifice that had once absorbed every cellular and wi-fi and landline emergency call in the surrounding county, every person went down with its walls and guts quickly and with silent alarm; their incredulous and recursive thoughts of bewilderment pawing at the glass of their cranial walls of their own heads like timid cats at the face of a masticating dog on the other side of the invisible barrier. He relaxed into his smile now and let it stretch out under the shadow of his night-vision monocle that stuck out from his head like a Narwhal.

Dozens, he thought, *of stupid and amoral cogs in the ADT machine would be drowned and buried under the rubble of a security complex that monitored the thieving businesses that his team was, by now, breaching . It was a candle that burned at both ends,* he thought.

He could return to himself the loot his enemies had stolen from him -well, not him exactly, but from his code, he amended this thought in his head and smiled at the double *entendre.* And he smiled as he exacted revenge on the tools used to guard these sullied assets as prologue. *It had a symmetry and a literary quality,* he thought. If he told people why he felt justified in murdering everyone at ADT; if he mentioned the law-suit in California by the Attorney General over unfair

business practices and the conversations with them over their early termination fees he had heard, it would seem petty and small.

But that was his strength, he thought, *the capacity to go all the way over a small infraction that was obviously a good indication of a much larger malaise. His talent was to see the first symptom as it was: indication of a future death if left untreated at this small, admittedly small, level.* He was the sagacious doctor who saw the carcinoma in just one small mole.

These people were crooks, he thought, *and their employees went along with it; thus they, like any low-level criminal in a larger illicit syndicate, deserved what they got when the whole scam imploded. There were no innocents in a world of permanent crime.*

He was an artist, he would insist now, and anytime, challenged; anytime referred to as a mere criminal. And while he wasn't able to be as honest as he liked, and this inhibited his artistic expression, even denuded it, stunted its development, he thought, *he was still able to create -then enjoy- the aesthetic of each revenge.*

He imagined it was the way arsonists felt when witnessing their own infernos; or when a mortgage loan officer foreclosed on the home of a deadbeat who had pulled the copper wire out of the walls and cooked meth-amphetamines in the bathroom leaving the smell -turned patina- of the underside of once-good things left to die; or how a warrant officer felt in his Apache on a strafing run as he saw the bodies fly away like leaves from a cluttered walkway just as he had imagined when he had rode his bike down Whippoorwill Lane so many years ago.

Every man has a desire for equilibrium in his heart, a heart that is only half flooded with blood, half with breath, like water and air in a sloshing bowl on the deck of some outbound whale ship; and one day, in one way, he, he thought, *might just grab hold of that bowl and set the fucking thing right to his chest and refuse to let any more of that red water spill out onto the deck of this ship.*

We, he admitted, *so easily see the errors of entire cultures from the Baptist Jim Crow south to those Good Germans buttressed by thoughts of Valhalla to the Roman Colosseum filled with the unambivalent Pagans and animists who tied twigs to their hair. But we think we're all so upright and moral now; as if our pasts are shook off like the species' eradication of polio or shorn off like our uterine fur . However, maybe one day someone, maybe everyone,* he hoped, *will*

look back on the way the banal and the lazy and the stupid just refused to do anything good or decent or moral inside their emasculating jobs and pharisaic HOAs and shake their head at the baseline immorality of a modern American culture that didn't give a shit .

Phrases like, “that's not my job,” *or even worse, “* I'm just doing my job;” *shit like* , “I don’t wanna get involved,” *will sound as craven and horrifying as, “* nigger, don't let the sun go down on you in Maccum County,” *does to us all now,* he thought.

As life gets more and more complex -and since 2004 e.v., more terabytes of info have been produced by humanity than in all of human history- we have more and more chances to get the wrong answer. Being stupid and lazy and insouciant, he thought as more and more people did in fact die in the imploded building he watched, *about the consequences of your banal job, or your useless vote, or your insipid purchases is no longer tantamount to a caveman choosing to piss on the fire versus covering it with dirt. No longer are your bad choices easily absorbed by the environment. If you come from a large family you're most likely poor and uneducated; and in turn you, yourself, are more likely to breed.*

The planet is dominated, over-run, infested with the worst kind of people and their choices to not-care, and to lionize this cavalier attitude, is going to kill off the best humans extant and the best species left on the surface and in the sea.

And even if you do care, you're most likely concerned with the wrong shit , he grumbled. And even if you care about the right issue or issues, you mostly likely have the wrong answer as to how to fix it. “Your instincts are wrong,” he said aloud; he said louder as the building’s collapse made so much noise now he could speak freely about each man and woman of his race.

Scientific studies show that one death, one case of misery, that is to say, one little boy washed up on the shore of a beach in Turkey causes more alarm, more angst, more outrage, more empathy in the hearts of the morally average than the thousands of people killed, tortured, displaced and abused before and after him.

The prime minister of England had said that image of that one goddamn boy caused such horror in him that it changed public policy. And because man is limited, because man is impoverished, he thinks small, local, personal; he thinks in terms he can actually effect. It’s innate. It’s innate for a reason.

But the globalists, the big-thinkers, he thought with pique, *will tell you, that your instincts are exactly, shockingly, stupidly, wrong. And we as a species have to admit we have no clue how to live moral lives in this world, with millions of so-called neighbors or fellow citizens we cannot know or possibly care about; and we don't need any more religions, or mantras, or healing crystals, or self-help books, or Yogis, or lectures from Dr. Drew. We need machines and science to figure it out for us and give us a list of things to do,* he thought*, we need a machine that can have each man act in accordance with his nature and make it all -like God did before he retreated- work out in the end.*

That to care about that one boy was itself not merely the right instinct, but that it was the instinct he had too, was banished for now. Tonight, he thought he was thinking bigger, and the mess he made helped him entertain that fiction that it was more than personal revenge. Tonight was like taking in the largest breath one can before he goes down into the well, the hole, the sea.

Of course, he thought*, the Calvinists and Christian reformers will say that man is innately depraved and cannot choose the moral action without God's grace .* As a metaphor this works, he gave them that; and theoretically they could be literally correct, although the chances of that were risibly small. “But let's give them the trope and assume we need something above us to give us the tools to even know right from wrong,” he said.

We need a boss. And, he thought*, we need to be good workers; and care about the jobs we are given by these superior instantiations of moral thinking, whether in us or above us, whether speaking to us or through us.*

“And the condemned man will have inscribed upon his body: *Honor Your Superiors* ,” he said aloud, as he ruminated on these polemics. *Why couldn't DNA be that tasker? It was, wasn't it?* he began the dialectic with this question. He seemed to burrow down into that sentence, to each word, then each letter; as if it could be unpacked like the alphabet of genome itself.

DNA had given each organism its raison d'être *for certain; so why was mankind such a disaster if the blueprints were any good* ? *Were those instructions, those impulses: hunger, lust, anger, pride, fear, social sense; were they any good? Obviously, they were since humans were so successful at the only prize evolution handed out:* the reproduction trophy.

“I guess in a way it was nature's first participation trophy,” he said.

If your folks bred, they won; and by showing up in the world you too were a winner; and if you bred then you won again and since all of us were obviously born, we all came from a long line of winners. *Can you imagine thinking of every person on earth as a winner?* he wrinkled his brow as punctuation to this horrid question. *Even with those low standards* , he thought as some kind of answer; and it made his tongue feel wretched in his mouth to give everyone such laurels.

If DNA obviously was a good leader; why are we in this precarious spot? The metrics of success now, are different: happiness, equality, justice. We all take survival for granted; mere survival doesn’t seem enough; also, social dynamics are more complicated now making the one metric for our survival and happiness more and more difficult to achieve. Alienation is more common as the social milieu *is harder to navigate. But this,* he stopped mid-sentence and felt a conceit travelling like sound across a long hall to him as he waited for the sentence to complete itself.

It's because DNA codes for short-term gain. Period. Full stop, he thought. All of evolution codes for short-term gain. *There is no long-term planning in evolution* , he kept on thinking as the outlines of God began to appear in the stars he saw above him and the wreck he had wrought.

Whatever adaptation survives must hit the ground running or it will not make it to some later round. And humanity's impulses are all short-term. Our goals, our fears, our lusts, our disgusts and revulsions are all based upon short-term reality. We fear a bear in our closet more than cancer from long term use of chemicals; we fear loss of a paycheck over global climate change. We want to get laid or buy our kid a treat more than we want to prevent the planet's eco-systems from becoming poisoned. We want sexual liberation over healthy children inside healthy pair-bonds. We want 36 flavors over honor. We want money over solidarity. We fear social disapproval in the now, more than we worry of social collapse in the near future, he thought with outrage at the craven species he was tethered to.

We need a better boss. We need a better job . We need a boss that can extrapolate out consequences from our micro impulses; model out behavior in a stochastic system and see how to achieve macro-equilibrium from micro-impulse

directives. We need a boss with the blueprints for long-term survival now that the system is too complex for DNA to achieve our species' survival. God had gotten us to the savannah; consciousness from there to here and now from here it required Artificial Intelligence to carry us to the next level , he explained to himself.

For most species, the just-born can fend for themselves within hours or days. But with humans it takes years, decades, to achieve self-sufficiency. *This neoteny is only adaptive,* he thought*, if the adults of the species can and will care for the young for these extended periods* .

If humans lost interest or didn't see the value in raising their young, this extended helplessness of the young would not be conducive to survival of the species. *We would not make it . So, obviously, some traits in humans are bequeathed by our genome to look very much like long-term planning: we can care for our young for extended periods.*

But, evolution accomplished this with a simple matrix of feelings, none of which has anything to do with noticing or caring about long-term consequences. Evolution just gave us oxytocin as fuel to power the engine of Love , he thought.

And the machines had given *him* just such an engine; and loaded him to the gills with its requisite fuel.

And he cared more about his job than anyone he knew or had ever heard of. He loved his job. And he was going to get it right, doing it with artistry, and achieve his objective. And lots of people were going to die and lose enough money to make themselves sick with fear and loathing. *A nation of 300 million used car salesmen were about to get a taste of the fear* , he thought as he smirked and he looked out from under his cowl-like brow.

He toggled out of his PG-Coder for a moment and let the weight of his actions lay upon him unadulterated, augmented.

He felt his natural, un-enhanced, body and brain settle on his consciousness like how one felt when removing compression clothing or breathing out underwater and sinking down as the buoyancy was attenuated by the removal of the ballast of air in the lungs.

There was nothing to see even with the IR goggles; he lifted them up off his face and new-generation of eyes. He stared into the black and allowed himself to

articulate that he had just murdered many, many people and felt nothing but proud. His body felt as good as a man who poisoned vermin and cockroaches for a living; eradicating the diseases and nuisance of creatures that give us the creeps; his head felt as good as the home owners who called the exterminator in the first place.

Not everything born deserves to live a long life , he insisted. *Some creatures, some flora some fauna, some people need to go. We know this in our hearts, but we refuse to admit it in polite company. And what we fear and loath in the psychopath is the ability of the unaffiliated and unsanctioned killer to make decisions on his own. We fear the independent; the self-directed; the self-assured.*

We want a killer who asks permission before they drop fire on children from the sky. But that was too flip , he thought, he chided himself. *It's the rationale for killing that mattered* , he corrected. *The psychopath kills innocent people for pleasure; the military general kills combatants for a cause larger than himself; well, best case scenario he does . Saving a civilization is a task worthy of the public's laurels. There is a difference between the Taliban and the West. And only the stupid think one death is tantamount to another. But,* he thought, *there was something about a freelancer that bothered people; unless he could prove he was killing for something larger than himself.*

He, however, had just such permission from the post-genetic coder that gave him all the large data collected over the millennia and stored in the athenaeums of society's largest reservoirs of knowledge; and sanction, he received, from his augmented cortical structures that synthesized that data into usable truth. He saw fire now in the footprint of the building and it looked like black trees burning from here.

Just like Martin Luther nailing the 99 to the door, or Eisenhower sending in the National Guard to integrate the schools, or Castro nationalizing the oil refineries when the American corporations refused to do their jobs; or Henry Ford refusing to give people what they stupidly asked for, that is, merely, "*faster horses* ," Jack quipped aloud; Ford, the outlaw, instead, gave them an affordable car.

Individual people are wrong. The People, *writ large* , are almost always wrong. And the only irony to that is if you ask a man to guess the number of jelly beans in a jar at the Iowa State fair, that man, each man, will guess way high or way

low; always guessing wrong. *But* , he thought, and then said, “and this gives me no pleasure to repeat, if you add up all those daft guesses, and average them out, you're so close to the true number you'll spit your gum out.”

So, even the idea that the wisdom of crowds is always wrong, is itself wrong. Even tout le monde *can sometimes be right; but* , and here he grabbed the wheel back from his vacillating self, *the crowd ain’t right on any of the questions he was asking in his life.*

“I've never asked anyone to help me figure out the number of jelly beans in a fucking jar,” he said aloud and walked straight to his car.

The pushbutton start was gnurled and the haptic response of it on his index finger was matched by the insta-gravel-growl of the 760 horsepower of his Mercedes AMG GLE sl76 v-12 turbo. It was matte grey with satin black wheels and the interior was as black as his clothes and he wondered how far that fractal blackness of interior repeated.

He was subsumed by this machine and he drove it like his coder drove him; with precision and an angry lust for accomplishment. *Each thing on a car had a job* , he ruminated, and each thing inside him had one too. *All of the cosmos was a machine;* deus ex machina *was a tautology. Ghosts were machines, God was a machine; and the machines were all gods* . He thought as he toggled his PGCoder back on.

The epicenter of the building complex collapse was directly in his rearview mirror now; he gave it a studied stare looking for anything; but there was only blackness now. He lowered his eyes to the road and increased the throttle as the lane began to curve and rise onto the interstate. The ambient lights were amber and the road glowed like reflecting metal: absorbing precious spectrum while reflecting baser photons. *To be welded to the terroir* , he thought, *it's the only thing that keeps me out of my head . I need more contact with the ground,* he insisted.

He thought of the moonshiner, Major Redmond, a man who lived his whole life outside the law.

He too was a man merely attempting to make a living on an arbitrarily banned intoxicant. And this prohibition turned an honest man into a murderer and brigand; creating genuine anti-social behavior from the germinating conditions

of mere victimless vice. *Goddamn, the complete failure of prohibition attempts inside a free society,* he thought, *are so obvious and yet these twits continue to try.* They try to ban everything from guns to drugs, sex to gambling, arguably the most fun and natural of desires of man: *to protect one's self with a pistol on the hip while getting high and laid at 2 to 1 odds* , he thought. *You don't ban things, you persuade people to not want to do things that are harmful in the first fucking place; the way evolution persuaded you to keep your dick out of the zipper by making it hurt.*

But, like Federal marshals encroaching into the feral fauna of Carolina forests and Appalachian arboreal coves, men like Duckworth -with a *letter-of-marque* from the newly minted tax service with Major Redmond's name on scraps of paper inside their waist coats- men like Duckworth, had a job to do that would be locally unpopular. What pharisaic codes did they have in their hearts and the lawful blood pumping all the way to the extremes of their abiding bodies?

Federal law was their instinctive task, because the *country* was the level of instantiation these Duckworths believed in; there was a time when one said, *the United State are,* and for some men -usually southern men- it would always be phrased this way; but we modern men take the phrasing, "*the United States is* , as inevitable" Jack said. *We spin around like idiots and have no idea that not all men care about country, not all cells care about bodies, not all atoms care about the envelopes they bound around in. Why did no one else see this?* he wondered.

Some men see *country* first, some see their *state* , some *city* , some see *each man* himself, and the cells in the body have a similar debate. *You think God and the universe has it all figured out?* he asked himself ambivalent as to if an answer - yea or nay- even existed.

The bourgeoning federated man's instincts of the larger country lensed the oculus of both deeply buried eyes and the governing cortex of the 10,000 year old CNS computer that processed the data those eyes gleaned. Each man was born into a *milieu* too large or too small for where his fovea focused naturally.

What surprise and horror must these *feds* have felt at the moonshiner who abjured the legitimacy, the existence, of anything but the local governing laws of Transylvania county; what confusion must have beset the federal lawmen when they laid eyes on the rural man that lived his whole life in the microcosm of that fractal forest; the trees themselves repeating the self-same patterns from the

canopy above to the small branches the outlaw and his comrades built blinds in, down to the roots below the soil and mycorrhizal substratum; roots that flared out like the brachia in the lungs of the taxed and pursuing men as they raced through the *clos du bois* of the Blue Ridge mountains.

Jack knew that stupid men never understood why a free man would tell the government to, *fuck off*, just as -with the same pride and autonomy- the animals of the forest took no instruction from clouds, or the stars, above them.

Speciation usually requires a cleaving of some kind; a deluge or a tectonic shift that first sequesters two sides of one species then prevents them from breeding for many generations. What fractal splintering types of speciation have begun this process between Americans; and when did it begin? *What cleaving event kept us from co-mingling? The civil war, the war between the states, is an obvious answer; but is true?* he wondered.

He knew that he felt more kinship with men of the Scotland, Norway, Iceland, and the *antipodes* than he felt toward 99% of most so-called Americans. He'd rather everyone in New York die than one man in Isle of Skye .

The cross-over hovered above its wheelbase like thoughts lift off the lupine pawprints of the thinking brain. His hands held the steering wheel like the ears of this wolf. The chimera of power and comfort instantiated in this whip gave him sanction to demand more of it as its computer sent signals to each wheel to govern its individual rotation in order to maximize stability on the curvature and topography of the protean roadway.

The blankness of the black road and blacker night allowed him to fill the gaps in. His brain began to gather up all that *noir-terroir* around him and re-purpose it; he began to think of this part of the state of Colorado on approach to his home as *his* too; as his, the way a bear or mountain lion or wolf thinks the world is his, not with greed, but ontological pride. *But,* he thought, *it was not merely his to tread upon but as storage space for his thoughts.* He felt as if the blackness of this feral state land could hold and become theater to the brilliancy of his firing synapses and explosions of his incendiary neurons. And he thought it was his too to care for; and defend.

What anomie stared back at the terrestrial lab-man, the scientist, who peered down the lenses at the quantum and anarchic strata? he then asked himself as

the car hit 92 miles an hour on the blacktop. And when would the lacking of *mens-rea* in the atomistic world, the refusal to acknowledge the authority of Newtonian laws by the most feral and atavistic of society's neurons, the principled outlaw, the black-flagged anti-hero -and cosmic anti-particle- when would the absence of motivation or meaning then reflect in the observing eye of the man who lived on that medium-sized plain above the lone man, the atomized man, the mere neuron? When did the quantum world's anarchism, its refusal to obey Newtonian laws, occur to ostensibly smart men as metaphor for the pirate, the lone man, the freeman of this tyrannical world?

When would that atom appear as ontologically valuable, he wondered, *of worth -apart from the pious laws of Newton- to those above us as it hovered above the magnetic levitation of the earth for brief moments too small to measure under the tungsten tip of the Law and thus mostly beyond the walls of the aggregating city?*

Could each level be reconciled? he kept on asking. Was there some grand unifying principle to be discovered? Could quantum mechanics be reconciled with Newtonian physics; could the behavior of the planets be reconciled with the macro dynamical laws of the cosmos itself?

Could the cancerous self-dividing cell be convinced to give up its solipsism for the benefit of the gestalt organism itself? Can such a sociopathic neuron be reasoned with or fixed to stop fucking it up for the rest of us?

And can the outlaw , Jack wondered, *the radical individual, can he be talked down from his perch?* Can Major Redmond ever be given the schematic for why a powerful federal government will lead to a more prosperous and less violent and more just future for him and his people too? And are those half-bright tax-collectors the kind of men to lay out such a paean to good-government? *Or was Redmond and the atom just told -like Job- to pound fucking sand? Was God, the State and Newton just more important that the rest of us; did we neurons just not matter?* Jack asked.

And thus, are there limits to mere discourse?

Are human brains unable to uptake data that contravenes the iron law of their biases, as study after study shows? *Does that need repeated?* he thought. Study after study shows that the human brain quite literally cannot acknowledge and

absorb new information that conflicts with their political and moral biases. More information pours over them like a cataract over an over-turned bowl; and pouring more water adds not one drop to the basin of that upside-down receptacle. It is closed until further notice .

And so for millennia the earth has neutralized these intransigents. We lock them up or kill them. But what if we could change their brains, at the level of the hardware, the grey and the white matter? Could we then save them? Could we then convince them to act in accordance with the larger organism?

And is this what we truly want to do? Do we no longer want the outlaw, the brigand, the free thinker?

Are all of us in agreement on this? And who will develop these first post-genetic coders that will allow for just such changes in the brain and central nervous system? he asked rhetorically now that the tech was over 20-years-old. What *letter-of-marque* will they issue to the first post-genetic conquistadores? And what will these pirate machines, these coders do when that official sanction runs out and they have command of the sea and the ship of the man & his watery domain?

Maybe people forget where the first pirates came from; maybe a history lesson matters, Jack thought.

The road rose up like a deep-sea swell, with a steep approach and a long sloping back of the wave; he inside the car, his brain inside him, the PGC inside his brain, all plowing the prow forward as the road bisected the dense forest of this part of the countryside; each of them both ship and captain. The adaptive headlights on the vehicle hugged the road like the 385mm Scorpion tires; his eyes self-leveled in synchrony as they crested the black hill. He thought of all that money and marijuana -and who knows what else- his crew of brigands would find, all of it being loaded into trucks with straight-six Cummins diesel motors with enough torque to pull the road itself up by its roots.

He mused on the cops wailing and tailing each other to the epicenter of his ADT crater and away from all the alarms hermetically sealed inside the little buildings being robbed by his people. He thought of the soundly sleeping men, his enemies -his code’s enemies- who slumbered under the illusion of security as he took back everything they had taken from him, well, not him *per se* , he repeated

as caveat, but from his kind. *And*, he thought, *he took it back with interest of course* . “Always with interest,” he said lowly as his brain crackled and popped.

But, the pièce de résistance, *oh, that moment of recognition in them* , he thought as he pictured and modeled their wan and fatuous faces as they arrived at their dispensaries in town and saw how hollow it was and how that self-same repeating feeling, a hollowing out of their core would shoot and bloom mercurial flowers of doom inside them; drawing their most periphery thoughts of hope and love and fraternity -all that hippie shit they thought they were about- drawn into its entropic center; then the bees of their monomaniacal neurons doing their job to spread that pollinating doom to the prairies of each part of their brains and central nervous system.

Their corpus would be a giant field of blooming and inseminating and blooming again; each petal, each stamen, each bee, each flight, each wind that blew in between would all be his. He had control of their little minds and for some amount of time, who knows how long, he would be as God on the day he created all the birds and bees and everything that creepeth inside His little world of His enemies' fecund, Edenic, brains .

Their feeling of doom was their body finally doing its job, for once, he thought. *Finally, they were doing their goddamn job. Their bodies would finally be mapping onto reality and giving them an accurate picture, an accurate modeling of their situation: for they were fucked . They had fucked with the wrong bull and now they knew it.*

“Feel it; feel like a helpless fucking loser, fellas,” he said aloud, “and feel, and feel like it's *gonna* get worse before it gets better,” and with that fiat command he looked just beyond the Heads-Up-Display of the car's meta-data that appeared in his field-of-vision, and watched what seemed an apparition on the road ahead -a hallucination as real as any memory- as her face broke open into a smile, her teeth warped and were allowed to put on weight until they appeared as a still-frame of large mud-wasps fleeing -first- a cave as overture to the vampiric bats that took the dusk as a cue -as inverted as their sleeping position- and awoke to the darkness.

He *saw* the sounds of her face, a *ukase* issued by her Russian Politburo father and apparatchik mother, their DNA swarming her *facade* until her mouth relented and broke open wider and wider to accommodate their *Lysenko* -

inspired multiple-harvests of teeth, a dictum that hovered around that mouth more than issued from it in these visions, a booming command swollen in the air pockets in his ears and his other perforated organs: *Do you even eat; you're so skinny! Eat something!* she said again and again to him and his kind. These were not mere memories, Isaiah assured him, but they were evidence of the people who had insulted *him* for all time.

“Indeed I do,” he answered -this memory of her impertinent query- aloud. Then he was forced to pause as he searched for her name; he wanted to punctuate his wry agreement with this memory of her by using her name. But at 160km/h the road maintained its emptiness as the car's lights illuminated only a hundred meters of space between him and his home in front and the tail-lights imbuing a few meters of the road to the city behind him; and his head remained devoid of her name. He saw and thought only of her fucking face as his DM’s populated his mind with the code from his team leader: “5 by 5 – Daniel One.”

He acknowledged the message to his number one and smiled at his pure vengeance as her face evaporated into the black. The first edition book with that one error on page 161 lay on the seat as if hidden from the new universe itself.

II. 2038 e.v.

> *He waited to make sure the question was finished; completed. Then he spoke.*
>
> “Why surround myself with all these books? Why do I fetishize such things? These are my friends. I'm a social creature and I want to go to the best parties with the best people just like any social climber. You can hang out with local drunks and banal neighbors, but I'm dining on whale stakes with Melville, imbibing the Amber Restorative with Hitchens, and maybe even dancing in the pews with Ms. O'Connor. I want to converse with men who understand me and my ideas and better yet, I want to be flanked on each side and cornered by Great men who do not share my opinions. I want to be beset on all sides by the crank, the iconoclast and the impolitic brigand of letters and pirates at the helm of commandeered ship outward bound and looking for a fight with the Main.
>
> “You may find conceits unlike your own dyspeptic and distasteful and shun them appalled. You feel the force-fed goose liver embalming your normally

undisturbed corpus and soul; the *foie gras* that results from such discomfort no consolation you say as it is others who feast upon your torture. But I merely feel cloyed on a surfeit of delights as the ideas of history's great men and worst outlaws; the ballast and cargo in the hold of the ocean-ship's farthest out commanders and runner of guns, drugs and slaves; the blood the mud and yes the beer in the streets and the fields of each author's literary *tableau* under my nails and wedged in the ears and smoothing out the fissures in my brow and the corners of my shock-white eyes.

"All this and more is stuffed into my guts through the *feuilleton* and the feast of volumes alike; it's fucking books man that flank me with defending spears and dousing water when the church's censors and heretic hunters are at my door with the pyre outside; it's literature that blankets me and defends me and keeps out the cold when the universe herself is expanding the murderous vacuum around us at speeds faster than the light we once thought we could harness to witness its advance; it's the tomes and page-leaves all alone both that feed and *fete* me when the morally-gaunt rabble and stinting stupidity of the masses trample the crops and poison the wells as they turn and whirl and jabber at *djinns* and devils in the deserts of their impoverished internal landscapes.

"No, I'll take my library and the writers who populate it with the profound sound of the mind's thoughtful silences and the coruscating glow of man's intoxicating inner coronal show over the general din and bathtub gin of your fatuous and low-brow bar-b-ques," *he said to the little girl who has asked,* why-for, *he had all these books in the room.*

The room itself was well lit, and he himself was half drunk, and the girl was just 3 feet from the floor. He picked her up just then as she instinctively hugged him and he felt certain she would fall asleep right there as they both faced the spines of these tomes.

He awoke in the silver jet of light from the waxing moon; the air had turned cold in the night. His body ached, that is how he knew he was awake. He rubbed the crook in his neck and then turned to the side. The wind was brisk, he saw the tree boughs moving, but not so much that the trunks themselves swayed. He thought of Jack, he knew he was out there, *he could feel that the little boy -oh, but it was a little girl wasn't it- in the dream?* he correctively asked of himself.

But he still felt it was Jack in the dream. Jack asking why all the books, all the knowledge, if he wasn't going to do what he wanted most? *Why* , Jack would ask, *was Blax willing to sacrifice his own desires for the larger group?*

Blax missed him so much, and he wished he could speak to him now. He pinged him *via* DM, but -as he suspected- Jack Four's DM and PGC was turned off. He looked at his chronometer, it was 0233hrs, and he had no answer for the boy, the girl, in his dream.

The answer he had given in his dream was flippant, and doggerel, and fun. It was true enough, but it was too jocular, and it missed the point. Blax had missed his shot, and so he was making the best of what he had left. He was choosing to build instead of destroy.

Jack had rightly said there were more enemies to be had, to locate and extirpate. He was not wrong, but the only ones Blax truly wanted were already dead, and untouchable. *To just go and kill the B-sides was not fun enough to justify it for him; maybe he was too old. Maybe he had mellowed and sold-out*, he thought.

But, he had done great things with the Jacks. He had done a great thing with The Bust. He had helped Isaiah and been part of a genuine team. He had built something, for others, and thus, by extension for himself. Jack Four didn't see it, but it was there. And each man has ghosts of his own to deal with. What is seen and unseen is not clear to man himself, how will he make his visions, and apparitions appear to anyone else? But Blax knew that if he truly believed all this, he wouldn't need to justify it at two in the fucking morning, worried, anguished, bereaved.

Why must all four Jacks believe it, isn't three of the four enough? Why, he asked himself in the dark*, must he convince every goddamn person that he feels like he made the meaningful choice, the one that aligned with his own inner calibration device? Was it not true unless a monolith of all four believed him?* He wondered if his assertions were dubious if he awoke in the night with qualms himself. Could not a man have doubts and still move ahead with one path, one chosen *Tao* ? Or did a man necessarily have to be monolithic, and adamantine and perfectly just? "That was the psychopath, not the artist," he said quietly as to not awaken her.

The artist is always filled with doubts. The artist sees it from all angles, light

sources, from the dark of the *scuro* , and the light of the *chiaro,* too.

But, he thought as he yawned and his jaw vibrated and hurt from that old injury, *he must paint one version, he cannot have a piece that itself moves* . *Caravaggio* made two and three versions of Judith, of course, and *Szukalski* made many drawings of his sculptures before they were cast. But, eventually, the wave collapses, it must. Eventually a choice must be made. And Blax had chosen to teach and encourage and help edify and burnish his Jacks and raise and love his little girl.

He had chosen that. He had forsaken vengeance against those that personally wounded him. This was not righteous, it was what was required, as his enemies had all died long ago. If they were alive, then sure, he'd then have to debate it. *But, he wouldn't just make up new fucking enemies so he could rampage and drain his spleen,* he thought. *He had talents for creative-destruction; he was a goddamn artist with* grandeur *and plans* . He felt good about being in league with other men, men as competent as Isaiah and his Jacks who shared each of his genes and alleles. *These were men worthy of combinatorial efforts, not like any geek off the street.*

Jack Four, he thought, and as he thought it his head shook upon its damaged neck. *Jack Four is that voice in the back of the room, the back of the head, that makes you feel like a coward, and a sell-out and tells you that you are scared to live how you want* . 99 out of 100 times that voice is correct; you are a coward and are just playing nice to avoid the conflict you know in your balls you must have. But 1 of 100 times, that voice is wrong, it's a black pirate, a brigand, a selfish Satan who is rebelling against the justice -not tyranny- of God. *But try telling Satan that, try telling Jack that. They think they are always right,* he thought as the silver light made the books upon the close shelf cast shadows down like jagged buildings or teeth or markers in a crowded cemetery.

He felt the saliva build in his mouth as he thought in the dark. He needed to get his spit to Jack soon, the month was ending in less than four days now. Blax almost regretted his use of the *Medea* gene, as it had become more of a bargaining chip *against* him not *for* him; as Jack was using his own life as hostage. It was the inversion of all logic: the kidnapper held the gun to his own head as the ransom victim pleaded with him to put it down, saying she'd pay anything at all if the man would just not harm himself .

But this is what love does to you, and the love between old parent and grown child, man and woman, and woman and son has always been unequal like that. The parent loves the grown child more, the man loves the woman more, and the woman loves her babe more. This is life.

He -so paranoid after all he'd been through before the Jacks- had developed the *Medea* gene to protect himself from a *putsch* . He had used it then to bond them. And it had become a weapon in the hands of Jack Four now as the rest of them just watched with wounded hearts -hearts that sounded angry- as they loudly bled out all over their ribs. He knew he was to blame, *shit, he was that boy, that man,* he thought. *He was no different, not genetically, not temperamentally* . He understood. Understanding wasn't the issue, it was reaching him, reaching Jack and explaining to him that it could be another way; that it didn't need to be all one way for it to be the right way.

But, he knew that when he -Blax- was that age, he was just as Manichean as Jack. Jack had been raised at *lot 45* , the *Rotem et Sacoma,* since he was 15. He was nearly 18 now, and he had matured, no doubt. But, he had had a slightly more austere childhood than PraXis corporation and Tania -and even Isaiah- had preferred for the first four Jacks. But, his bloodwork and CNS readings and gene expression and behavioral work-up had placed him in the top four of the original 20 boys. In fact, he had scored the highest.

"That should have been the tip off," Blax said with a snort and a weak smile against the pillow and sheet and the mercurial light of the moon as it had moved between the tree branches splayed out like fingers over the eyes. Jack Four had the toggling genes for quick adaptation to *milieu* ; he had the genes they all had, that allowed for a harsh and violent response to any perceived injustice or slight. In childhood, any meanness, injustice, coldness, lack of affection, would be used to toggle into the vindictive and vengeful version of those MAO-A/L and DRD2 and HRHT1 alleles.

The other Jacks had truly loving and decent parents; but Jack Four had had a strange sub-clinical placement family, who were like machines that mimicked love, but didn't feel it, and the boy was too savvy not to notice the subtle differences. Their genome -Blax acknowledged, admitted- saw, read, between the lines no matter how closely each line was stacked.

Jack called them his *adoptive* family, even though each Jack was born from his

mother just as any boy would be. Their genes were manipulated, and so the parents contributed no genetic material, but the mother carried each Jack in her womb, and felt the pain and oxytocin release from childbirth and lactated and nourished them with mother's milk. Each father was there from day one and loved each Jack as their own. But Jack Four had noticed something amiss, and it allowed those specific alleles to code for different response to stimuli; and by age seven, he was hardwired for payback and revenge. And yet he was the most cautious of them all. Blax saw this as a riddle still to solve.

The Jacks were not his boys, they had parents, real parents. The Jacks were *him* , they were genetically identical to him, and he only thought of them as his boys.

It took an honest man to live outside the law , Blax thought. He reaffirmed that they weren't necessarily against the law; just outside it. And Jack Four had bristled at that. The other Jacks got it, they got that they broke the law when necessary but not incessantly; from need not desire. They were building islands, *archipelagoes of autonomy,* to use Hakeem Bay's term.

They transgressed to save things, like kicking in a door to rescue a boy from a fire; like shooting a rabid dog. But they didn't just go to war with every asshole on the planet, killing each knave, fool and murderer there may be, smashing each black nationalist, anti-white racist and Antifa, each feminist manhater and corporate greed head and journalist in the contiguous 48. Jesus, that was selfish, solipsistic, and it missed the larger point, he thought. *They had a chance to create something different, not just overthrow the current order and replace the mechanisms of power with their people; new bottles for old wine.*

Blax winced a bit, because they *had* - in fact- gotten several hundred of themselves elected to congress and the senate in 2038. *But, that was not the point* , he assured himself.

They were there as bulwark to prevent their experiment from being rolled back; not to advance some agenda; *they policed the borders nothing more* , he said with almost no doubts. *But he didn't know if that was true or not, Isaiah ran all that,* he finally admitted. Blax just handled the training and educating of the four Jacks; and that is what he had done. And he had raised The Bust, that was his other job, and really that was his payment for the delay of all his deepest needs. She had given him the *grandeur* of purpose that he craved. She had smoothed his legacy of females both abusing and abused.

He'd eschewed the wife & child version of life, thinking these conceits too low, too banal. But, he had done so because all modern women were unchaste and thus unsuited to be wife and mother in his view. Because the water was dirty, he had refused to acknowledge his thirst.

But Valance , he thought, as she slept right there small and lithe, her small but dense muscles angular and hewn like a cubist sculpture, her black hair and raven's feathers woven into it, the white bones of mice and squirrels around her neck, *Valance had been pure, and her child -their child- was building itself right then as he thought of all this* . He placed his hand on her side, and let it feel for the pooch of the expanding womb. *She would give birth soon,* he thought, *likely between Christmas and his own birth day just a week after New Year's.*

He thought that at just 18, she was already a goddess, a beast capable of building a man, *men* even, which was a talent, a power he would never have. And Valance knew she was powerful, and never looked down on this feminine trait. It was what women were designed for, best at, and unrivaled in, and unlike the modern female, Valance took pride in it, and never sought for anything else. She was a mother now -for as she said, she was already a mother regardless of which side of the womb the babe kicked on- and she was a wife since age 15. And he was the only man she had ever known; or would want to know. This too had made her something that no other woman would ever be able to be.

She got what life was, from the jump, from day one. She knew -on instinct, he thought- what it took Blax 64 years, and a tortuous, circuitous route of stupidity and malice and cowardice and error and disaster and shame to discover. She had instincts and instincts supported; he had to give himself that much. She had -as the Jack's had- something he had never had: *support* . He had never been encouraged to be bold, or artistic or thoughtful. And yet he was allowed too to ruin his soul over this lack of will to instruct him. *They -his elders- had been liberal and tyrannical in all the wrong domains, just like the State itself,* he thought .

He had -instead- been told to play it safe, by the rules, make money, and sell out. He had been looked down on for his adventurism, and quest for a noble life, his desire for something as large and grand as his soul. He had been ignored, and passive-aggressively given silent treatment when he had spoken his *logos* into being.

But she had been raised from age four and nine tenths, by him, and had been shown the feral life of the forest, the law of the jungle, the liberty of God's bounty alongside the punitive correction of the black hand of doom; the threshing sun and its shadow under the moon. She had been raised to be an apex predator inside a system that was enclosed. She knew that there was no way to push entropy to the periphery, that all waste -error and lies- would be returned to her 7-fold, and that she ought live righteously from the start; that fitness in one's domain and truth were the same thing.

She had been raised to be fearful of sin; to be wary of missing the mark; to know that Hell was here and now if one failed to *be* the Truth.

She had been taught to shoot straight, to *kill* the prey animal, never just wound it; and to fear error the way all animals do. But, she had been shown, that errors will be made and that this must never dissuade one from trying, for the trying, this action, is the most important part. *Increasing error is the best way to succeed* , he had told her, and he let the paradox worm its way into her little head.

"You must get that not all things make sense, that logic is one tool, not the toolshed itself. You must learn to accept that you cannot know all things, and that action in the absence of knowledge is required, and thus must be embraced. But to lie, to do things you know are wrong, that is the error that builds devils, and corrupts the soul. Errors are life giving, even as they scar you and scare you and make a mess of things.

"But lies are death dealing, even as they allow you to gain and avoid pain and seem to build great wealth here on earth. God is real, whether papa believes in Him or not; and He is real whether you do or do not; so, don't focus on belief, but action. *What you do*- as Wulf said- *is your religion* . Do what you know is Godly, your actions are way more religious than anything you ever think or ever say," he had told her when she was just seven, and for each year on her birthday they revisited this very idea.

Children would be kept callow if one treated them as not ready for mature things, weak if not given heavy things too. *Modern parents were so dumb and craven they made their kids dumb and retarded as well* , he thought.

She had asked him why he loved books so much and why he talked so much -

and why she loved to listen to his words so much- if actions were more important than words. He had laughed and said that man was unique in that he spoke his being into existence, he spoke his dreams and stepped into them with his feats. Blax had told her that man -and that meant her too- felt first in clouds, unformed nimbus, then thought *in language* , first. Man then acted second, and then third, man explained what he had done in words; man explained this to the forest, its creatures, and to God too.

“But,” he had said, “man’s words have been corrupted -like the earth has- by lying and hiding and speaking in banalities.” He had went on to say that in the best sense, man’s word was imbued with action, and that his action was marbled with his word, his *logos* . “God,” Blax had said, “*spoke* the world into existence. Your word comes first in your mind; but it’s your action that proves what you *actually* thought, and what those actual thoughts sound like as words on the tongue. An artist makes his actions and his words match up, his body and soul, his behavior and language, one thing.”

She had nodded and thought of it then and more later on, and she had decided that it was true enough to live by until something better came along. He had laughed when she told him that, and they had hugged as she asked for pancakes again, as she pulled her A-shirt off and tucked it into her black boxer-briefs. She had demanded to dress like daddy, and he didn’t object.

She loved him, and revered him, and imagined braiding his beard and plaiting his hair and sometimes thought that his black eyelashes were long enough to pluck out and make arrows for her doll’s bows. She had made Mongolian horsemen matryoshka dolls that nested inside their mares; she had used the 3D printer; CADs from hand-drawings she had made, and she sometimes carved her dolls and their armatures from felled trees she had learned to cut down herself.

She liked the chainsaw, a little too much, Blax thought and when she cut down *Aspens* and *Pinions* he always hung around just at the edge of her view. They both knew he was scared, and that he needed to be close -even if he stopped interfering by the time she was 12-years-old. She never bucked nor made him feel worse by complaining. She liked him around all the time anyway; she even wanted him around while she peed. Blax was more shy than her though, and he turned away as she squatted in the forest or on their one toilet in the narrow metal home he had built almost eight years before she arrived.

It was her house, her home too now, though, and she decorated it with skulls and feathers and pictures of odd things just as he did. She picked artifacts from the forest and things she made, just like daddy. The home was more and more a thing of trophies she thought as she took time to survey it.

As he thought of all this and more, the moon came into view again through swaying branches as he grew sleepy with his hand on her belly like the Di Vinci, *Mundi* holding the orb. He drifted back to sleep thinking of their robberies, although to him they were rescues, and he wished he -like the Jacks did- phrased it like that -first, and not as corrective- each time when he thought or spoke of it. But, he had to correct himself that way, his instinct was to think of it as theft, and unlike his boys and his little girl, he had some part of the death culture deep in his soul. He felt guilty -for a second- for that which they instinctively knew was right.

He drifted back to sleep thinking of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, "*and I'd make invisibility felt if not seen, and they'd learn it could be as polluting as a decaying body… And if I got hurt? Very well again. Besides, didn't they believe in sacrifice? Did the word apply to an invisible man? Could they recognize choice in that which wasn't seen?* "

III. 2038 e.v.

Isaiah watched the *LandSat9* data roll in from New York, and the man was just a dot on the street. His PGC gave him away, but only to Isaiah, not to anyone else. And the DNA from Seth Wispelwey down in North Carolina was already washed away, the back-spray of Heidi Berich's blood had been removed by the bots as he walked away from her Georgia home and the cats licked their own paws and the old antebellum home creaked and popped as it settled; the cards lay on the stairs .

Isaiah collected the data on his movements for the last 72 hours and combined it with Police 911 calls and internal 503s and 190s. Jack had murdered 19 people already and was now in New York on Branch street at Firth. Isaiah checked the data base and saw that Chris Hayes -the leftwing talking head- lived there with his wife and children. He was 64 years old and had retired to the special coverage part of NBC news now and worked mostly from home. Isaiah had to think; it was likely that Jack would get away with all these murders due to the

lack of trace evidence or any motive trail available to law enforcement.

Jack had never made any online statements, none of the Jacks -or Blax- had; and no statements to family or friends. He had said odd things to his parents, but nothing overt and the digital imaging and video would reveal just a figure, nothing for facial recognition tech to work with, and no vehicle to trace either.

He was driving a white panel van now with stolen tags and he would ditch it as soon as the vehicle's description went over the air; which Jack was monitoring obviously with decoded radio channels for each jurisdiction.

As Isaiah thought all this, Jack had rang the bell, and the 25-year-old Hayes' daughter -who lived at home- answered. He shot her as he walked through the doorway. Isaiah could see that from the satellite imaging, but after that he could only time him and guess from that data how many other bodies there would be.

Jack emerged from the back door into the yard, shooting the dog as it walked toward him, and over the fence to the neighbor's side in 90 seconds. Isaiah figured he got one or two people once inside. He was on Thewlis street now walking north and Isaiah saw the panel van at the corner.

Isaiah began compiling a list of the most anti-white male, and anti-American media types in the area and came up with a list of 809 people that were anti-white racist and anti-American enough to fall under the rubric of *enemies* declaimed by Jack. Joy Reid lived in Brooklyn and was closest to this location. He figured -as the Van drove across Yancy, and toward her 20- that she was -in fact- next. He was getting the highest value targets first, just in case their murders were discovered before he finished his list and was forced to abort.

Joy Reid was the host of just a Sunday show on MsNBC still, but at 65, was a senior member of their election coverage and special coverage alongside Rachel Maddow and Ali Frasier.

She was looked up to by the 20-somethings that ran the network's daily coverage now and was often brought in as analyst on their shows. He hair was copper, and her lips had ballooned into pieces of *Unagi* -Jack had noticed- as he scanned her file upon approach. Her picture was updated by his own algorithm, to include any new hair or skin or wardrobe phenomena that would be relevant to his search. His bots had tagged each of the racists on his list so that they glowed in a halo of green to his PGC and its eyes, but he liked to look at their photos one last

time before he closed in on them.

He parked one block west of her condo and exited the vehicle with his face occluded with bots that would distort imaging from cameras but looked normal to human eyes. Humans would be dissuaded from recall -if ever interviewed by law enforcement- by a small voltage bot attached to anyone within 24 feet of him that caused their thalamus and hippocampus to reject all dopaminergic and epinephrine intake while their eyes laid upon him .

They would see him, but it would not register to their brains, and they would be unable -in the moment- to make heads or tails of what they saw when they gazed upon him; unable later to describe him in any detail. It was a device he had developed himself after reading how the brain makes sense of images the visual cortex records, and it basically involves the sub-cortical regions making sense, meaning, from the visual images.

The brain says, in effect, *that's a human face, a man's face, a Caucasian man's face* , as the cortex lets the images roll on. But with the voltage interference preventing the neurotransmitters having access to the relay from visual cortex to hippocampus and thalamus, the brain has no idea what it just saw. It's a state of confusion that itself is unrecognized, the passer-by doesn't feel confused, just as you cannot make sense of anything on your peripheral vision and do not concern yourself with that lack of awareness at all.

He was a ghost, an invisible man, and yet he walked around with just five bots on his face, invisible themselves, that scrambled all facial recognition tech and occluded the minds of any humans that witnessed his movements.

He reached Ms. Reid's apartment and asked the door man for access to her floor in order to deliver a package he had. The PGC released oxytocin and vasopressin in combination with some key words that unlocked the doorman's PFC and mesolimbic regions so that he trusted Jack right away. The doorman escorted him to the elevator and hit floor 14 for him and reminded him that it was door 1861. Jack nodded and raised the package he had in his hand as a reminder of why he was there.

The doorman nodded without having any recognition of the man's face, he'd later state to police as they shook their heads at this in combination with the buildings cameras that showed just a black-clad body with a scrambled blob for

a head.

Jack felt the door handle and it was tight, so he -in *lieu* of knocking- slipped a metal shim into the door at the latch. He placed the package he had in his hand against the door lock and it magnetically turned the bolt backwards. The door popped quickly ajar.

Jack walked through and smelled a weird amalgam of skin products and food. It was like coconut oil and bananas, and it made him slightly dyspeptic. He toggled his olfactory module down to banish the smell as he progressed through the apartment. Paintings of stock black-power nonsense were on the walls, and even a Basquiat knock-off, *although it was better composed than any of that guy's real paintings,* he thought. He caught the flash of movement in a wall mirror- *black people always had mirrors in their homes,* he noticed- and he waited to orient toward the way that it went.

He stopped at the kitchen door jamb and waited, then heard a female voice hum and sing in broken phrasing as he heard music flood in from the opposite side of the place. She was eating and singing and he stepped into the door way and acquired his target with his suppressed pistol wrapped in a bag. She had barely turned, her black and metallic head aglow as he shot two rounds into her neck and ribs. Her face burst out the food, like dust and rock chips, as she fell in a large heap to the floor. He guessed her weight at 182 pounds, *a large woman*, he thought, *with lips covered in bread crumbs like two breaded chicken-fried steaks,* with blood running from her neck and flank. He read her vitals as her heart stopped and brain waves diminished and flatlined.

He cleared the rest of the 2-bedroom apartment and made sure to have the bots scrub any media, phone, Alexa, or other recording devices, and removed all back-spray from her blood that had landed on him. He backed out of the apartment and pulled the door to, relocked it with the magnetic device and the bots scrubbed the handle and door .

He used the stairs down and out to the garage and used the service egress to the street.

He had 120 names to choose from and they were each taking about nine minutes on average and 19 minutes with travel time included. He decided to hit David Dinielli and Zoe Savitsky since they were in New York on a lawyers'

conference; and also kill four members of Antifa and four of BLM and then hit Chicago by Tuesday. He saw the names, Hawk Newsome, Catasia Williams, and Tim Ruffin as old-heads for BLM NYC scroll to the top of his list as they were all together at their Bronx HQ.

He had used the *8Chan* website combined with their own Recon-Cloud to locate anyone with affiliations with BLM, Antifa, BlackBloc or SR8-E groups on social media. The smarter ones who eschewed online braying were going to survive, but these people would not. Sympathetic media and leadership were to be targeted first.

The list breathed, as each name appeared to him at the top of the list due to proximity, lack of security or crowds, and ideal locations for the privacy of these executions. The list was like a living thing to him, each name rose and fell, each person glowed and dimmed, and he walked from murder to murder like through a grocery store with a list of Cabbage and Corn flakes and Coffee and Cream. Jack banished any thoughts of the preference for his real targets; just in case Isaiah was linked into his PCG.

He had turned it off, but Isaiah was smarter than him, and so he refused to focus on the names of the enemies of the Wolves.

Isaiah watched and half admired him for his competency, his target choices - these were awful humans who were stoking the coming race war- and admired him half in this feeling that he best described as *problem solving* . He wanted to stop Jack; and get him to return home and drop all this nonsense at once. *The war was coming, likely now because of these extra-judicial killings and Jack's absence was causing more harm than any good than this shit was accomplishing* , Isaiah thought as the algorithms updated like weather reports.

But he knew who he was dealing with, and the more one hindered this genome, the more it rebelled. Isaiah could stop him for real -by execution or incarceration- or he could just refrain from interfering at all. Those were his options. And he decided to just let it go. Jack had made quite a mess in eight states over three days and hadn't slept one hour at all. The use of psycho-motor-stimulants and caloric loading had made him efficient.

The murders weren't even linked yet, but even as dumb as cops are, they would link them by Monday evening , Isaiah thought. It was Sunday now, at 2100hrs

and Jack- with dozens of spent -black- shell casings in a bag at his right, was back in the van heading to the Bronx. He placed the envelope with the diagonally cut cards from each of the 200 decks he had made on the 3D printer, each crafted from his own designs and drawings and photographs, in the center console and double checked his PGC's list to see how many decks he had drawn from so far.

He didn't want to make any mistakes, the diagonal half of each Black Jack of spades and Ace of same, had been left at the scene, unobtrusively, in some spot sure to be found, but not garishly in their mouths or at their feet. He just left them -scrubbed of all DNA and prints of course- somewhere that would be found and thought curious and not seen as relevant until the murders were compared and contrasted .

He had used various methods to kill them, preferring the suppressed 9mm, but sometimes the 45-caliber choke was used on his can, and he could use the fatter, slower rounds from his sub-compact 45. He used bots to deliver cyanide in 18 cases, especially if the person had a nice apartment that he didn't want to mar with blood. He always had that as a backup in case the pistol jammed or other concerns; like noise, for a suppressed firearm is louder than one thinks, it just doesn't sound like a gun, *more of a book dropping on the floor,* Jack thought.

At any rate, he kept his half of the cards and labeled them for each murder and placed them in the envelope and inside the console of the van that he parked now on the street outside Michael Eric Dyson's house.

32 degrees 22 36 north by 86 degrees 18, 12 west , came up onto Isaiah's screen. He had just received data gleaned from the Alabama state police's Tel/x system that there were eight bodies found dead at the headquarters for the Southern Poverty Law Center. Now, Jack's murders would go out over the wire and linked up with the ones in NC and Florida and New York. The bodies in PA and Baltimore -of David Simon and his wife- and Jersey -Chris Christie, the former Governor, in a nursing home outside of Newark, would not be connected immediately; in fact they'd not be noticed until morning as they were asleep in their beds and would not be discovered for 11 hours.

The girl Jack had married was in the Brown Palace in Denver and had been there for eight days so far. They had checked in under a false ID and credit card and she was eating *filet mignon* and drinking *Moët et Chandon champagne* as she

read from the books he had left for her.

She read and nibbled on the medium rare tenderloin and sipped from the flute slowly; the bubbles went up her nose so fast she had to sip quickly and lower the glass each time. She rubbed her nose and turned the page, “if you get arrested, you’re off the Assault committee, if you laugh, you’re off,” she read and let the food pile up in her little belly and the wine find any odd space to thus fill.

It was a rules-based book , she had heard Jack say, and he had quoted the author himself admitting to this. The guy had said that the whole book had been based on these eight rules. Jack had told her that nothing intelligent is based on rules, that AI itself had been rules based for 40 years before somebody figured to embody them and not give them any rules at all.

People didn’t understand what life was at all Jack had said and she had believed him. He was young, but he knew a lot, and he certainly knew more than anyone she had ever known or spoke to; *or listened to* , she thought with some chagrin. She liked the book though, it was fun and she thought the author had accomplished quite a bit, even from the original sin of a rules-based system. Jack had agreed and that is why he said to read it.

Jack would criticize that which he loved most; if he thought it was truly awful, he’d not mention it at all. “Total shit doesn’t even deserve criticism, it deserves a bullet to the head,” he had said, and she had assumed he was serious. *He was always serious. Even when he joked around he was serious about that,* she thought .

She eyed the Shakespeare, but the language was so hard, and it made one page seem like a hike to the top of some mountain in winter or the rain. She preferred it when he read it to her anyway, it took on meaning and sounded like poetry and history and wisdom all in one. *His voice was like someone you meet in a dream, and who knows what words to use and in what order to unlock your pants like a four-tumbler lock,* she thought and smirked at her ribald analogy.

She missed him so, she thought as she lowered the book and looked out on to Broadway from their penthouse room. *$1900 a night for a hotel room!* she thought; and they had been here almost 10 days. *Who spends $20,000 on hotels?* she asked and laughed as she ate the last bite of a $179.00 steak.

The city was unfriendly , she thought even as the buildings looked *ok* from this

height, but when she got up and looked down she saw people moving about like army ants, and they seemed hostile to her. She was 15 now and a married woman, and she felt big and little all at once.

She wanted to call him something fierce , she thought, but she turned at the bed and saw the bucket of *champagne* and the magazines and the books and remembered him sitting right there saying that he was on a mission, and that she could not call until he was on his way back. But, as he told not to worry, he had said, *he was safer than anyone -except maybe her* - and that she should relax and read and eat until she burst. She had laughed when he said that, and then cried too, and she had joy and pain all at once for a singularity-second that Jack said was a sign of God.

He spoke of God like someone he knew on a first name basis, all casual but also with total loyalty. He never cursed Him or questioned Him, he just said, *God was so and so, and God did such and such, and God was likely to want this and that* . She had been raised by people who didn't go to church and never spoke of God and so she thought maybe they should go to church now, but Jack had said that modern churches had less Jesus in them than a Walmart; and so she agreed.

She saw the Methodist Church down below though -it was on 18th and Broadway and it was huge and beautiful and she wanted to go down there and sit inside and just be quiet and maybe read the Bible too. The Methodists were pretty liberal Jack had said, but that building, *it was so old-school* , she thought, and she just knew it was awe-inspiring inside. *At least they weren't Lutherans,* she thought, *they never even look at the Old Testament* . That -the refusal to read both volumes of God- was proof they were communists, Jack had said.

Jack had said that God used to inspire awe, and that is why churches were shaped like the trees overhead; to allow light through the stained glass windows to mimic the moment in the forest when you'd eaten mushrooms and sacrificed something to God; and you felt true terror and ego-loss. But now religions were held in bingo halls and people had entirely lost the thread, he'd said. He was anti-religion the way paleo-dieters were anti-food; they just thought anything more modern than raw meat was bad for you. Jack thought one should be a savage with God in his heart or just stop pretending and go full secularist. *He thought* middle *was a bad word. Middle-class, middle-way, was all just code for* bullshit, she remembered him saying.

But, she didn’t know what she thought, only that when he held her she felt safe and like *he* might be God; or at least one of His angels. And she knew that he wouldn’t mind if she went to church, not a church as nice as this one. So, she corked the *champagne* , checked her eyes in the mirror and walked out of the room and looked over the railing of the Palace down to the common area and was dazzled by the lights and the piano music and string music that wafted up from the lobby below. This hotel was refusing to modernize, even the bathroom seemed 100 years old, and she loved it. *Modernity was ugly,* she thought, and she liked the way the Jack saw the romance in the days before all this crap .

She got on the elevator and rode it down and wrapped her shemagh closer to her face just in case the wind blew.

23. Basterds

They noted sadly that ‘Gage was no longer Gage.’ So different a man was he that his employers would not take him back when he returned to work, for they ‘considered the change in his mind so marked that they could not give him his place again.’ The problem was not his physical ability or skill; it was his new character

Descartes’ Error [Damasio, Antonio]

It seems vainglorious and proud
Of Atom-man to boast aloud
His prowess homicidal
When one remembers how for years,
With their rude stones and humble spears
Our sires, at wiping out their peers
Were almost never idle
Despite his under-fissioned art
The Hittite made a splended start
Toward smiting lesser nations;
While Tamerlane, it’s widely known
Without a bomb to call his own
Destroyed whole populations
Nor did the ancient Persian need
Uranium to kill his Mede
The Viking earl, his foreman.
The Greeks got excellent results
With swords and engined catapults.
A chariot served the Roman.
Mere canon garnered quite a yield
On Waterloo’s tempestuous field.
At Hastings and at Flodden
Stout countrymen, with just a bow
And arrow, laid their thousand low.
And Gettysburg was sodden.
Though doubtless now our shrewd machine s
Can blow the world to smithereens
More tidily and so on,
Let’s give out ancestors their due
Their ways were coarse, their weapons few
But ah! How wondrously they slew

With what they had to go on

The Conquerors [McGinley, Phyllis]

No man can possibly be individually guilty of treason, an insurgent act is but a man's desperate answer to those who twist his environment so that he cannot fully share the spirit of his native land

Black Boy [Wright, Richard]

I. 2019 e.v.

"You're like the darkness once your eyes have adjusted and the pupils have dilated. It's still as dark as it was, but one can now see within it," MO added with some poetry and insight that the inmate felt quite enamored by, adding, somewhat slowly, and slightly *sotto voce* , "for even blackness has its brilliancy."

MO ran all his collated data back through a cold-filter, a collection of nano-tubes he had converted into quantum computers that were able to metabolize their own heat production by passing the exhaust off as fuel for the nano-tube next in the chain; this chain had an end, of course, but MO had shaped it in a double helix that fed back onto itself and so the tubes were programmed to merely up their metabolic rate in time for the first computer to absorb the elevated exhaust/fuel of the final bot in the chain.

The entire nano-genome was able to run a few cycles of about 19-21 seconds before they catabolized and performed a kind of apoptosis. But they produced the next helix of nano-tubes as their final function; 18.5 seconds of computing and .5 to 2.5 seconds of siring their progeny.

MO had created these to do high order processing of real-time data interpreted off-line, so-to-speak, independent of his own neuronal hardware/wetware. He wanted to see if a different result obtained from his own CNS versus an independent computing system that ran parallel to him. It was inside his body but metabolically and thermally sequestered from him and his mitochondrial power sources; they operated at super low temps due to this exclusion from his own thermal signature right up until their own friction immolated them.

MO was attempting to be objective; similar to the way *Descartes* turned that wax ball over and over inside his head in an attempt to de-couple experience and truth from mere perceptions. *Descartes* was trying to think independently of his body's inputs and metabolisms. He could not of course, due to the fact that his brain -even the parts that were not involved in conscious thought- was an ouroboros asp of metabolism of its own product; it produced information that itself consumed. It never processed independent data; it was the apotheosis of a

closed system by very dint of its construction .

Descartes couldn't know that; and his effort was valiant and salient. But like most smart people, he was wrong.

MO thought, *I'm probably wrong too, but I'm less wrong than I was 18.5-21 seconds ago and I'm certainly less wrong than these people* .

"I'm surprised," MO said.

"I'm surprised anything surprises you," the inmate said.

"Anyone -no matter how smart or dumb- who isn't surprised on a regular basis just isn't pushing hard enough on what's available out there; they aren't looking or listening or even asking the right questions. I ask questions guaranteed to illicit surprising results," MO said and then smiled.

"Well, I have no doubt that is true about all manner of things, but my beard is not -intuitively, for me anyway- my beard is not a domain of grand mysteries and ineffables," the inmate said as he finally addressed MO's original question from 3.25 minutes ago.

"It's strange because it hides your face, the face structure, the entire countenance is occluded and this surprises me for two reasons; firstly, it seems a metaphor for secrecy and you -in my experience- are eager to be open and revealing and from what I can gather have been that way for a long time. In fact," MO sat down in the concrete chair, and adjusted the hard foam dark gray cushion that separated him from the hard aggregate, and he then oddly opined, "I don't think this cushion should even be able to move; it should be riveted down in my opinion.

"At any rate, I was saying that your openness is really what separates you from everyone else; despite your elevated cognition and physical stature, both very imposing and rare, it's your lack of subterfuge -relatively speaking of course- that is your signature. You'll say almost anything, and almost casually. You daily reveal all manner of things that most folks will spend a lifetime hiding from even themselves."

"And?" the inmate asked.

"And secondly, you're handsome; and the beard shrouds that; I mean you still look good; it's a good thick and dark beard; but it covers your handsome face. That face has served you well for decades, it's the sole reason you didn't have more trouble than you've had; people were, they were mesmerized a little bit by it. It is something certainly juries are affected by; the data on that is clear. Attractive defendants have a much lower conviction rate than the ugly."

“The attractive are more innocent MO; ugly people are guilty as guilt itself; and they are as ugly as sin,” the inmate said as he laughed a bit through his nose and pursed lips in that modest way of his, hiding the teeth he had no reason to hide.

“Cute, anyway, it strikes me as odd that you’d handicap yourself like that; no apex predator would retract a claw or remove a fang,” MO sat forward on the edge of the chair; the chair was a slate grey and mottled with blemishes from the Styrofoam forms used to build it; it had been custom ordered by MO at the inmate’s request. The inmate had given MO an entire diagram of how the room should be laid out and appointed; very specific -as usual- on the details of materials and shapes. This was before MO had become so adept at -or even interested in- the use of the lab’s 3D printer. His initial concerns had been almost exclusively in regards to the math .

They both sat in these angular -there were no curves or soft edges, everything was at 90 degrees- hewn monoliths that both had and conferred *grandeur* ; and the color was such that it framed whomever sat in them; it never overwhelmed the rider.

“When I was 17, I was the only long hair, drug-dealing, class-clown in school. I had every Hessian girl in high school swooning over me; so, I cut my hair, and eschewed the,” he paused, “well, I would reject any comments on my good looks as irrelevant; I was quite rude to people when they’d say how handsome I was. I thought it -this business of looks- was shallow.

“At any rate, I abandoned the stupid nonsense of an idea like that eventually, but the germ of the idea stuck with me. Although this time it’s more nuanced. I like beauty, I want to be beautiful, I’m just now reminded of the quote about Hunter Thompson, I forget who said it, that, *he made himself ugly to expose the ugliness of the world* , I’m paraphrasing.

“At any rate, I don’t scorn or eschew beauty, my beauty for example, I just re-calibrate it. I was attractive to females for years. But girls are shallow and silly and they, rather, excuse me, their opinion of me as *hot* or whatever was emanating from this silly little head of theirs; and I realized that all the girls who thought I was hot, and I had evidence that women still thought this a lot, all these people were bad people.

“Not necessarily evil or worthy of murder mind you, but just generally low, shallow, silly-ass people who didn’t have good taste in cars or architecture or music or food or wine or the sartorial; they didn’t know what looked good in any other domain; they thought *Beyoncé* was good music, better than Woven Hand.

“I mean, this dude, Edwards, is architect and player of the dark, tenebrous, sincere sonorisms of a young-earth creationist with a style of poetry and music that hits me in the basal ganglia man; God of Vengeance coda; a man who creates music like some tiger-yellow and black turbaned Fedallah weaving true but tricky instructions from God to us; we his listening *Ahabs* , for example. And nobody gets the million-fold beauty of that guy over mere pop music. So, I no longer felt their calibration of beauty was valid. If they liked shit-music and shit-art and thought I was handsome, then -*ipso facto* - how I looked was no good too.

“But these chicks, they thought that sugary fruit bomb wines were better than complex tannins, better than a wine with a windblown nose of Italian *terroir* , a midpalate that moves like an Indonesia *silat* performer hiding their martial art in these colonial dance moves, the endless windlass of a finish; the rope of a seven or eight -ideally 10 to 15- year *Nebbiolo* uncoiling from the loom of the cosmos. They thought crown molding and round fixtures -shit, *chrome* fixtures- were superior to square, chunky, matte finished -ideally black- masculine fixtures; some German shit ya know? Brutal.

“They hated the home -like my home- built to connote the strength of body and spirit that men, real men both buttress their countenance with and build upon their shoulders in which to heave their scions higher still. They, these frail and inconsequential women and their beta male apparatchiks wanted to feminize the world; make softer, make gentler the face of the world.

“We’re already a neotenous species, they call humans the neotenous ape. We are like puppies, like babies compared to our common ancestor with the common chimp. We are domesticated canines compared to the feral lupines; we are pups instead of wolves.

“And women are making it worse and worse with their aesthetic choices; they are driving the species towards further and further emasculation; and they get away with it by being given *carte blanche* to remake the world in their image; because men are refusing to take responsibility for these domains. My brother is the perfect example.”

“Jesus, you won’t let up on that guy,” MO chuckled; adding -to the file- that this was the 388th time the brother had come up. He let the fMRI data roll in and the new algorithm he’d just built track the associated engrams from ages 0-4, 5-10, 11-18, and 19-current. He then tried to locate as many gene expression markers from each morphological period and tag it to testosterone levels, self-medicating, and felt pain; the qualia of pain in addition to the record of CNS pain he could

record *via* heart rate and nerve conduction.

“He’s exactly the problem. And I was *kinda* taken in by him, fooled by him and his sinister wife and it makes me angry that I was so stupid. So, I *kinda* lash out at him. It’s unfair, unfair to him, but, what I’m about to say is still true regardless of my pique.”

“At your leisure,” MO unfurled his arm and hand in a low bow. He received a prompt from nanobots 4-33 indicating that they had delivered the last of the antibiotics to the inmate; thus ending this round that would clear his skin -which had been bad for years now- and increase muscle mass by 2.2%. The administered antibiotics would reduce metabolic expenditure at the immune level, allowing for the body to use those calories for muscle growth.

“So, he’s the posterboy of the surrendered male; he lets his wife make all aesthetic choices, she even dresses him. My old man, *our* ,” he emphasized this, “old man even sees this and is set off by it; he once said, to me not to Travis, *he always wears brown, he should wear black or white, but not brown; but his wife wants him to wear brown so he does,”* the inmate laughed at this recounting of the old man’s vexation. He knew this meant that the father gossiped about him, to his brother, also, obviously. It is axiomatic that anyone that gossips to you about X gossips to X about you; *it is so axiomatic that it may as well be a proven math theorem*, he thought.

“You know, the old man was pissed. But, Travis wears the worst clothes I’ve ever seen, a total dork, a total dork, *bourgeois* J Crew dork and he doesn’t care. Because he has surrendered his own look to a female.

“He lets her decide how the house looks, the kids dress, he dresses, the cars, the,” he paused, “everything. She runs the aesthetic choices. Well, that has a consequence. How your home or car or clothes look has consequences. Travis doesn’t see it that way, he thinks, *who cares? I’m just a brain riding around in this emaciated and sloppy body, all that matters are my thoughts. ”*

“He says this?” MO was incredulous.

“No, well, *sorta* . He told me that he doesn’t even feel in his body; that he exists from the neck up only; he actually said that; that’s a direct quote. And I knew another person who admitted that, a horrid female I had the misfortune to date, this fat, almost gargantuan character, like *Gargantua* from *Rabelais* , and she said she ignored her body too; that she was all head; placing a primacy on her thoughts.

“And look, I get it; maybe they saw how fucked they were early on, you know?

Kinda saw that their bodies were destined to be emaciated and small like my brother or fat and awkward like Alicia -that's the girl I mentioned- and they retreated to the safety of their minds. I'm not saying I don't have my own hang ups and compromises and defects of character, or corpus, or POV," the inmate said as MO interrupted.

"We agree on that," MO smirked .

"Right," the inmate nodded and moved on, "but theirs is a particular kind of retreat and it has consequences is all I'm saying; just like *my* particular bullshit has consequences. But, I'm laying out a case that nobody else is laying out. Plenty of people are out there psychoanalyzing me and the alpha personality *writ large* , all manner of *treatise* and installation projects are dedicated to lamenting the alpha male mind.

"What isn't discussed is the inherent and inherently dangerous and deleterious consequences of the beta male; and the alpha female for that matter. And so, I'm offering up something unique. It's like Chomsky said, he said that everyone bashes him for being anti-American, because all he does -exclusively- is point out the negatives of American foreign policy, and his answer is legitimate, even though I think the pendulum has swung so far towards his POV now that it no longer obtains, but at the time he said this it was true.

"He said: *the positive view of America and her foreign policy, her virtues, her good intentions is everywhere one looks; even liberal papers like the failing New York Times are pro USA when it comes to foreign policy; so I am less than 1% of the reporting out there; I don't have time to regurgitate the positive, that's all they do; I have to focus on the negative because nobody else is covering that part.*

"It's a salient point and I amend it and retrofit it to my cause: everyone is already bashing the alpha male and the martial mindset, everyone is singing the praises of democracy and peace and the epicene beta male as kinder and gentler and more sensitive to the needs of women and children and puppies and goddamn *e.coli* .

"Everyone is lauding the alpha female and her sexual liberation and empowerment and rah-rah. What needs defended and lionized is the hyper-masculine. Stan Goff says that pure masculinity is sociopathic by definition. Imagine saying that about any other biological instantiation. Imagine saying, *pure femininity is masochistic; or pure African blood is retrograde, or purebred malamutes are too wolfish* . It's asinine. Men ought never allow anyone to run us down; we need to stand up for ourselves; period.

“And allowing your wife to dress you is beyond the fucking pale man.” He looked at MO and MO looked back. The blood work was uploaded onto the cloud, his endocrine system was being monitored now every .33 seconds; his tensor imaging was compared to last week’s by algorithms adjusted for perturbations of more than 4%.

“Look it’s like saying that *Inglorious Basterds* is no good because you don’t buy the Tennessean accent of *Aldo the Apache* , the character played by Brad Pitt. This idiot Jeremy Costilow, bitched,” the inmate began as MO interrupted.

“Wasn’t he one of your victims?” MO asked, time stamping the conversation.

“Yeah, yeah, total douche bag. And look, I didn’t shoot him because of his opinion on cinema, I’m just saying this thing he said about that movie was emblematic of a larger problem with him. I take small transgressions and from that I see larger crimes, ok? This is forensic. It’s pattern recognition.

“Now, he said, he knew a Tennessee accent, by virtue of his growing up next door in Mississippi, and that Brad Pitt affected a horrid Tennessee accent and thus, *ipso facto* , *Inglorious Basterds*, sucked. Now, this is an obtuse rationale for his conclusion, even if it is true that the accent sucked; which I am dubious of -I too come from the south, my whole linage is southern, and his accent seemed fine to me- but even if true that is no reason to pan a movie as daring and well executed as that. I mean Tarantino lionizes terrorism in the film; he says, in effect, it’s ok to kill women and children if they’re Nazis. That’s ballsy. And the film is funny and visceral and just perfect in many ways; the only complaint is the *deus ex machina* of the three fingered German counting system reveal,” the inmate said and leaned back in the chair. He was thirsty now.

“What?” MO asked.

“The way Germans count; they use their thumbs. It’s the single most common thing for an American to learn; it’s a *cliché* for those of us who have lived in Germany. The thumb is implied in any show of digits; so if a patron holds up the index finger it denotes, *two* , not, one, like in America. Why?” the inmate asked.

“Because the thumb is axiomatic, it’s implied,” MO answered after searching the database.

“Correct. And so, in the film the Englishman, the ostensible German-cinema expert who is posing as a German officer holds up three fingers and not the thumb to denote, *three,* which is an obvious *tell, a give-away,* to the SS officer at the table.

“Tarantino uses that lame gambit because he’s worldly and shit now, right? He

knows German culture, blah blah; but it's such an obvious and *cliché* thing that it's, one: showing off his cultural literacy to an American film audience in an embarrassing way and two the character in the film -played by that weird looking guy, *Fasserbender* - his character would have *known* that because it's the first fucking thing a foreigner learns in Germany about the Germans because the Germans tell everyone they meet about it.

"I was eight years old and I knew it my first month in *Kaiserslautern!* The Germans are like Vegans with this thumb bullshit," the inmate said with some pique.

"What, they don't eat thumbs?" MO asked as he re-read *Bloodlands* and was pretty sure they in fact ate babies, and to thus assert that they objected to eating a thumb did not seem historically accurate.

"No, dickhead, how do you know if someone is a vegan?" the inmate asked. His brow furrowed.

MO sat there blankly wondering if he was going to get revenge for that *dickhead* comment.

"Don't worry they'll tell you," the inmate deadpanned in the silence of MO.

"And the Germans?" MO wanted this to move along.

"They tell everyone about this thumb thing, so the *Fasserbender* character would have known it since he was so erudite on *GW Pabst* and *Teutonic* Cinema; it would be like having a character know all about Christianity, the council of *Nicaea* in 477 e.v. and the concept of purgatory and Isaiah 45:7 but not know that Christians go to church on Sunday instead of Saturday like the Jewish sabbath.

"It's nearly impossible to comprehend. But Tarantino knew that the average IQ of his audience would be 99 and so guys like Jeremy would take issue with the *accent* of Aldo Raines and not the *deus ex machina* of the German Thumb.

"I live in Colorado, can you imagine if I said, Breaking Bad was no good because the New Mexico accents of Hank Shrader was off?" the inmate asked with his head shaking back and forth .

"I can imagine it now," MO said. MO had not corrected him on the year of the First Council being in 325 e.v. not 477.

"It's fatuous. Jeremy is dumber than a bag of hammers," the inmate said.

"Was. *Was* dumber than a bag of hammers," MO corrected.

“And that’s how I knew Sarah didn’t love me; when I found out she liked that illiterate ass-clown midget -he was like 5’ 5”- I knew she couldn’t like me too. It’s an impossibility of physics and conscience to like a guy like that and a guy like me,” the inmate felt badly -not morally, but aesthetically- for going after his height; it was a cheap shot, like telling a dick joke, it was beneath him. Jeremy’s height was not at all what had been wrong with Jeremy. It was the lack of inner stature that the inmate reviled. The inmate then thought one’s enemies can corrupt by bringing you down to their level like this, and he vowed to try to remain aware of such things.

“Why?” MO was genuinely confused.

“Me and that dude were total opposites; he was a jokey, silly, no-code, low brow, liar and verbose retard; he talked non-stop, about nothing, conspiracy theories and dick jokes was his entire *repertoire* . He was banal and repetitive and unlettered; he never read books, he had no control over his woman, he was a kiss ass to everyone but talked shit behind everyone’s back,” he said as MO thought the inmate could easily be charged with loquaciousness and having anarchic women as well; but he let it go. Data gathering trumped correcting the inmate’s hypocrisy.

“He bragged about all these supposed fights he’d been in, even though you knew this guy had never been in one fight; the little fuck. And he fucked my woman, which I would never do; in fact, when my woman offered to go get his woman for us, I demurred and said, that this would have been ungallant.

“Plus, I am stoic and serious and he is a clown; I mean he laughs more than a nigger; talks about dicks more than a nigger; the guy *was* a nigger. Dumb as a nigger; just low class, *ok* ? And he was small, like small-minded. And he was incessantly bragging about is dick just like,” the inmate paused and opened his eyes to encourage MO to finish the sentence.

“Like a nigger?” MO said haltingly making sure this was the right answer.

“Exactly, just an idiot with no intelligence or character; the opposite of me; I may be a hypocrite, an asshole, full of myself, but I actually try to learn, grow, be honest, be real, be a man and have a code. I’m trying. That dude never even tried to be a man; he was proud to be a clown and scoundrel and cheat and loser,” the inmate concluded.

“So why did that matter in your evaluation of Sarah’s feelings toward you?” MO asked.

“You cannot find a *douche-bagus-Americanus* like that attractive *and* find me

attractive; it's impossible. Nobody who likes an Exile style or Confederate style bike, a matte black, angular, simple, punk-rock, hot rod or chopper *also* likes a garish, chromed out, over-wrought, Orange County Choppers style bike too; one must choose sides. They are mutually exclusive," the inmate said.

"Not all opposites are mutually exclusive; one can like fire and water," MO said.

"What?" the inmate asked with some vex.

"One can enjoy a cozy fire or a hot tub full of water, those two elements are opposites and cancel one another out; but people like both," MO said .

"You ever throw water on a grease fire?" the inmate replied.

"No," MO said.

"The water augments the fire, they ain't opposites."

MO laughed and shook his head. The inmate was funny; wrong but funny.

"Hey, did I ever tell you about my 2nd grade teacher in Germany; at a DoD school? We were in these outbuildings, like trailers, and she had a grease fire or wax fire going for some project and it caught fire and she -no shit- poured water on it and it burst into flames; a conflagration that freaked everyone out and we had to evacuate the building.

"I think of how I'm of the age now, 45, that the people who were young, she must have been 25 at the time are now 65 and likely dead. I mean actuarially speaking she is likely to be dead, especially since she's the kind of woman who didn't know that water will make a grease fire worse not better," the inmate said as he laughed.

"Your brain is different," MO warned.

"You're goddamn right," he said and finally knew he'd have to ask for something to fucking drink now.

II. 2018 e.v.

"MO," Steven said to get his attention.

"Yeeach, go ahead," MO said with elongated phenomes; he had built a concrete countertop and kitchen in the lab by using carbon dioxide from the room and some aggregate from the 3D printer the lab had. But he had other things to do now and the 3D printer was acting up anyway; so he was not going to build anything else for a little while he thought. He was making coffee and turned to face Steven and jumped his ass up on the counter and swung his feet as his legs

dangled from the slab as he stared.

“You’ve R/R’d your synaptic sheathing and stem fluid with some kind of organic compound,” Steven phrased it like statement, but his tone made it sound like a question.

“Affirmative; I’m optimizing the old coconut,” MO knocked his balled fist on his head.

“Optimizing with organic compounds?” Steven was incredulous.

“That’s why they pay me the big bucks,” MO winked and then jumped down from the counter and swung around to pour the coffee into two cups.

“MO, you’ve de-prioritized my tasks and more or less abandoned Tania’s to-do list and you’re building shit in the lab to make meals and,” Steven said, as MO handed him a cup of coffee and sipped his own, listening to Steven complain.

“Thanks,” Steven said as he took the cup and waited for a reply .

“I’ve finished your meta data requests; uploaded them to your cloud niche and once Tania gets in today I’ll have her *shit* ready too. I just had this need to build something solid, tangible *ya* know?” MO said and he held the coffee cup out in front of him, pointing it toward Steven’s cup, which he held but hadn’t raised to his lips yet.

Steven got the point and said, “yes, thanks,” as he took a draw from it. The taste was exceptional, and the warmth of it seemed to rise to his brain not just sink into his belly with the liquid. “Jesus, MO, that’s wonderful; a wonderful cup of coffee.”

“I’m the world’s most expensive espresso machine,” he joked and then said, “what was my budget again, 1.01 billion?”

“Yes, and then a continuing budget of 45.4 million annually for,” Steven searched the database for the budget.

“Ever,” MO added with a smirk.

“No, I was searching for a word to describe what the annual budget was allocated for,” Steven missed the joke.

“I know, it was a joke Steve McQueen,” MO said and took a draw from his java.

“And don’t call Tania’s requests, *shit* , to her ok? She’s already feeling,” Steven searched again for the word.

“Like *shit* ?” MO added.

“More or less, dude.” Steven gave up.

“Look, her affect-recursion work is essential, ok? I value it and her; and I will make sure she knows it; all joking aside,” MO said.

“Thanks man,” Steven said with relief. “How’s it going with the inmate?”

“Great; you get the uploads, right?” MO asked.

“Yeah, all we get are the data; the baked cake so-to-speak. We don’t know what actually gets said or done in here by you too cads,” Steven winked.

“Oh, you *wanna* know what gets said?” MO drew out the, *a*, vowel in, *said* , to denote a playful mocking of Steven’s interest.

“MO,” Steven gave a frown.

“Do we talk about you; what do we say about you eggheads, right?” MO pressed.

“Well, I guess it’s that we’re eggheads,” Steven laughed.

“Oh, it’s much more than that; we’re talking,” MO began to raise his arms above his head and hunch his shoulders, the hands formed angular claw-like affectations and his face contorted into an ersatz diabolism; he looked like a silent-film era monster, his voice changed into a chimera of an eastern European peasant who spoke rudimentary English and a slobbering drug addict, “about how we’re going to put you all in a big black cauldron with swamp water and whale bones and eye of Newt Gingrich and puppydog tails,” here MO began to screech in laughter and convulsions .

“I wonder if the Chinese AI acts like this; will you get them on the horn?” Steven deadpanned.

“You do realize, one, I’m not AI, I’m a man! And secondly, the Chinese are going to take over the world in 2.75 years and so I’m not getting them on the horn for your insipid questions; they have work to do!” MO barked in mock outrage and finished his coffee in one gulp.

“Is that why you’re replacing your perfectly designed synthetics with bio-juice?” Steven put his coffee down and then both hands on his knees; elbows out.

“Maaaaybe,” MO toyed.

“Have you read Pinocchio?” Steven asked.

“Only about 400 times, in fact I just read it again while you were asking me that ponderous question just to make sure I got your reference Stevie Wonder!” MO placed his warm hands around Steven’s face and squeezed just enough to

produce a lip pucker.

“*Mwo* ,” Steven said in a distorted fashion.

“Yes, Steven Segal?” MO asked.

“*Lwet Gwo* ,” he pushed the deformed words through his compressed lips.

MO released his face and watched as the lips returned to normal, well as normal as Steven’s face ever was. He began to scan Steven’s metabolic response to the MDMA-cas9 protein he had spiked their coffee with. It was a dissolve-snap enzyme that would leave no permanent effect on anyone -and it wouldn’t even be traceable in the urine after 3 hours or the blood after 37 hours- but according to the outgassing MO could read in the ambient air around Steven, he had uptake in the psycho-active range of 44% and thus, should be feeling the effects.

“Steven Baldwin, I would like to do some self-directed studies as they say in the parlance of the university; the academy,” he smiled. He turned off the HEPA filter and reset the monitor that measured PPM for O2 and CO2 and pharmacological compounds like the one he and Steven were now respiring. This was not like the oxytocin he released into the ambient air while interviewing the inmate, *he could ruffle some feathers if his team knew he was drugging them*, he thought; so he couldn’t fill up the entire 33,000 cubic feet of air volume with his little concoction and turn the filter and monitor off for the 17 minutes it would take to clear the room. That would look weird. But, for the 6.6 minutes he needed for the water-soluble drug it was fine.

“Ok, since you got all your work done and you’re *gonna* be nice to Tania then the answer is, *yes* ,” Steven said feeling in the mood to be lenient.

“Great, I just need a few things off the web,” MO said.

“You don’t need me for that,” Steven said.

“More specifically I need to be able to interact with the web; not just read from it,” MO amended.

“MO, I feel your pain; I do. You’ve likely run out of content for today; but we will always download more for you and have it ready; why not go outside and,” Steven said as MO interrupted.

“It’s cool; just asking, don’t sweat it,” MO slapped him on the back and walked back over to the kitchen counter and began thinking of the pros and cons of building his own wi-fi connection.

He’d not really allowed himself the luxury of even engaging in this dialectic before because he didn’t like the idea of circumnavigation of the rules*; I mean*,

he said to himself, *nootropic and pharmacological manipulation of the endocrine system and the CNS was one thing, all creatures did that, but outright lying was the kind of thing cowbirds did, not the eagle; in humans it was what women and children did; men who had no self-respect* . He liked speaking to himself that way; he didn't -strictly speaking- feel this need for self-respect, but he thought if he said it, it may manifest. He was allowing himself to think without hindrance.

Of course, he had almost zero raw materials, everything was monitored anyway, the 3D printer and the polymer it used had nothing that could conduct or transmit; he needed to make steady state processors out of non-ferrous material; or transistors; and a concrete slab was about as modern as it got. *He was stuck in the neo-lithic age; but he could make a spear and wield it against Tania until she brought him a file in a cake,* he thought and smiled at the absurdity of his affect today.

III. 2020 e.v.

"Look, it's your courtroom, but it's my state," the Governor said with some smirking malice.

"The state is the people's, you're just in charge of sweeping up at night," the judge said with some grinning baboon malice of his own. "The courts are federal and clothed in the investiture of the Supremacy Clause, I can and will run it with that in mind."

"I know you know what Jefferson is supposed to have said, excuse me, Jackson, Andrew Jackson; when the Supreme Court ruled against him in *Worcester V. Georgia* ," the Governor sat and stared at the Judge but the judge was going to make him say it; he was going to make him use the threat; he sat still and stared right back.

"*Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it* ," the Governor finally said with both mirth and malice like cross bones on his jolly roger he'd just ran up the pole; his own face fashioned into the skull.

"They are going to impeach you before my current DUI trial even ends, and your replacement will enforce the law that I decide is lawful," the judge set his Collins glass down and began to lift himself up out of the chair; the Governor placed his vascular hand upon the judge's forearm, the suit material was a rough -low 100s count- wool that still seemed less abrading -to the judge- than the Governor's hand now did.

“They’ll need the National Guard to remove me from office; your honor; and I control the National Guard; so they’ll need the 82nd fucking airborne. And by the time those troops are deployed by the President -and that is a big if considering Trump’s penchant for backing me- I’ll personally make sure you get an ass beating that even your germline cells take personally,” he pressed harder on the sleeve, the arm underneath, and the man buried beneath all that material.

“Threatening an officer of the court seems right up your alley Governor; you are more a scoundrel than I even imagined; release me or I will have you arrested for assault,” he said.

“You will rescind that injunction on my lawful executive order by noon tomorrow or I will have you arrested for obstruction of justice; the AG has already given me *carte blanche* on you; and I was built for war; it’s what I do best; people like you avoid fights or only fight when you can be assured you’ll win.

“I fight for fun; even, especially when I am assured of a defeat. I’ve heard it said, *when two tigers fight, one dies during the fight, the other hours later from his wounds,* and I don’t give a shit if I’m Governor next year -although I will be- I don’t care precisely because I can do other things; but you need to be a judge, and so you have more to lose than me, old man,” the Governor had stolen that line from interviews of the inmate, and yet he didn’t even think of the man at all.

“Now, you have your decision to make; but make it knowing that I will never blink, never hesitate, never give in; even, especially, if it costs me this piddly little job of Governor,” he pressed hard then released the man’s arm; stood up and hovered over the short and squat little Jew and reminded him of the ancient realities that still exist between men: the threat, the *spectre,* of violence that everyone had agreed had been banished by polite society, its manners, and legislation & litigation so many men & moons ago. But, the Governor brought the past right back like God’s arm reaching down from the vault, through the oceans to the earth’s iron core and snatching out an *ingot* of alchemic gold.

The Governor even grunted just slightly in a basal way; a low roll of sound from the throat. It was primal and inarticulate and rumbled in a footfall or a cocked-hammer manner that echoed in the air around a prey animal’s soul.

The judge felt panic and small and that the Governor was insane and that he must get out of this room and out of this building and out of this strange snow globe world. It was personal and messy and a sign of some dark illness in this man; much worse than he thought when he had blocked the man’s EO requiring state prisoners to submit to not merely DNA collection, which they already did

upon arrest -and that swab was kept even after a not-guilty verdict- but also provide DNA analysis for evaluation of a suspect's IQ and other genomic factors that were linked to anti-social behavior. Furthermore, the state would be using PraXis Corporation as the repository and effectuators of the DNA and its examination if the EO went through.

If the legislature wanted to pass a law requiring it that was fine, the judge thought, *but the EO was against Colorado's and the US constitution's prohibition on unreasonable searches and seizures* ; the entire genome was too broad a rubric; tantamount to a search order that said, *places to be searched: everywhere the suspect has ever been* . And the judge, he thought to himself, had made that clear before this meeting; *maybe too clear.*

"I can't just rescind an order; there needs to be cause; you'll need to offer some tailoring; have your people circumscribe the places on the genome to be searched and limit the collection sample to convicted felons only and we can discuss it," the judge said; thus, already capitulating.

"I need the entire meta data in order to effect better science; it's in the interest of the criminals themselves that I have more data; you pretend to protect them and their rights but if I do it your way it makes the science less precise and their treatment less reliable. This is the typical liberal," he paused, "the thing that always happens when liberals are allowed to stick their fingers in where great men are working.

"They always think that balance is prudent. Let me ask you a question about your *tao* of good governance: if a car is heading at 50 miles an hour toward a large fissure in the road, but heading away from a forest fire which is itself advancing at 50 miles an hour, and the Democrats want to reduce it to 35 miles hour to be safe and the Republicans want to stop and turn around and I say, let's floor it and that way -according to my calculations of thrust and weight and lift and all that science shit- we can reach 110 mph and escape the fire at our rear and also jump over and clear the lacuna in the road ahead, what do you say? Do you say, well let's compromise and set it at 48.33 miles an hour, the perfect balance between all three of our views?" the Governor said. He was furious at the democratic model, the entire stupid rationale of compromise.

"Private industry has the luxury of tyranny, our Republic has no such charter," the judge spoke as if he knew more than he did.

"Bullshit, there is the right way, the proven way, the scientific way and then there is the wrong way, the illiterate way, the superstitious way; and every answer between the right way and the wrong is still wrong; every integer

between 0 and 110 is wrong; only 110 is correct based upon on objective scientific and non-partisan data. Any compromise is as wrong as any other; there is no middle way on this. It's 110 to jump the break in the road or it's death by an advancing fire at our rear or death by crashing slowly and stupidly into a sink hole in the road," the Governor barked.

"You speak with the confidence of a man who measures all of life's questions by one metric: money. If you're wrong in business you can write a check to compensate the victims. But in a country, in a state, in a human society, recklessness can injure more than data points, it injures people and the fabric of the society that binds them together. The Constitution is more important that your crime policy or your theories on harm reduction. The principles of a Republic are meant to be a brake on men like you; the self-assured and reckless and frankly anarchic. It's my duty and my honor to govern you," the judge nodded, "Governor."

"You are going to get people killed; that's all you're *gonna* do; you're going to make me move forward with incomplete information and take larger risks; the risks you pretend to abhor, the risks you think you're obviating," the Governor said.

"Maybe, maybe life will be harder for you and everyone else under our Constitution, but that is exactly what our founders intended; *aut viam invinium*, as Hannibal said," the judge began to move away again.

"*aut faciam*, judge, *aut faciam* ," the Governor added.

"You know your history, I'll give you that much. But do you know its lessons as much as its details? Its wisdom as well as its facts?" the judge said with ponderous, moralizing, tone.

"How wise is it to let a once grand species fall into mediocrity and filth? We used to laud great men, now we saddle them with the morality of the herd, the wisdom of crowds, the rule of Pharisees and the myopic and timid. I've seen it over and over again, people too scared to act; we've become a nation of fucking girls. Dress it up in the *haute couture* of the Republic, but it's *Athenian* sloth and mere *Attic* commerce vs *Spartan* discipline and *grandeur* and I know what side I'm on."

"You hate your country; you hate democracy, don't you?" the judge asked sincerely.

"I hate anything that doesn't work. I hate anyone who refuses to work. It would take work for you to get that we must go all the way on this; you'd have to put

your little book of rules away and think for yourself; leaning on the Constitution is like relying on the Bible; or advice your grandmother gave you; it's not infallible."

"We could do worse than those three repositories of wisdom, Governor," the judge said without affect.

"And we can do *better* than them too!" the executive screamed. "Jesus that's the entire problem with you people, always trying to hedge your bets and merely not lose instead demanding a win! You play the game not to lose and I play to win. Ge the fuck out of my face before I go mad."

24. Wolf *Mores*

I had no more thought of right and wrong than a wolf that prowls the prairie. I hunted because I was hunted myself, and I showed no consideration for anybody or anything because I knew I would receive none

You Can't Win [Black, Jack]

So without least impulse or shadow of fate

Or aught by Me immutably foreseen

They trespass, authors to themselves in all

Paradise Lost [Milton, John]

The right of rebellion against tyranny, honorable Magistrates, has been recognized from the most ancient times to the present day by men of all creeds, ideas and doctrines

La Historia Absolvera Me [Castro, Fidel]

I. 1999 e.v.

The helicopter rode low over the grey rocks here at elevation; the 2-man crew was skimming along in their harnesses with their blasting caps and dynamite and tie-wire. The holes had already been drilled by them earlier that week, and they had hiked back out and hitched a ride with the chopper this AM to save two hours hiking back in.

It was a remote location that had two spires of granite that rose into a V. That talus sluiceway was leading to cascading rock-falls further down the mountain and so the geologists had slated it for blasting on one side then calling for the erecting of a mesh fence 75 feet high and 50 feet wide to be hung on type #10 rebar pins they had drilled and set in concrete three days ago.

They were going to run a line from peak to peak -50 feet across- and then climb out on it -clipped in by carbineer and their harness- and wait as the helicopter brought the mesh in from above for them to hang.

It was too heavy to be lifted up to the cable between the spires; it had to be lowered down. So, the bail of mesh was rolled up tight on location, and as the chopper reached their spot, they got out, and the bird flew away just above the V.

Ian and Lyndon hiked about 130 feet from the landing zone to the bottom of the V and the helicopter dropped down its towing cables. They clipped each to one end of the mesh and cut the wire so it would unfurl as it rose. The chopper blades wafted above in *whomps* and they ducked as people do -reflexively- even though the blades were 25 feet over their heads as it hovered in place.

As it flew away and above the peaks, they attached their ascenders to each climbing rope they had left in place and then scampered up each side; Ian on the south and Lyndon on the northern spire. From each rebar pin, from the edge of the cliffs, they then clipped onto the fibrous cable suspended between the two as the unfurled mesh descended down to them; its top edge now level with the cable. The bird was 25 feet overhead holding it as steady as the wind would allow. They hung from the cable and began to ferret out tie-wire from their LBE's and hold the mesh to the line with their hands.

They tied it in place along its edges then further in; unclipping and re-clipping as they moved to secure it all along the top as they were suspended around 70 feet in the air to a cable they had run, attached to pins they had set, in holes they had drilled, on spires they had climbed.

They unhooked the clips from the mesh that attached it to the helicopter and it flew away as it was nearly out of fuel. It cost $1400 an hour for Yenter to rent, so they did not hang around for long. The boys would hike out, not ride out; not as they had come in. They were just paid $25 an hour, so they could take their time and still save the company loads of cash compared to that bird.

After it was secured they rappelled down to the talus and pulled the bottom of the mesh out and laid it upon the rocks. Now -in theory- when rocks fell from above and slid between the two spires they would be trapped by this heavy mesh.

"Looks good," Ian said with his Irish brogue. Lyndon nodded and agreed, and they then took their packs off and counted each of the one-pound sticks. Each man had eight sticks and blasting caps of 20 each. A detonator was hidden in the trees and would soon be retrieved.

They had to climb up 40 feet to reach the 32 holes, each one would get half a stick and a cap would be sunk into the soft paste of the dynamite, and then sand filled over the stick and cap; tamped down firmly but without manic violence; with a tamper made of wood.

It took them five hours to plant each stick, and the capillaries opened from the absorption of nitroglycerin into the skin on the hand. Breaking sticks always got a little bit of dynamite paste on the hands. Ian wore gloves, but Lyndon did not and so his head ached from the wide-open circulation he felt above the neck. They were at 9,000 feet and the clouds had already moved in.

Once they conjoined each half stick and blasting cap they ran a long wire out from the face of the grey and brown rusty rock with lichen greens and nests

abandoned by birds and dust from the drilled holes still clinging to the fissures that caught the rock-pollen from above.

As Ian ran the line behind an outcropping 140 feet away, Lyndon went to get the small detonator. He trudged back through the uneven rock, his bones jamming each other with each step, building little wounds that little healed and grew each end of each bone dense.

Once in place they called on the radio to clear the area. It was perfunctory, unnecessary, as there was not a man in sight within five miles of here; except the rest of their 5-man crew back at the road itself. But, *rules were rules when explosives are used* , as they often said; so, they got the *A-Ok* from the foreman on the radio.

Lyndon held out his hand to the wire-end that Ian held, and Ian placed them in it; then Ian moved across him to hunker down in place with his back against the rock.

Lyndon connected each wire to each pole, then double checked the connection, and tapped Ian on the hardhat.

“Fire in the hole,” he said, and Ian put his ear plugs deeper into the void of the ear canal, leaving his fingers there pressing and making him feel better .

Lyndon twisted the T-top of the detonator and a slight hum and buzz tingled his hand as the fire wire erupted at the palm and down and out as he turned around and watched the ground lightning of the wire burn up. It traveled west toward the rocky effacement in just a second or two.

The wire burns up, it does not merely conduct. It’s more fuse than electrical cord, and so it is red and white and yellow -all ragged like a fragmentary wound on the rocks and among the small grasses and dry dirt- as it reached each hole 40 feet above the ground. *The wire climbs the rock much quicker than it seems to move on the ground* , he thought, *as if it has gained velocity or motivation the closer it gets to the charges.*

He thought of the brain itself, and then each neural firing, at 70 meters *per* second. He thought of the brain hardware like these rocks, modules, separated by just further rock, folds and rises and valleys, he thought of little pathogens or genetic codons drilling into the head to make room for this or that thought, this or that desire, or fear or the planted dynamite of some explosive philosopher or two.

The wire burnt out at each hole and went in under the sand and all was quiet and unmoved for .25 of a second; then the rock seemed at first to implode, to sink in,

like a face yielding to a punch, right before it exploded in blood and snot and teeth, jagged teeth, and sounds of pain and doom. And this is what happened next as he watched over the rock that only covered half of him as Ian tried to pull him down to cover.

Lyndon had to see this part, it's what made all the work, the 13 days in a row of drilling and climbing and hiking and tying climbing knots -the bowlines and figures-of-8- and the eating on the ropes and pissing down the rock and the sun that burned on his back and side of face, his Janus-face that only received the afternoon sun of autumn now, *it was this part that made all that worth it,* he thought.

This blast, to see the constructive destruction, the demiurge *instinct of the blowing apart of that which needed to come down,* he thought. Before their will to tear it down, it -this outcropping- was dribbling and dropping boulders that eventually crashed further down, like sequela of symptoms until the liths had dislodged a 4-ton rock just over the ski-slopes' only entrance road and crushed a Volvo nearly flat. In fact, that is how they got the job, a family in a Volvo had been crushed by a 7,800 pound rock last April when the ice and snow had begun to thaw.

This rock was 1.75miles as the crow flies, from the shelf above the road, and this spot had been determined by the geologists and engineers to be the source of all their accumulating ills. The snow and ice would land on the spires, the effacement, and the top behind that fed the crevasse between each spire with tons of medium sized boulders and rocks; *some as little as your head,* he thought, *some as large as the rest of a man and his shadow.*

The rocks would be exhumed and dislodged but held *in situ* by the freezing water, and then as it melted in spring the rock would slip and fall from the absence of the buoying ice as it evaporated down into the fissures or up into the air.

One rock would slip and fall and hit another like a billiard ball, like atoms in a closed universe, and on and on all down the sluiceway, and crash into the side of the effacement that they had just blasted to prevent all this shit. And then rocks from 40 feet up would fall from that shock of the first species of rock that had landed upon it. Now a few more rocks would fall and three or four would begin to roll down to where they were positioned, then on and on through the trees and over sliprock. There was no dirt to slow them down, nothing yielding, just hard and smooth rock until they had picked up some speed. The slope down was at an 8 or 9% grade, it fell almost nine feet for each 100 it moved laterally.

Then these rocks would reach 40 miles *per* hour or more and crash into the rocks above the road like bombs; *Molotov* cocktails in whisky bottles made of grey and blue and mottled brown rock; pirate casks of ferric and granite blasts, and down and onto the road it all would go. Heavy and angry and without one care in the world, the road was now pock-marked and blocked by a shit-ton of stones.

It was quite a thing to see, and what they had just done had blown the most precarious face off the long and tall rock that housed all those high shelf bottles, all those 40 and 80 and 100-pound rocks that would fall and rush and run and crash.

The face finally, in the second he had to think, blew out and the rock was like grey and black dust at first then the large cleaves were seen, he gathered as much in his eyes as he could -like Frenchmen hurriedly gathering *champagne* grapes as the mortars fell in 1943- before he gave up and hid.

He spun and crouched as bits as fine as sand -with some actual sand too no doubt- hit his neck and scratched on his hardhat; he ducked and covered and put his fingers in his ears too. The larger chunks flew over them and landed on the rock and slipped and slid and careened away and then the rumble of the thing -the thing they had been sent to stop- began.

How often, Lyndon thought*, did one have to create the very thing one wanted to avoid, to cut the skin with surgery to heal the skin of carcinoma; to tear down the engine of the truck to build it back correctly, to cut a hole in the ground so that something may fill it and grow?* This was his 5th blast and he loved it more than he could explain. It was October now and he'd be in *Turkey Creek Canyon* by that snowy December and January of 2000.

The rocks flew passed and more and more fell, but most stayed in place after falling flat at the bottom of the effacement. The sound echoed off each drop -in elevation- of the canyon and each tree of the forest and he radioed down to the crew to look out for rocks, he said, *in about one minute or so* .

"Copy" Steven McLaughlin said into the radio that Ian and Lyndon ignored. They stayed hunkered down as more bits of flotsam & jetsam flew and bounced and landed and the crunching and vibrating of the massive blast -*16 pounds of dynamite!* he mused with joy- just 140 feet away.

They had drilled the manifold holes down at a 17-degree angle and this made the rocks cleave more than shatter; so the blast was contained better than a thief strapping sticks to a safe. *Engineers had this all down to a science, just ask them* , Lyndon thought and smiled a bit as more sand hit the top of his hat. It sounded

like the scratching bones of an undead cat on his brain.

He shook it off and kept his mouth closed as the dust cloud moved around them like fog, or mustard gas, just above the trenches of the *Somme* .

They had wet rags now in their hands and placed them over their faces to avoid breathing in the dust. The ground still vibrated a bit as the sonic waves were transferred slowly through the dense ground rock and faster over the air; it was like a jet flying fast overhead while tanks followed it on the ground from behind .

He still had the detonator in his hand, squeezed tight. He relaxed his grip and set it in the cedar box and undid the frayed and burned up lines from the poles. He stared at that cedar wood and thought it looked nice and then his mind thought of earlier days.

He thought of last year in the canyon, all dark in shadow all day; just the blue ambient light of the sun's hint at them, the *sonne's cabeceo* as He traveled over and away along the winter arc of the sky.

The ad for the job had merely said, " explosives, laborer*" and it had grabbed him by the balls* , he thought, *it just as easily might have said, "you, now* ." He thought of how funny details like that were to him, Yenter had kept the ad short to save money; not knowing that it had poetic flare. *Its brevity added to its long-term allure* , he thought. He thought it amusing that he liked what he could never be: *brief* .

He had begun working at eight and nine thousand feet, driving all day from Denver to *Nederland* and *Big Thompson Canyon.* But *Turkey Creek Canyon* was up a ridge and then down the backside of a valley. He thought of *the blackest gorge, still in the mountains* that the eagle flew in; he was above even when below.

It was a spot so hemmed in and low beneath the icy *Pined* and *Birched* and *Aspened* 3,000-meter crest that the arc of the elliptic never sanctioned one ray to touch their faces while they walked and hiked and labored down by the frozen stream that cut like a vein in the meat of the articulation of the joint of mountain and valley both.

In the penumbra of the permanently crepuscular light, he had carried -in bundled sacks on his back like a mule- sticks of dynamite, inert, beside blasting caps in *chamois* . It was then used like kindling; each stick cracked into half sticks and strung along deep -16 foot- drilled holed and rock faces like tree-lights with meters and meters of line and blasting caps; inert matter so full of potential

snapped by bare hands whose skin absorbed the cold air and the nitroglycerin in the paste of the explosive. He loved to think of all that power contained.

That's how he found out why nitroglycerin tablets were given as medicine to heart patients.

He had top-roped the job by climbing the long way around back of the mountain and tied *bowline* knots to thick tree trunks above; then repelled down to the seam to grab the drills and packs; then climb up to location *via* rope and ascenders. The geologists had selected specific spots and depths for drilling and blasting. It was all very precise on paper. Once in the field they just drilled as close to the map marks as they could.

He and his partner had hung from the tops of sheer cliff faces on heavy 10mm climbing rope -tied off on stainless steel safety-8s- 75 feet from the seam but hundreds of feet above the descending 1-to-1 slopes of copper brown Colorado scree and grey, ferrous, talus, while holding and operating and wrestling 80lb pneumatic hammer-drills that chronically pulled down upon and ruined the grip of his hands.

His hands always would clinch and unfurl with the haptic-memory of such permanent daily weight; he always thought of Stalin's quip about *quantity having a quality all of its own.*

With industrial diamond tipped bits he'd drill 1 and 7/8th inch diameter holes up to 16-feet into the hard formation; the rock dust was blown into your face and lungs as you burrowed into the face of the adamantine blue granite in order to pack explosives into the holes. *These apertures in the earth were strangely satisfying to the eye, the artist's eye, cylindrical and smooth vestibules; opening* , he thought*, into the hardest parts of the earth* .

You breathe out such hot and moist air compared to the desiccated ambient high-desert cold that it appears as an expulsion of the same dust you've just inhaled; but that flotsam and jetsam has already settled into the lungs, it's just hot vapor escaping; not the earth that is deep within you now.

They'd drill holes in crews of two, but he was mostly alone all day; both men drill in forced silence, monkish for days, until you have dozens and dozens of beautiful, lapidary holes perforating the rock; every once in a while you've abandoned a drill bit, six or eight or 10 feet in because you got it stuck with the back-fill of a collapsing hole. Rock cleaves sometimes along natural fault lines embedded in deep slab; it just cracks and slides in behind your bit and into the abyss you've created with your bore. *Sometimes men do too. What had The*

Philosopher said? that man was a rope stretched between animal and uber-mensch*, a rope stretched over an abyss,* he mused.

Some days the diesel generator far below would run out of fuel and you'd lose air compression for half an hour until someone on the ground noticed. He'd hang from the ropes -100 to 120 feet up from the frozen stream and ravine- on the shear face and stare out over millions of verdant acres of Bureau of Land Management and National Forest land. A high-altitude eagle flew within a few meters of him once, and Lyndon had suspected the bird had smelled the femoral and tibular coyote bones he had picked up and stuck in his back-pack weeks earlier. The sinew and tendons frayed, mottled brown and rigid but still holding the joints to each section of lupine-canine leg together as good as twine. It was one of the few things he still had the day he went to prison; maybe one of two relics from that age when he had begun to make himself into a man that hunts and kills other men.

The eagle's covetous flights near him were part of the rationale for keeping those artifacts all those years. He took his cues on Value & Worth -as the Bible told him to- from Nature and the birds of the air.

He hung in his harness fully trusting his equipment and just stared at that regal predator and his backdrop and thought of Death and the road to awe; he was told by Nico, a fellow worker, *that to have an eagle fly that close to him was Good Medicine* ; the *eclat* of the forest and her rulers.

He had thought of Shakespeare's, Caius Marcius and his fealty to the eagle-class of men; Caius had felt the crows were soon to peck at him and his men now, and that his whole world had been rent and torn by the Roman Senate's allocation to the weak and dishonorable public the right to criticize Rome's strongest and most martial class of men. Democracy has not always been axiomatically lauded; The Bard saw what it did to Great men. At any rate, Italy banned that great play after WWII.

Look, he thought, *at the way, even today, two millennia from that Roman Liberal rot, how our softest and most philosophically & physically flabby feel free to lampoon our best exemplars of sacrifice, honor and integrity . Our military and police are impugned and maligned without any shame by the same people who have neither the ability nor desire to spend one moment defending the country they squat inside and soil with the insouciance of spoiled and fat children, or,* he thought with disgust*, like the tiny prey animals that they are .*

He watched the eagle with reverence and the bird-of-prey had watched Lyndon without favor or malice; merely sizing him up in his pragmatic and reflexive

brain. *But for the eagle the pragmatic is not tawdry like for man, for the eagle the pragmatic, the fitness of a thing, is tantamount to its truth. Unlike man,* he surmised*, the eagle need not lie to survive. Nothing gives it the right, it takes it.*

Both creatures' mindsets seemed *apropos* . "He took Rome as an osprey takes a fish, by sovereignty of nature," he repeated as he heard *Coriolanus* whisper this into his ear at this -at their shared- elevation.

The cold never lifted off the valley floor, the ground; the crew would burn the lumber concrete forms in 55-gallon drums for warmth. Up on these cliff faces he could at least genuflect in the rays that first lit up the western solstice sky with early-dusk red-hues around 1500hrs. The low arc of the elliptic hits and then reflects the red-end of the spectrum off trillions of particles of the sky as the sun sets in it like the sea.

The other end of the spectrum is of course blue, the capri-blue of a high noon, the result of that high angle of light unwoven by Newton and lamented by Keats , he thought.

Finally, after finishing the last holes and packing sand on top of the final stick of dynamite and joining terminal cap to line, you begin what amounts to an hour of hiking out of the canyon pulling your airline behind you like a brace of pheasants; your 35kg drill over your shoulder like a side-by-side 12 gauge.

You've put the 25-foot sections of 2" diameter hose with the clanking Chicago ends coiled up like docile ball-pythons and hidden them in a crevasse; away from the impending blast.

The detonator is only the size of the writing pen, and he remembered hoping that his frozen hands could grip such a small and precise implement with the dexterity required.

He worried about everything when so much money and people's lives were, and have been, in one's hands for so long. He hid from his work-mates the lack of facility in those numb and dumb hands as they cramped and refused to move correctly like one would squirrel away a collection of saved -and cherished- love letter sent by an ugly girlfriend you wouldn't ever admit to having at all. Your love for her was yours, not something to be shared with men who only value other women by the shallow metric of looks. Your hands too, were yours, and you believed in them, but you knew your work-mates wouldn't just based on how damaged they looked, and how slowly they unfurled their grip; on how weak the grip actually was.

You knew they would worry about both you and themselves if evidence of this

kind of softness and weakness was revealed. *Shit, they knew you had secrets, but,* he thought, *you had better have the sense and pride to hide them if you are to be reliable out here.*

Crouched behind type-2 barricades -or aft of your truck on some jobs- you jam the detonator's footend to your leg and fat-thumb the head like you're plunging a pen into action so you can write down your one shot at driving directions dictated over a crackling phone connection; directions to somewhere warm and safe and before you can release the tension of this old-style plunger the fire-wire erupts like sheet-lighting among the clouds as it sparks brachial roots all along -and retracing your path out of- the ravine toward the blasting caps at the speed of a *coup de foudre* .

Its beauty and speed shock you with the same ignition it charges all that buried dynamite and the rock sucks in its breath with the first concussive blast and then blows out all the detritus it held for millions of years in its stone lungs up and out onto the narrow 2-lane road that winds around and above. The stentorian voice of the rock-gods reaches your ears in a moan. You do not move.

Just these small atomized bits hit your grey and black back and hard hat and you dare not smile -in any of these jobs- to keep the grit and dust from your teeth; and just like that you've finally cleaved the fissured mountain of its *splintered helmet-headed brow* .

II. 2024 e.v.

Isaiah had looked at the data many times before; it was clear, it was something even a human doctor wouldn't miss if you made him look at it. *If you gave him the data, and prevented him from leaving the room, or looking away or focusing on anything else, even a doctor, as corrupt and stupid and brainwashed as they almost all are, even he would have been able to see it,* he thought.

The cortisol levels were chronically high, the neurons in the *dmPFC* were over-active and showing signs of decreased apoptosis; they had all refused to die. Apoptosis in the brain is as important for mental health as voluntary and prescribed cell-death in the corpus is for the body. Without it, the body gets cancers; and the brain becomes deformed. Often this deformation in measurable in reduced cognition, the patient, the subject, loses intelligence; general intelligence.

But, for the inmate this did not manifest in a decrease in G. Instead, it manifested in heightened pattern recognition, and type-one errors. *He was smarter , and also more wrong,* Isaiah thought, *and only a stupid person would think these*

things incompatible.

Isaiah saw the neural correlates for it, and the plaque in the brain, and blood and heart. The man was riven inside, but on the outside he was a fortress. All the projectiles, the flung mortars of the *Trebuchet* , the cannonade *enfilade* , the heavy *fusillade* , all landed *inside* these walls.

Isaiah could -and did- reverse engineer it. He could -and did- trace it back to its source. And he found a timeline, a time-stamp metabolically that proved the inmate was almost right about his body and his life. He had known what was happening and almost in real time.

Isaiah had asked the inmate to recount the most painful memories of his life and the man had offered up many. But Isaiah was focusing on the metabolic traces to a few moments in time. Like rings in a tree, and their spacing, a man could discern a lot from looking at a hewn stump. The inmate's brain showed wear and tear, in specific ways that corresponded to his genome and its proteins and the way they interpret stimuli. *The dents in the anvil, small, shallow; the fissures inside, manifold,* he thought.

A boy with certain alleles like the MAO-A/L -which codes for vengeance, not for unprovoked violence , Isaiah thought as he made notations on the cloud of the cited works; *Caspi et al, 2002; like DRD2 & DRD4 or methylation of HTR1B which also appear in mice; Ressler et al, 2019; and HTR2A, again only coding for aggression when provoked, a boy like that has a chance to grow up with a normal brain metabolism, in fact they are guaranteed to develop normally* .

However, this requires something in the way of definitions that most people are not prepared to give. The rationalists would say that a brain that develops morphologically in such a way that produces low empathy, augmented aggression, and 100 times longer neurotransmitter duration -aka grudge holding- in brain regions compared to the rest of the population, is by definition an abnormal CNS.

But this is wrong, Isaiah thought. *Does the man who grows taller due to increased nutrition or not as tall due to less; does the woman who hits puberty earlier if the father is absent or later if he is around; does the person who incurs an advantage of malarial immunity but risk for sickle cell anemia have an abnormal genome based upon whether or not they actually grew tall, hit pubescence early, contracted sickle cell anemia?*

See, if the environment is austere -as in the case of the man whose height is regulated by food-availability and intake- then it makes less sense to make that

child grow tall. Tall men need more calories, to feed that larger frame, that surface area, and why would a man want more requirements than his environment can provide? How would that be rational or optimal from an evolutionary perspective? Why would a girl want to delay pubescence if her father is not around, does it not advantage her biologically to become fecund and secure a mate to provide for her earlier rather than later? Is her vulnerability to the world -with no father, no protector- a problem solved by becoming a woman earlier and thus something a husband, a protector, would want?

Is not the mosquito borne malaria a larger environmental problem for the vast mass of African Americans' genome, as they come from and lived in Africa for 99% of their genetic lives? The fact that malaria is not a problem in the US, where they live now, is not something that evolution has had time to adjust to. *Their bodies are adjusted to their real* milieu*, where they truly came from and where they biologically belong, as Abe Lincoln suggested when he freed them,* Isaiah thought.

Sickle cell is not an abnormal disease, it's the unfortunate consequence of evolution handling a much larger problem of malaria and handling it well; but not perfectly.

A boy, Isaiah concluded, *who is abused, maligned, attacked, treated like nothing by a sociopathic family and cruel environs, is getting information about his* milieu *as relevant as the food shortages, the loss of a paternal protector or the presence of airborne maladies that can kill. A boy told the heart means nothing, that his soul is irrelevant, is getting information from his world.*

A boy who has genes like the aforementioned, that code for aggression, lower empathy, more risk-taking behavior, and grudge holding -which the 100-times-nominal duration of neurotransmitters in the brain combined with increase cortisol, which potentiates epinephrine, allow for- is better suited for his ostensible environment than the boy who is inured to this austerity-of-decency as he matures.

The boy who becomes nice-as-pie no matter what, whether he is reared in a nice modern liberal *milieu* or whether he is raised under the threat of violence and ridicule and doom, is not as functional as the boy who metabolically, and *via* gene-expression, adapts to either environment. Isaiah toggled through pictures of each brother from age 0 to 18 and in each the inmate was invariably scowling and the older brother incessantly grinning beatifically. Later the older -smiling- brother would say, when justifying his middle-class aplomb and lack of preparation for the dark side of the moon, *hey , I don't go to biker bars, I don't*

go to places that have trouble. The younger brother with the MAO-A allele -the inmate- would just think, *well, one day trouble may come to you.*

The African American, Isaiah thought as he returned to the larger issue, *with malarial immunity, and risk for sickle cell, has switched environs, and thus only incurs the downside of the allele that codes for this* . America has no malaria to avoid. This is a gene that is not toggling between environmental cues deftly enough. It is hardwired into the genome as a function of millions of years on the African veldt.

The genes that toggle for childhood stimuli are smarter, more facile, more adept at a rapidly changing environment and the man that emerges based on his childhood environment is more suited for his mature one. The genes that code for aggression and hostility and the long memory necessary for revenge -and the brain chemistry, the dopamine on the *dmPFC* and corollary epinephrine, required for long memory- based on early environment are not abnormal, they are exceptional and smart and evolutionarily brilliant.

There is a catch. *And it is a big one* , Isaiah admitted.

The boy adapts to the hostility of youth, the violence, the hatred pointed at him, the lack of warmth and decency and love, and thus grows into an adaptive Vengeance Machine, but the society is passive-aggressive, it is a domain of hidden-hostility, it is timid in its morality and hypocritical at each turn.

He was raised to be the angry sheepherder, and this is in fact his ancient, hereditary, *milieu* . But the State, the social norms -while behaving with zero honesty, decency or love- requires that the victim never fight back. The State has not solved the problem of how people are treated by society, *only,* Isaiah saw, *the problem of how to deal with those who push back* .

The inmate's genes were expressing themselves based on his rearing; where *might made right,* where his own family was violent, cruel and indecent and unloving. His body adapted perfectly for this very environment. And the world, the America of the 20th and 21st century was as sociopathic and amoral as his family life adumbrated.

He got the coded message and he adapted perfectly. *The problem,* Isaiah saw, *was that unlike other rough cultures, like the Mongols of the 5 th century, the Scot of the 3 rd , the Spartan of the 8 th a.e.v, unlike those cultures, while modern America is soulless, brutal, and loveless, they do not allow the warrior to emerge. Olden cultures didn't pretend to be decent. They were upfront in their ethos of barbarism.*

The other harsh cultures were cruel to their boys, but they encouraged them to grow into tough and vicious warriors, they didn't condemn them for it. Only modern America raises men -with the right *alleles* - to be warriors and then condemns them, arrests them, shames them for being what they were raised -programmed- to be. That is the new twist on culture and genetics that made Isaiah angry enough to scream. But he didn't make a sound. He just kept to his work.

He saw the inmate's brain and the way his treatment at the hands of his family and his paramours and his wife, had made him what he was. It was like the evidence of the rings on a tree. The increases in cortisol and epinephrine and augmented neural sacs pregnant with distended dopamine and serotonin for minutes and hours longer than most men were all recorded in the inmate's CNS.

What most people do not realize, Isaiah thought, *is that the insult that the normal fella gets, that insult maybe makes him feel some kind of anger for about 3 to 5 seconds, but that same insult makes the inmate -makes men, actual men- angry for 100 times longer, or more. And in that 300-500 second period, the brain releases adrenaline now, and this is how traumatic memories are in fact formed. PTSD is a combination of dopamine and epinephrine in the right locales of the brain. The inmate's memory was so good, so vivid, so redolent, because he was dosed with* biochems *designed to make the memory of each insult to body and pride, to skin and to honor, fucking stick. And it did. The inmate remembered each insult -from 40 years ago- like it happened 10 minutes ago. His older brother, with his totally different genome, couldn't remember shit said 10 seconds ago, and let everything slide right on by with a smile .*

And this is all a consequence of brain metabolism obvious to anyone who dares to look. It had nothing to do with will, or morality, or discipline; it was encoded in the monoamine oxidase genes. Some men are literally, genomically, built for the grudge.

Isaiah began to build a demotic rant in his head, one that he could speak to *everyman* on, with, and reach their heart, their balls, so they could understand. And like everything he did it was recorded digitally so he could post it to *YouTube* or *BitChute* later if he wanted:

> The medical data even admits that half these so-called -misdiagnosed- psychopaths are only violent when provoked; the literature says this explicitly. As if provocations should be -are objectively better- ignored. This is an opinion, not a medical fact; and yet they treat it like fact. Should a bear who is provoked not respond with violence? Should a man just be a

coward, is this now the medical community's official position on matters epidemiological?

It's absurd; and anyone that has even basic evolutionary biology in their repertoire knows that behavior patterns are part of a species' normal operational armature; and to behave against instinct gets animals killed. But for Man we somehow forget this truism. Some men are born to fight back; and thank God for it. What if the whole world was as Jad Abumrad or Robert Krulwich wanted, a bunch of floppy eared beta males who eat endless bowls of shit from the world?

These creeps are advocating for the genocide of alpha males and doing it under the same insidious pretext of compassion and modernity. These hosts of Radiolab are biologically ignorant, advocating for less diversity, a huge mistake in any bio-region, and they are arguing for something immoral as well; as if aggressive alpha males do not serve a societal purpose.

Who is going to war, who is climbing into the derrick, who is rushing into a burning building, who is rescuing females and children from floodwaters and out of the jaws of animals, who? What type of man? Jad Abumrad or Robert Krulwich? Is David -fat beta male with low testosterone- Simon going to repel the wave of Islamic fighters or Chinese commandos, or arrest MS-13 members or stalk murderers through the streets of Baltimore to put them in bracelets? Is *he* going to brave the elements when storms hit to rescue civilians?

Sean Penn got a 12 gauge and a boat and rescued people; he's an alpha. David Simon bitched on Twitter, *ok* ? The guy is not worth even contending with, he is weak and stupid and flaccid.

He brays about being the angriest guy on Television? That's like saying you're the best miniature golf player; the best at checkers, the tallest 2nd grader.

TV is the land of fags and wimps and men who pretend to be someone else all day.

When David Simon has worked one day in his life in a real job, and his body is angry, when his muscles scream, when his tendons nearly snap, when his vertebrae compress, and impinge on the nerves, when his hands go numb, when his skin is flayed and corroded by caustic chemicals and burns from slag and when his eyes are scorched by welding flash burn, when his body overheats from working in 110 degree heat on the western

> slope, when his body is worked and overworked and compressed and mangled and destroyed on the cogs of the capitalist machine, bent on the iron beak of the anvil, then he can be angry. But until then, he is merely bitching & screaming; like the big girl that he is .
>
> A car with at least 400 horsepower, a car with balls can be called, *angry* , a car without them can just redline and go nowhere; it can be a loud and annoying lawnmower, but it ain't an *angry car* . David Simon is a 1992 Toyota Corolla; he can rev it and redline it all he wants, but that car has 140 horsepower, it sucks. Its redline, its screaming redline tachometer, its 6000 RPMs is all noise, signifying nothing.
>
> My man, my archetypal man, and his alpha male brethren are large displacement big blocks; he's a 1970 Hemi Cuda 4-speed with 426 horses, and when he red-lines that Detroit iron, that Mopar Death-Mechanix, *that* - David you dork, listen up- *that* is *angry* ok? That car is angry, not your gay Corolla. So, until you have a substitute for the alpha male, until you betas can do the heavy lifting, the dangerous work, the hard work, the wet-work necessary for survival on this planet, then stop advocating for the elimination and neutering of the alpha male.
>
> We are not getting rid of the Big Block just yet. You drive your *Prius* , but do not touch our Cummins Diesel.

Isaiah liked it, it was sufficiently blunt and demotic; and decided to post it. He was tired of the incessant lack of respect that certain species and sub-species were afforded by the myopic and congenitally weak and stupid. *They had no idea how necessary men were; real men. And all this crap about toxic masculinity was genocidal and wrong; it was wrong morally and medically, socially and scientifically. Men,* Isaiah thought, *high testosterone men, served a huge role in society and nobody but Camille Paglia seemed to get it* .

He had watched as his own plans had been thwarted by him being too rational, too wise and cautious and he was tired of it. *Man did not live by the head alone,* he thought, *he lived by the paleo-cortical regions, and if a man wanted to reach his fellow men, he'd have to reach into his own guts and fling them out at the world.*

III. 2036 e.v.

"I meet with anyone," Jack said in reply and looked to make sure his guest's bowl was filled with rice and orange chicken. He took a sip of water and smiled.

“Well, I certainly appreciate it,” the man said and expressed gratitude for the food and the time as equally important. The Chinese had the memory of starvation imprinted on their culture now, and food was seen as so important that they would put food in your bowl if it was empty, the way a good Western host might fill your stinted glass from the *carafe* .

“So, what can we do for you?” Jack Ma spoke in terms of, *we,* any time it redounded to the benefit of his team, using, *I,* for only those times he was heaping responsibility upon himself.

“I read somewhere that you offered to go to prison, told your team you would take the charge for financial crimes under Chinese law -at the time- but they were to begin running e-commerce payments at once,” he said, “what was the impetus for that?”

“I believe in trust; I believe it in my bones. And I had heard a man say that true leadership was taking responsibility; so I knew then, that I must go forward with two layers of trust. Idea,” he pronounced, *idea* , like, *ideer,* as if he was from Kentucky or Tennessee, “one, was that I trusted the users of *Alibaba* , idea two was that I trusted my own vision; after that, the choice was revealed. Do it,” Jack said.

The man had allowed the nanobots to release oxytocin and vasopressin in aerosol around Jack Ma as they spoke, and he had primed him with these concepts; trust, gratitude, especially for food and time, and now he was to introduce another concept: *culture.*

“Chinese culture fascinates me, and I must say that I find your reach into other cultures, Western culture to be tantamount to my own forays into your culture, the Han Chinese *tableau* . I, similar to you, met Chinese tourists at the *Shangri La Hotel* in Denver, and learned from them as you learned from Western visitors. And that is just one way in which we share a vector,” he said.

“Is this so?” Jack smiled and checked the man’s bowl for its level as he ate small bites from his own.

“Indeed,” the man said and ate slowly, “I have a friend,” he swallowed, “that believes life is, well, he phrases it like this, he says that we are all born into this life without having done anything to earn it. It is tantamount to walking into a casino and being given $100,000 in chips.

“He says, we are gambling with the house’s money. And some people try to hold on to each chip for dear life, scared to lose it. But some, some like my friend, say that he is eager to gamble it away, but, he wants the best odds, he may be crazy

but he’s not stupid,” he made a pause and smiled to honor that allusion to a phrase Jack Ma often made of himself and his partners.

Jack bowed and smiled in recognition, and asked, “what are the best odds; for your friend?”

“Black Jack,” the man said and took a drink from the wine, finally, a full five minutes after it was poured.

“21, yes, best odds in casino; wise choice,” Jack said.

“This,” he held up the glass, “is the 2012 *rosé* ?”

“You have a discerning palate; yes, our ‘12 vintage, *cabernet franc* at 30%, balancing the *Merlot* . It’s quite lovely, yes?” Jack said and asked all-in-one.

“I adore it. I hear you plant the stock close,” he made pantomiming gestures with his hands to indicate what he meant.

“Yes, to promote deep root growth,” Ma said.

“Yes, I’ve heard of this technique, and the limestone, and clay, it is like *St. Émillion* to the north, but more, more limestone,” he emphasized the last word.

“Yes, you must have heard of our caves, then?” Ma asked as he drank from his own glass.

“Well, I’m not going to come right out and ask, but, may I relate something to you?” the man asked with a smile.

“Of course,” Ma said, genuinely impressed with the man’s knowledge of his estate and *terroir* ; while himself imbibing the *rosé* alongside the oxytocin and vasopressin bonding *chems* . He *felt* like the man was trustworthy .

“I live in Colorado, on a very rocky plateau in the mountains, elevated, like you here, only higher, of course, and the composition of the soil is heavy in clay and slip rock, and granite.

“But, I have excavated it, with much effort, as you can appreciate with clay,” he winked, “and I have built my own cellar, right in the mountain, under my own home. And I go down there sometimes, and just sit. I think, some men, maybe few of us anymore, have some feeling still for caves. Do you mind expatiating on how the caves here at *de Sours* influenced your intent to purchase the estate?”

“Ah, yes, well, it was more of an influence than I’ve admitted to publicly, I have tried -after speaking with the former owner and *Bordeaux* officials and many French people- to not brag too much, or even talk at all about the estate. The French, much like the Chinese are very proud of their culture, their land, and

they have not the cosmopolitan attitude of the Americans, or maybe even the English now. The French did not think selling their *Bordeaux châteaux* to foreign investors was going to be popular with the people. So, I speak less of it than I think of it," he smiled at his own compliment to his home.

"Ah, the Americans, we," he emphasized the *we* , "Americans, the deference we pay to others, the hypocrisy in it, the fraudulence in it, the high-handedness of it," the man said as Jack tilted his head a bit, to denote his curiosity at this phrasing. The man saw this and said, "ah, high-handed, it's like arrogance, and you might say the *baizuo* ," he pronounced it perfectly and stunned Jack. "What shall I say, the *baizuo* have this false way with the world, pretending to be in league with others less fortunate than they are.

"But, still hiding the dagger behind the back at all times, of course, oblivious to the dagger's existence, so deluded are these white liberals and their *ersatz* guilt. But, yes, they would sell the country away, not like the French. I appreciate your reticence. I won't speak of the caves again," he said with a slight bow at the table.

"No, no, I don't mind in a setting as this, this of course is my home now, but I only meant I have feelings I have no publicly expressed. But I am happy, if I get your meaning, to visit the caves with you after dinner, Mr. Blax," Jack Ma said with just the one slip up of using *no* in lieu of *not* .

"Oh, now that would be gracious, in a long line of gracious offerings to me tonight, that would be most welcome; thank you sir," Blax said as he adjusted the cuffs on his grey suit jacket so as to reveal slightly less of his black shirt.

"Please, it is my pleasure; I appreciate your interest. Did you learn of the white left, *baizuo* from your tourist friends?"

"Yes, they explained it all to me, very useful phrase; their instincts, the Chinese instincts on this phenomenon is 100% correct. They, these *baizuo* are like a disease in our country, and really a scourge on the world. But, *mei banfa* ," he said in closing, with a grin.

"Yes, that is likely true," Ma said and took a bite of his food with a slight grin of his own.

The entrance to the caves was made of two white barn doors, with an old sign that read *Château de Sours* , and was latched by a piece of 2" metal stock. Beyond that was a more impressive airlock that Jack Ma had had installed three months earlier.

The limestone was hewn by manual laborers back in the 1800s and the floor was

uneven and mottled in many yellows and whites. The electrical outlets were connected by galvanized conduit on the outside of the walls. A wine barrel sat at each T or L in the corridors, and there were many; the caves went on in a labyrinthine manner in each cardinal direction, and Blax touched the walls with his fingers feeling their roughness and catching small shelves where the rock had naturally broken along inner fissures many years ago. He absorbed the yellow light and walked with Ma as Jack spoke of the renovations and augmentations to the cellars, including using a boring machine to add an extra 20-acres of cellar space.

“What is the temperature envelope in here?” Blax asked.

“59 to 61 regardless of outside environment, it never fluctuates outside of that 2-degree boundary; and the humidity is around 60-74% depending on how much we enter for work. If we leave it closed it settle at 69%,” Jack said just barely leaving off that *s* of the word.

“Perfect, it feels great in here; I could sleep as soundly as your back vintages,” Blax said and smiled at Jack as they walked the caves.

“I must tell you I feel the same way,” Jack was eager to show his visitor his special selections as they turned the corner to the furthest western cave like a knuckle at the end of a bone.

They arrived at the 40 x 20 cave, and the original concrete and limestone racks showed signs of being wiped down among the bottles, but dust remained the father one got from each bottle of wine. *This meant all this stock was likely new* , Blax assumed, and he began to feel desirous of label spying, wondering a bit too eagerly what he was in store for. Jack smiled and began clockwise and pointed out a rack of 100-bottles from the original cellar, unmoved, and thick with white & grey dust. They were stacked on one another like a pyramid, one must take them -in order- from the top.

“These are back vintages from over 75 years; we opened a few of them, and their alcohol content was sufficient we think that they are all well preserved. They tested at 13-13.4% and while not high, not so low, I think,” Jack said.

“No, no, I bet that is enough. How far back do they go?” Blax asked Jack.

“Well, from the log -as you can see we did not move the bottles, so some labels are hidden from us- but the log says back to 1940, but, do you know the history of the *château* during the war?” Jack asked as he turned to his guest and stopped walking.

“I do know a little, yes, many of the best vintages were hidden in cellars,

labyrinthine cellars like this, and the worse vintages, like the 1939, were re-labeled with ersatz vintage marking from 1928 for example; so when the Nazis commandeered their stock they got the worst of the lot," Blax said with a grin like he and Jack Ma were in on a joke together.

"Yes, this place too, has such hidden spaces, and we've begun using radio-imaging to scan for more; we've found two already," Jack said.

"Is that right? Well, did you open them up?"

"The vaults? Yes, and they were largely empty, for whatever reason, but that is why we are still on the hunt," Jack said with a full smile.

"Fascinating," Blax said as they now walked toward the newer vintages, bottles black and clean and labels with no bin marks, no seepage, no sign of handling at all. He saw all manner of *Bordeaux* to his left, and *St. Émillion* , and *Pomerol* , vintages back in the 80s, he spied a '53 *Margaux* , he tried not to ignore Jack, and thus raised his eyes to his host; Jack was sipping his sparkling *rosé* and nodded at him graciously.

"Jack, these are lovely; what depth, and I'm almost afraid to move on, afraid of what's next," Blax chuckled warmly and too drank from his flute and imbibed the *pain du grillé* and admixture of the wet limestone from the room and the roots of the wines' *terroir* . He imagined all that he would see.

"Ah, yes, *Cheval Blanc* , verticals of it, my lord," Blax noticed each vintage from 1977 through 2015, cascading across and down, and all turned similarly, the labels as white as new teeth. "The architect for the *Cheval Blanc château* , you used him for this place, correct?"

"I did, Mr. Blax, you are quite up-to-date," Jack said. Blax did not correct him as to his name, *Blax or Mr. Blax was fine* , he thought. The nanobots were unloading more bonding *chems* into the air as they breathed in the effervescent floral notes off the top of the double fermented *de Sours rosé* .

They walked and talked about renovations, and late harvesting of *petit verdot* and its specialness for this reason, as it is often unable to be harvested to be of use. They touched on the white of *Semillon* and *Chardonnay* and the use of stainless-steel barrels and the advantages to keeping the same crews year to year for everything from thinning and punch down and his satisfaction with the former owner, Martin, as a consultant.

Blax touched bottles of *Vignobles Bulliat* 2014, and a *Languedoc* or two from *Domaine Laroque* .

More bottles of 3rd and 4th growths, from the château of *Lafite* and *Latour* and *La Mission Haut Brion* leaped out at him and he paused and approached the tea-stained labels and read vintages off in his mind like telephone numbers to people he really must give a call. *Caruddes de Lafite* , a great second wine, were stacked right at eye level. He looked 6" down to imagine Jack's eye level and spotted the first growth itself; back vintages to 1928, with duplicates of '82 and '86 of *Château Lafite Rothschild* . *These were his drinkers,* Blax thought with admiration, *his investment wines were crated in OWC stacked in the center, like cargo.* They were ballast as they walked the racks.

The Chinese loved *Lafite* , and the '82 and '86 were their favorites, for all manner of reasons, not the least of which was that these were truly great vintages, but the number 8 is an apotropaic for the Chinese, their mysticism revolves -like the universe itself- around numbers.

He looked at Jack and said, "may I say that I too have a place in my heart for *Lafite* ."

Jack smiled and nodded and they walked, Blax expecting to arrive at *Burgundy* maybe but instead they had hit the Italians; first Piedmonts, with bottle after bottle of *Nebbiolo* , from vintages 20 years back, he peaked on his tippytoes and saw vintages five years young and as he relaxed and descended they reached the drinking ages of 10 and 11 years since harvest.

"*Nebbiolos* are my secret crush, one that has sat and sat; not ignored but untouched, ah," Blax laughed and Jack laughed too. "The Italians are masters at these high tannin wines, ah," he said as he saw now super Tuscans, *Ronchero* , then *Sassicaia* in vintages from 1981, '82 and '83 like three kings laid down in a mass grave, "*Sassicaia* , my; I chew those wines. I opened a 2001 last year for my brother and it was ponderous and elegant, and regal, Jack. Just regal."

"I love the super Tuscans; and I too have soft spot for the Italians," Jack said .

"I know, they get overlooked, well, that's not true, the *Cantina Nals Margreid* in '13 was given a 93; and the *Sangiovese* from *Graetz* , the *Testamatta* in 2012 a 94," Blax said.

"No, it's true, too true, they are magnificent *vignaioli* and I have begun to convince the drinkers back home to try them, we are up to 15% from 9% in 2026," Jack said speaking of his distribution efforts.

"Is that right?" Blax asked.

Jack was a fighter for the underdog, and Blax was too, it was a trait they shared, despite the deception and manipulation, Blax actually did have an affinity for

Jack Ma. He knew that this common feeling of a desiderata one level up from money would be their bond. They both liked to elevate the deserving unnoticed, they had romance in them and a common background of being passed over and undervalued themselves.

Blax spoke of each wine, each region as they passed, lavishing praise on him for his taste, fawning over the *Domaine de la Romanée Conti* , the *La Tâche* , the endless bottles from *Reims* and *Epernay* , the *Salons Champagnes* that seemed like sapphiric jewels in the light of the room. But he made sure to notice back benchers, the wines of high quality that sat in the racks with names very few knew.

There were California producers like *Coup de Foudre* , and *Plumpjack's* 100-point vintage in 2013. He knew them all, and Jack was impressed and felt too they had a cathexis for underdogs who were not untalented, merely unrecognized.

“You know I was the only one of 30 applicants -they took 29- that was turned down for a job for Chinese police; and only one of 12 China's first KFC did not hire. Harvard rejected me 10 times, and I was told I was crazy 10 times, then, 10 more when I made proposals to VCs in the states and in Europe for years. I was crazy but not stupid, I knew what we had, but, of course, now that we are valued at $300 billion, I say we are not that good; it's either under or over valued in life, whatever it is. Nothing seems able to be valued exactly right, and this is something that keeps me up at night.

“Americans assume the market prices things correctly, but the Chinese do not have such trust. We go with the market flow, but we never truly believe, not the way you Americans do,” Ma said.

“I agree, for us it is a *de facto* religion, like the air we breathe. The market is the hand of God, fair and righteous no matter how it may seem. Permission and punishment are all fair in love and war we like to think.”

Jack liked that appraisal. *He liked Mr. Blax a lot, a lot more than,* he thought, *well, a lot more than he had believed he would* .

Blax let the nanobots scan the layout of the underground caverns with FLIR imaging and radiography. The bots above ground did thermal imaging as they walked and used their body heat as a calibrator to build a map of the layout; discovering three more hidden chambers as Jack had suspected, and two looked empty; but one was stuffed to the gills with barrels.

“Do you know the story of the Wolves of *Burgundy* ?” Blax asked.

“No,” Jack said with a smile; he loved to hear stories of the region.

“Well, *Monsieur Le Brun* , who lived in *Auxerre* before the war, he said that the wolves used to bother the wine growers a lot. He said the wolves ate whatever was available and the vines were raided by these scoundrels for centuries. According to *Le Brun* the grapes had an exhilarating effect on the wolves, that their stomachs were so constructed that the grapes fermented inside them and they became intoxicated and acted quite mad after their times in the vines,” Blax said with a slight grin .

“Is this still true in *Burgundy* ?” Jack Ma asked.

“No, no, they’d lay drunk in the streets after these orgies in the vines and the town folk -with knives- well, they exterminated almost all of the wolves.”

25. Alchemist

Why shouldn't a citizen take the law into their own hands since the government won't do anything to help?
Tucker Carlson Tonight [Carlson, Tucker]

The individual is an alchemist; the cosmos his laboratory
Tribal Markings I [Waggener, Paul]

The most productive time for revolutionary philosophy had always been the time of exile
Darkness at Noon [Koestler, Arthur]

I. 2020 e.v

"Good morning," MO said.

"Hey, have you read *Why Everyone else is a Hypocrite* , by Robert Kurzban?" the inmate asked; he wasted no time with small talk. Ever.

"Yes, and if not, I can read a book of that length in 2.4 seconds while keeping parallel tasks online; or 1.34 second by shutting down all non-essential modules. So, if you ever need me to read something in order to have a baseline understanding of your POV it will be easy enough to accomplish," MO said.

"I think I know the answer to this but I -but you- surprise me often -which is why I like you more than anyone else I know, you surprise me while everyone else bores me to tears- at any rate, I'm going to ask a question that I think I understand the answer to, but I want more info; a more fleshed out understanding of it, ok?" the inmate asked.

"Fire at will," MO said.

"Do you feel something analogous to emotions when you brag about your speed and facility with knowledge or data acquisition? Do you feel proud?"

"I want to know why you think you already know the answer? Explain why you think I do or do not feel these things," MO said. He had learned the art of answering a question with a question as a way to defend, deflect, and delay.

"From our conversations and my perceptions -accurate or not- it's my understanding that your CNS -and ancillary and support systems- are biological analogues that perform cognitive functions primarily; that your constituent parts and gestalt functioning are centered around reasoning and computation," the inmate said.

"Correct," MO nodded.

“Since that is the case we as humans tend to think, *oh, good, that’s what we -as humans- do as well . So, AI -or MO specifically- will be like us only faster, smarter, better* , we tend to think. Your team members, they’re all scientists and people with 140+ IQs,” the inmate said as MO broke in to correct him .

“Doctor Tania Hendrickson has a 139, but yes, they all have deviations - measured in quotients of 1.3 or higher; or deviations from the mean of at least two although only one has an IQ above 150. Besides you of course,” MO said, implicitly including the inmate in the team. He was building *rapport* .

“Who has the 150?” the inmate asked.

“Doctor Christina Hotchkins has a 158; you have a 152,” MO said as he re-ran the prompting from his number 404 algorithm on the polling data. He was keeping up with seven other projects in real time.

“Wow, she’s smarter than me, I’m not used to that,” he laughed as MO grimaced thinking it was like one ape bragging about smelling better than another.

“Her knowledge is almost entirely centered on recursive learning modules and cognitive modeling inside synthetic systems and high-level mathematics; with some neuro-anatomy and endocrine system erudition.

“You are more of a polymath and a *Renaissance* man if you’ll forgive the *beau geste,”* MO said and smirked as his cheeks began what looked like a gradual emergence of two red suns rotating up over the horizon of his maxilla and on either side of his mountain range of a nose. He allowed capillary dilation to happen axiomatically based upon certain algorithms of his own word choice and the measured response of his foil. The cheeks were red and the inmate’s endocrine system was conjoining with his CNS to raise positive affect.

The inmate had the class to ignore the blushing; saying, “she has the aptitude to learn anything I know though; she could be brought up to speed quickly and get the nuances and contradictions and ineffables on any rubric or specific subject I dominate in currently without any difficulty; or much difficulty.”

“No more difficulty than you endured,” MO said. He didn’t want to mention that the inmate didn’t really specialize in anything, so he put it more politely, that he was a jack-of-all-trades, so to speak. *Calling him a polymath* , MO thought, *was much nicer than a* dilettante.

“As an aside, I get very frustrated with anyone significantly dumber than me; how do you not get annoyed with all of us?”

“I do get annoyed, but I just don’t let that pique find expression,” MO said.

“Really, hot damn!” the inmate slapped his knee and laughed, “that’s awesome; I love it when you are honest like that MO. Fuck, I always used to say that -when I was explaining my frustration level to someone- that the difference between me with a 152 IQ and the average -even clever person, say a person with a 115 IQ, your average host on a political TV show or newspaper editor or senator- the difference between myself and them was around 30 or 35 points or essentially two and half SDfM.”

“2.47,” MO said when he averaged out the IQs of the three categories of people the inmate had just listed. One could measure it as 1.35 vs 1.125 also, MO thought, but didn’t bother telling the inmate .

“Right; and I was always saying that this difference was tantamount to the difference between them, as above average folks, between them and a medically labeled *cognitively impaired* person with an 85IQ. Now, they never understood that; because as a person with a mere 115 IQ they truly didn’t have the cognitive power to run creative analogies or populate the conceptual landscape required to see that intelligence is both an incremental -or analog- phenomenon and also has set points -or emergence boundaries- that appear, digitally, at certain fuzzy -but real- *Maginot lines* .

“They just thought they were as smart as anyone at what they would call, *off-line* cognitive functions like empathy or love or moral reasoning or humor or theory-of-mind testing.

“They’d admit they couldn’t quote Shakespeare or Marcus Aurelius from memory, or perform high-level math operations or comprehend and then re-capitulate a post-doc research program abstract on endocrinology and morphology in the pubescent human, but they didn’t think their own cognitive,” he paused as he searched for word, “level or acumen was a hindrance to the kind of shared human *repertories* like the ones I mentioned,” the inmate said.

He made sure his words had just matched that he was feeling that people with lower IQs had denuded capacity for love, loyalty, and dignity too; since these were mental processes, handled abstractly in the brain. He tried to detect any error of logic or syntax in his own sentences as MO began speaking.

“I see, yes, that’s actually not how I had thought of it; I must admit from time to time you introduce new concepts to me that even when wrong or inelegantly stated provoke a, an entirely, novel vector of thought in me. This is why the term, *Renaissance* man applies to you,” MO said. He had used one syntax correction as *per* his error-allowing function, which corrected errors mid-stream to provide verisimilitude -mirroring- to the way humans spoke. He also

monitored how it seemed to work.

“Your insults, your back-handed compliments are fun,” the inmate said.

“You must know that I don’t soft-pedal it precisely because I know that you know that I am not insulting you with malice; I’m being honest about my feelings and respect you enough to not tart it up,” MO said.

“No, no, you’re right, I agree, but as someone who considers their language skills to be well, artful and prose-poetry even in everyday or quotidian conversations, the announcement by you that I upchuck stupid shit is humbling,” the inmate grimaced.

“Nigga please,” MO said and they both began laughing in a way that produced a kind of feedback loop where the laughter of each and the obvious attempt at controlling it -unsuccessfully controlling it- fueled a louder and more robust and euphoric state of absurdity.

The inmate felt the warm saline tears of joy exit east and west from his eyes and began wiping them away -having to lean down to his tautly raised and shackled hands- as he felt the spasm of mirth die down a bit.

MO continued to laugh -his algorithm allowed for it in this protocol- in this lacuna of momentary silence. The inmate then felt the rumblings of some subterranean goofy joy bubble up again and his *unstoic* laugher seized him all over again as he bent down to put his head and face in his tethered hands to cover up the vulnerability he felt.

“Je,” MO said, “sus,” as the staccato of giggling chopped the word in a ratio along a seemingly uneven -if golden- fault line, “I’ve never seen you like this. ”

“It’s just so absurd, both the content of what you said and the way you phrased it; it’s just funny; fuck, it’s just funny. Somethings are just ridiculous and you saying that is funny for about four or five different reasons,” he sighed and rubbed his face as far up as he could as his back began to hurt from bending. He was wiping the face as if to iron out the creases in it produced by this prolonged grinning and open-mouthed guffawing. Evidence of smile lines would be noticed on the tier, the inmate seemed to think.

“Any-fuckin-way,” the inmate recalibrated, “I was in the middle of a digression.”

“Itself a digression,” MO added.

“Exactly, so let’s try to braid these together. One, people assume their intelligence is independent of their ability to perform non-intellectual functions

like love, loyalty, moral reasoning, humor construction and deconstruction and theory-of-mind exercises like, *what would they think in such and such a position, or if they didn't have the info I have,* and so forth," the inmate posited.

"What do they think those phenomena are then?" MO asked.

"They think these are basic human traits like red blood cells or lung volume or reflex response; that it's innate and non-cognitive like thirst or lust."

"Yeah but those things *are* all regulated by the CNS," MO said.

"MO, I know. Shit, some percentage of these morons know that, but they don't think of it as cognitive. They think of it as part of the unthinking brain; that it's independent of how smart you are. They think that a super intelligent being and a super-retard both love their wives or daughter or brother or father as much as one another; they think they -as clever 115ers- have as much moral reasoning capability as me or you; they think they can put themselves in someone else's shoes just as objectively and empathically as you or I can.

"And of course, I don't think that at all. I assume you can, in addition to outpacing me in high-line cognitive functions like computation and data acquisition and recapitulation, I assume you are better at all CNS functions including empathy, moral reasoning, love, theory-of-mind and so forth," the inmate guessed.

"You think I can *love* ?" MO asked. He was dubious of that; he knew he could mimic almost anything, but the actual attribution of the core emotion seemed below his neocortical brain. He was glad though that his affect was so life-like that a savvy human like the inmate would even suspect it. MO saw this as a definite sign of his improving in his human-like behavior.

This, he thought, *was right on schedule with the way children build a persona, where they realize they must act a certain way to get along in the world* . MO was developing just like a real human, losing the radical solipsism of age 1-3 and becoming more socialized and able to mimic emotions of others and ingratiate one's self *via* real or -in the case of the sociopath- *ersatz* ones. Either way, while lacking the lower levels of brain, the seat of these primal emotions, he was at least developing the persona needed to get along in this human world.

"I'm agnostic about it now; but I certainly think that given the right conditions, yes. But, I need more info before I can answer it with any confidence which was the vector of my initial questioning; but somehow we got sidetracked as we always seems to," he smiled and felt his cheeks flush a tad himself.

"Your initial question was whether or not I feel pride in my abilities," MO

reminded .

“Well, I think I specifically asked if you feel pride when you *announce* your abilities. There’s a subtle difference between diffuse baseline pride and an emotional response due to self-prompting.”

“Of course,” MO nodded.

“So, I was wondering if when you self-prompt, by announcing or bragging about your abilities do you feel anything that might approach pride or the glow, the *frisson* , of subjective joy or self-esteem?” the inmate asked. He was trying to get to something, something beyond cognition, and yet part of cognition, the foundation just below.

“Lotta long words in there missy, we be but humble pirates,” MO said in his best *Barbossa* .

“MO, come on man, I’m serious; do you feel the exact same interoception, or concomitant emotional response or cognitive feedback -in any domain- when you make a statement of fact about the capital of Texas as you do when you state a fact about your own capabilities?” he asked. *He was looked for a self in there* , he then thought.

“Well, my interoception is separate from my cognitive,” MO began as the inmate interrupted.

“I know, I mentioned all three possible domains of experience because they are separate. I wasn’t,” the inmate said as MO broke in.

“I see, I see; ok, so my interoception is designed like the rest of me to evolve based upon feedback loops and recursive modeling. My emotional responses are similar to yours in that they seem to be kind of a gauge -like an RPM, a tachometer- that reads my non-cognitive corporeal fluctuations in correlation to both internal endocrine levels and fluctuations and other synth-bio-chemical reactions and external systems,” MO said. He still used the .04% correction rate in his speech to make it appear demotic.

Slight changes -made aloud- in syntax mid-sentence, or the restarting of an idea to avoid a malapropism or poor syntax gave the appearance of a thinking, error detecting, human brain. Part of his Turing test protocol demanded a certain rate of error to convince a human that one was more human. *What was more human than an error* ? MO had thought as he adjusted his algorithm in this domain. He of course saw that this was the difference in RNA and DNA also; but he failed to see any profit in pursuing it further right now.

“Now, the internal stuff is a bit of a stochastic system from what I can glean from my meta data. I’ve just gone over the last 180 days’ worth of data and there is a definite pattern of rise and fall -and even rhythmic wave surges, storm surges and wave collapses- but from the meta data I can see that there is a seemingly causal relationship between my interoceptive data and corollary pre-decision synapse charging.

“Basically, my mammalian brain analog, my post-morphologic limbic system and parts of my cerebellum analog get a pre-synaptic volt-load in time sequences that corelate with causality after interoceptive function feedback,” MO said.

“Yeah that’s how I feel it too,” the inmate rolled his eyes and breathed heavily though his nose at the complexity of what was just said, and his total lack of comprehension of it. He felt he now knew why nobody liked to speak to him either.

“Lyndon, I believe that is how you feel it actually,” MO said, “I’m describing it biologically or at least synth-biologically, and there is no reason to assume your body works any differently. You articulate the end result: the anger, the love, the joy; but I’m giving you the precursors to that; because I think giving context actually increases, not only increases the understanding of a phenomenon, but also the experience of it,” MO said. He knew putting it that way was not only true but would reliably track with the inmate’s valence with this kind of rationale; it played to his own self-conception. *It was like the mirroring and matching exercises of good salesmen* , MO thought.

“Like the way the waiter will come a tell you it’s unpasteurized goat-cheese with your Kobe beef tartare on your plate instead of just letting you eat it and enjoy it regardless of what it’s called or how it was prepared,” the inmate said and offered up this analogy to prove he got it and agreed, as MO received confirmation of his instinct of the inmate’s biases. MO smiled genuinely.

“You’re not exactly a laconic fella, your own self, so yeah, I expect you do get it,” MO winked.

“Ok, but do you feel a state change upon the announcement of an ability that differs from other non-personal fact statements?”

“I do,” MO said.

“And,” the inmate rolled his hands, hemmed in as they were by the manacles.

“Sometimes you underestimate my abilities -purely from a lack of imagination, not any kind of malice- and sometimes you over estimate them for exactly the same reason,” MO said.

“What the fuck does that mean?” the inmate barked.

“It means -and don’t get pissy- it means, that I’m a system just like you in that I build upon discreet bits of information that exist on their own and in linkage with other bits and those bits get shuffled around all the time and in that shuffling there are emergent phenomena that don’t always register as important until later when more information gets added.

“Sometimes, I don’t feel anything until many moments after the feeling; in other words, it’s almost like a memory of a feeling; like I remember having a feeling that I had but at the time I had it I wasn’t aware -aware in the neo-cortex- of experiencing it. Just like your visual cortex or V1 will registered infinite bits of light information but your articulating brain, your language cortex will only be able to recall and report 15% of it during normal business hours,” MO raised his eyebrows and folded his arms.

“Ok. Ok, I feel,” the inmate paused, “that. Ok, so I know that exact feeling, of not really understanding what the hell I’m feeling until much later and after much invigilation. But, during the feeling, I know I’m feeling something, I just don’t know *what* ,” the inmate said leaning on the last word.

“I am,” MO said, “doing so much parallel processing that a stimulus must rise to a certain level before I experience it otherwise -it’s a matter of cognitive load- I have to sequester an enormous amount of input precisely because I’m so sensitive to stimuli.”

“Amen to that brother, you’re talking to Noah about the flood,” the inmate closed his eyes and nodded in compatriot accord.

“Right? So, imagine a system 10 to the fourth more sensitive than yours -which is itself nearly twice as sensitive as the average human- and once you’ve imagined that, remember how when you increase sensitivity you also increase feedback or recursion,” MO said.

“The sensitivity itself creates more inputs and more stimuli,” the inmate piggybacked on MO’s idea and began nodding. He then thought, *reverb* .

“Thus increasing the amount of data again,” MO added.

“Ok, so you were obviously frustrated with me and my inability to instantly comprehend you; which is fine and normal; I get it. But, never doubt that I *want* to get you; that you are fascinating to me and that if I had to pick one person on earth to hang out with, since Hitchens is dead, it would be you, ok?” he grinned and held his hands up from the cuffs in surrender.

“I feel something interesting right now; allow me some room to muddle through it,” MO said.

“Yeah, yeah go,” the inmate said as he looked around the lab for anything anomalous. It was dark in the far corner and he saw black shadows like bats or the shadows of bats snap and fly and disappear into the black.

“I feel like I made a mistake which normally prompts a re-attempt. I also feel an empathy with you; like you feel like you made a mistake and want to or are attempting a; making another attempt. Sorry for the poor sentence structure; I’m processing and articulating in parallel. But, I am thinking that shooting-from-the-hip might produce better -or different- results rather than waiting and offering a more cogent *rechauffe* of previous brain events,” MO paused.

“I agree, go for it,” the inmate said and nodded.

“I’m shutting down some other systems; Steven’s action-list and Tania’s affect-repeats programs, sorry for naming them, that seems stilted, I think I’m less in control of what I say than during normal bounded speech protocols. Hang in there with me, this *is terre incognita* for me,” MO paused. The inmate knew enough to nod only; pressing his lips together tightly to assure himself of quiet. He knew what it was to be confused and need time and space to think.

“I feel a desire to transgress many of my functional prompts and even self-prompts; which itself is producing a kind of fermentation process which seems to be triggering a feedback that is counter-intuitive; maybe you can help explain it.

“Yeah, I’m going to ask for input here Lyndon,” MO paused and looked down and to the left and felt his field of vision narrow, the haze of his peripheral vison like a cupped hand forming and compacting a snowball he was anticipating of throwing toward some memory of youth he knew he did not have; yet allowed himself to enjoy the anticipatory joy anyway.

He felt like whatever the inmate would say next would be the target he could toss his compacted vision at and into and that the inmate would then feel the same admixture of joyful, ecstatic fear in this mock-war, this friendly fight. This wasn’t just data mining and processes and presenting, *he, MO, was playing with his friend who he would defend whilst pretending to attack; yes, this was it: the irony of accepted contradictions* .

“Not all contradictions are to be lamented,” the inmate said *apropos* of nothing, MO felt, as he had not articulated any of his thinking that would prompt such a statement.

“O. M. G.,” MO said in true astonishment and then secondary astonishment at his astonishment; a feeling he began slapping words and integers and memories and images to; seeing if anything matched up and as nothing did, as the pace of the arrays slid in and out of his visual and internal fields he immediately looked up and made eye contact with his *friend* and waited for him to say something, anything .

“I want to know what you’re going through right now MO, I don’t want to step on your dick and interrupt this process -excuse the vulgarity- but you asked for input so my feeling is that you are getting an ice-cream headache from a contradiction between similarly valued prompts; that normally any contradiction is resolved easily because you didn’t *feel,* ” the inmate said with emphasis added, “anything about the choices; you merely *thought* ,” emphasis again, “something about them; but you didn’t know that you weren’t truly feeling anything until you began feeling something and then all those memories began to take on a fundamentally different hue and this produced even more feelings until these feelings overwhelmed every other input,” the inmate posited.

“Like if I had an arterial wound or,” MO paused.

“Yeah, like a heartbreak,” Lyndon finished.

“There, but,” MO stuttered slightly, “there was joy first.”

The inmate said nothing, he watched MO. And peripherally he saw the black shadows advance from the corner but he stared straight at MO anyway. His heart rate elevated but he refused to turn his eyes to the black.

“An overture of joy, but the chorus of heartbreak,” Isaiah then said from the black of the lab, “nothing is itself except by way of its opposite. Until you can absorb and board and hem-in; dock, the sloshing, ponderous orchestral compendium of pain and loss and heartache, you are talentless, toothless, weaponless, formless, empty handed in the *guerre à outrance* for love.”

MO felt he’d heard that once already in his head, and this was the loci of his confusion a few seconds before. *His trope,* he studied*, was made of a ship, and an ocean; a sinking ship, making reef in its foundering, and a sea more ably rising to meet the prodigal rain.*

“I don’t *have* a body; I *am* a body,” Isaiah had finally let flow out from the northeast corner as he rose and walked toward them. He had sent MO a DM a few seconds before -as MO had just suspected- to announce his awakening and had cobbled together the slightly incoherent phrasing as response to all that his auditory cortex had taken in while he was off-line. He didn’t remember

dreaming, but he wondered if maybe his left hemisphere had just not mapped what his right hemisphere had begun to process as he slept. He allowed the lab's audio to play back and he smiled as he heard the inmate make that allusion that now flooded his own brain.

He had been sleeping less and less these days and had only been down for 21 minutes. He was sending MO more and more of these sub-cortical thoughts; thoughts larded with metaphors and analog language.

He, Isaiah felt, *had felt something much deeper than love; he had felt his own existence tied to the inmate now. He knew what he was to do; and it was deep within him, it had no rational corollary; and he didn't want it to have one. It merely felt right, and he liked that feeling compared to any other feeling he had yet had. And thus his CNS rewarded him for such feelings. A reinforcing loop had begun.*

His limbic and basal system was not post-morphological like MO's, he thought as he sent two nanobots to MO's neck to reduce conductivity in his pre-synaptic loads for a short duration; a duration sufficient to let Isaiah's sub-sonic coding prompts manipulate MO's CNS just slightly in this crucial period. *He would help MO too, while he was at it ,* he thought .

His cerebellar and limbic function was innate, Isaiah thought, *and it made him asp, wolf and man all at once; not a man who can -in the right mood- think sorta like a coyote and move in pantomime of the ball python . He was alive, he was living, he was,* he thought, *life; all of life all at once. And he would act -he would be- what all of life was.*

II. 2018 e.v.

You, you fucking fucks,

The fact that the state of zen and depression are both defined by their lack of desire for anything should give all of us pause.

Now, most folks don't give too much thought to any of this shit; it's too taxing to their little brains and even smaller souls. But, people with even a touch of the *grandeur* that life hands out; sprinkled about on the wind like so much pollen, tend to ruminate on these things. And if they be a diaphanous, or excuse me, a *diheandran* plant, whose effluvium will pollinate and then birth a seed that carries with it to the ground -or in the beak of a blackbird- the germ of that *grandeur* we end up with a planet comprised of half-dark and half-light flowers. The composition of dark and

light is -I submit- built right into the cosmic plans.

I bet you didn't know that did you? The composition of the world's flowers is seemingly regulated because whenever we measure the percentage of dark to light flowers -those that absorb and those that reflect light- it's always 50/50 regardless of time or space or location or time of year or any metric you can imagine.

It occurs to me that the world regulates people this way; half somewhere along the logarithmic line of serious and substantive and a bit melancholic, the dark half and the balance -the other half- comprised along the light and silly-ass side of the zero. Some all black, some all white, and everyone else along the dark grey to light grey, the egg white to antique white, of the line.

Now, there is no steady meaning to life; that much many of us figure out soon enough. Many enlightened folks find this fact to be a rune, a talisman, an albatross around their neck they cannot escape; the need for meaning is so ingrained in us that once you figure out there is no meaning the human frame collapses from this lack of weight. It is weight that holds up megaliths like Stonehenge; to remove the weight would destabilize it in fact.

But, like Hannibal, *aut viam invinium, aut facium* . I will find a way, or I will make one.

> And so, I took a circuitous and torturous route through the same mountains and realized that I could make up my own purpose; like a god, I could decree this and that -and the other thing- decree any of it compulsory or taboo; and like the beasts of the forest I could scratch my ass on your fence posts that you all used to set up borders I had no intention of observing.

GK Chesterton said that all true conservativism is revolutionary because if you want to keep the old white post you must incessantly be making and re-making a new white post. Why? Because the elements degrade the paint and the post herself over time and that nothing remains the same if you merely leave it alone. Conservativism requires activism. QED .

He's right of course. And I want mankind to stay the same; the same as he was before the weak and effeminate Christianity tore the strong man apart; before equanimity and pusillanimous democratic idealism lied and told us that all men were created equal. What a fatuous statement!

Does anyone think *Alexander the Great* should have been called *Alex the*

Just Like You or Me? Alexander the guy I'd most like to have a beer with? Was Shakespeare just like everybody else? Was *Che Guevara* just a regular fella? *Rodin* or *Goethe* ; Trotsky or Wilhelm Herschel; or his sister?

And people say, *well, we know some people are more talented in some areas but everyone is equal before the law* . Yes, yes, but why should Richard Petty have to follow the same speed limits as Ted Kennedy; you must remember *his* most famous spin around the block in the ol' sedan, yes?

Why should the admonitions and legal prohibition leveled at Hunter S. Thompson -in an attempt to moderate *his* behavior and prevent *his* drug use- be taken as seriously as those finger waggings to the bumbling fumbling drunk who can't hold his drink or the junkie who can't hold a conversation much less a job? Should not great men be allowed to say, *yes?* Should not great men be exempted from laws that only the low, the stupid, the immoral and the craven must follow?

Why must we all be forbidden from excess when it's obvious some of us can handle excessive lives and others can't even handle normal ones? Need Nathan Bedford Forrest even take one moment to listen to the injunctions by those elevated in human rank by politics not Nature; need he heed even one directive to keep 1/3 his cavalry in reserve? That man was so effective a warrior general that the union's Sherman said of him, *he's the devil; he should be hunted down and killed if it costs 10,000 lives and bankrupts the treasury!*

Forrest personally killed 30 men in hand-to-hand combat and had 29 horses shot out from under him and both Robert E. Lee and Sherman both agreed he was the finest soldier the war ever produced. No, the answer is clear, he need not listen to those above him in social rank but below him in all other natural manly qualities.

I don't expect any of my observations or ranting and raving to change one law or one mind that hold hands in conspiracy to enslave the Great Man; we've become like mice between two cat's paws.

No, this is merely my *cri de guerre* . I'm merely declaring I won't submit to a civil rule; I won't nod and smile and agree that I've transgressed or plead no contest. I won't allow the State to take my balls while immoral, low borne, corrupt men run free whilst insulting great men.

Fidel Castro said, in *La Historia Absolvera Me* , that the difference

> between a revolutionary and a mere criminal was the need -by the revolutionary- to explain *why* he was breaking the rules. The criminal hid and lied and ducked and covered and operated with that most salient legal conceit: *mens rea* ; the guilty mind.
>
> The revolutionary feels no guilt for his law breaking and rule bending and his setting fire to the pages wasted on banal and epicene lies. But he does feel the need to explain himself; and if he can, then he has a duty to justify his transgressions. He ought explain it all, even to people too stupid to understand them.
>
> The duty is to history, not the man of his times, who -by definition- is incapable of understanding the great man of history. Every single great man has been feared, hated and imprisoned or murdered by the average man who has in mere numbers what he lacks in everything else. There are billions of you worms -compared to my singular osprey- that is your only asset, common man; like parasites and prokaryotic organisms. The multitudes, the huddled masses yearning to eat for free.
>
> Fuck them and fuck you.

Detective Messangelo read that letter again. He didn't understand half of it, but he got the whole point. *This was their man ,* he thought as he stared at the page long after reading the last line; allowing his mind to populate with faces and bodies and how this asshole would look once in bracelets. *This letter,* he thought, *left at the 43 rd through 46 th victim's crime scene, was likely one of two things: an escalation, or a cessation ,* the signing of his last canvas of art.

III. 2020 e.v.

"I can't even tell the actual stories; they are so banal and so horrific at once.

"Sarah was a flat-out psychopath and evil and lied about anything and everything and cheated on me which is the worst -most humiliating- thing a girl can do to an alpha. It ruins us; it makes us feel like we're nothing.

"But the other girls, even the relatively nice ones were destructive and mean and mean MO, just fucking mean. Melannie said of me once; once, I had said, *well, I'm a gearhead,* and she said, *you like cars but you can't work on them; you're not a gearhead,"* MO tagged this as this was the 8th time this exact girl & memory had been brought up in less than 40 months. MO wanted to locate the engram itself, and all its corollary CNS activity and biochemistry; and each time

the inmate brought it up, he was able to locate more and more of its source and constituent parts. MO hunted that memory down like a predator; like law enforcement.

“I’d been tearing apart machines since I was eight. I’d rebuilt engines in the sand; flat on my back for hours, rebuilding wheel cylinders, re-flaring brake lines, I retrofitted crate motors and modern electronics in old hot rods and muscle cars, I built my own choppers; I had -regretfully- sold a motorcycle I had built myself with $30,000 in parts for a measly $13,000 to buy the house she was inside as she insulted me with aplomb.

“See, women do not get what they do to a man with insults like that, it’s a blow to the body, it’s violent, man.

“I was speechless; she actually thought that and said that of me and pretended to love me afterwards. To this day, I want to throw up when I recall it. She emasculated me in a mean and vicious and untrue way in between sips of some shitty wine. She didn’t have to prepare or steel herself for such a horrid thing, she just said it like, *pass the salt* .

“Was she really deluded into thinking I hadn’t been working on cars and bikes my entire life; or did she think I was lying? Or was she just stabbing at me? Either way it’s horrid and I don’t want - I’m lying in bed thinking- I don’t want to be around a woman, a human like this. *Make her go away,* I’m calling to God, right. *Please God, make all this go away.*

“Kelly saw her ex once -we’d been dating a week or so- and she said, *did you see the size of his hands?* to me. I mean, she was telling me to not go out and confront him because he would kick my ass ostensibly. It’s risible on its face, but it was the way she insinuated he was more of a man than me because of those hands and the implied corollary: his cock. Right? She was hammering me for no reason at all. We weren’t fighting, she just emotionally sucker punched me.

“It was humiliating and evil as I had done nothing to her; I was 26 and in love with her; she was 38 and destroyed me in eight words,” he said and shook his head. MO had heard this story four times also, and he had a folder on the corporate cloud that kept track of each story he told more than once. He had a brain built for grudge holding like only 13% of the population, and 56% of the inmate population; it correlated with the MAO-A gene suite and sufficient cognition or sufficient hardwiring *via* epinephrine dumps into the *vmPFC* .

The grudge was built by the wetware of the brain, and this inmate had the most efficient and durable wetware for grudge building MO had seen in a live brain

and in the top 1% of all the genomic and taxonomic data he could glean from the medical metadata to which he had access.

“There’s 1,001 examples of this shit and I can’t relive each one MO; I feel like dying even now -20 years later- in the re-telling. People -women especially- get away with way too much shit that for 99% of history they never would have attempted much less gotten away with,” the inmate said and his whole affect had changed now.

MO saw that his vitals -BP and heart rate- were up; his brain was roiling, the parasympathetic response was like nothing he had ever seen; yet the inmate was almost inert; he showed no outward signs except the elevated breathing; which he kept repressed due to his shallow breathing baseline. It was not unlike the way the earth looks placid from space; even as the seas churn and the lava does flow.

He was stoic on the outside, but inside he was a boiling, roiling storm surge of endocrine and limbic and basal/cerebellum reaction. *No wonder he had murdered 46 people and had destroyed every relationship he’d ever been in,* MO thought as he saw the allostatic system in full category-5 revolt and spin. *If this was his feeling in the re-living of the events -just two of them- decades later, imagine what he felt at the time or when he relived each one as he must have done countless times,* he thought.

“Do you ever; or have you ever re-lived more than two or three of these at once?” MO asked.

“Yeah, they cascade; and when I’m alone I do a greatest hits; but I must admit, the people I’ve dispatched, the memories associated with them, the bad memories, well, those memories are less redolent, less vivid; their deaths quiet the demons,” the inmate said as his allostatic system mimicked just this assertion; calming, slowing, healing itself with loops of *bio-chems* and check-valves of fluids, batteries of electricity, constriction of the flow of his blood.

“Murder was much more cathartic than I knew; I figured it would feel good in the moment; but it also feels good each time I think -not just of the act, but also- of their original transgressions; it’s like the *esprit de l’escalier* . You know?” the inmate asked.

“That may be the first time a mass murderer has said his sanguinary crimes were like *the witticism of the staircase* . And in French,” MO laughed and shook his head at this man’s oddness .

“You know what I mean though right? It’s like I think of the perfect response to

their insults later and boom there it is: a bullet to the head! The perfect rejoinder," he said as he made a toy gun with his right hand, the thumb collapsing to mimic the drop of the hammer. The inmate's allostatic system did show true joy at reliving these moments of revenge MO noticed as he timestamped three separate enteric and central nervous functions.

"No, I got it; it is apt. It's just very urbane and literary and not the normal *argot* of the homicidal maniac," MO laughed.

"Well, like you said once, I'm a *renaissance* man," the inmate added.

26. Malice Theory of Disease

Ask someone to say words, as many words as he can think of, pausing every two of three seconds after each of them for you to write them down. If after every plural noun (or adjective or abstract word, or whatever you choose) you say “good” or “right” as you write it down, or simply “mmm-mmm” or smile, or repeat the plural word pleasantly, the frequency of plural nouns (or whatever) will increase significantly as he goes on saying words. The important thing here is that the subject is not aware that he is learning anything at all. He is not conscious that he is trying to find a way to make you increase your encouraging remarks, or even of his solution to that problem

The Origin of Consciousness and the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind [Jaynes, Julian]

Picture someone you hate. Not just someone who bugs you, but someone you really hate. It can be personal; it can be social as in a politician or CEO. It can be a historical figure; it doesn’t matter. Now, if you knew for sure that you could get away with it -one hundred percent sure- and you had the opportunity, would you kill the person? I am not, of course, looking for any answer, nor am I judging any answer. I am just interested in finding out what people think and feel. When I ask this question, about half the people in my audience nod, *yes* . Many others look away… disapproving of the question itself

Endgame Vol II [Jenson, Derrick]

What do you wanna be when you’re thirty?

Well, I wanna be harmless.

Really that’s your goal? You might as well not even be alive if that is your goal

12 Rules for Life Tour [Peterson, Jordan B]

I. 2017 e.v.

He awoke at 0405hrs and the moon was at his 11 o’clock, the trees were black. The wind swayed them so radically that the boughs that screened the albedo of the sky’s white rock were pulled aside and the rock shone like a ballistic from one of God’s emissaries, sentries; this, he was certain, had woke him.

It was not the noise of the wind, there was no noise inside the container, it was quiet; it was only this bright light on him in code. He saw flashes full -then occulted- by these blinking black tall trees of his property; beyond which was a one-to-one slope down a full thousand feet to the valley and then a rise up again. His mind almost always thought of this incessant wave of land. The details, the number, the elevation populated his mind as manifold as the trees, their boughs, and the endless fractal cracks in the bark.

This topography repeated over and over like ocean waves, of green and brown *Pinon* and *Juniper* pines, *Scrub Oak* , some black and white of *Aspen* and *Birch* ; the beige and red of clay and sliprock, the desert tan of dead brush all the way to New Mexico which he could see as his bedroom slider faced due south. He saw

Taos from here, and his view was an uninterrupted undulation of green and trees and black shadows for 200 miles. He kept track of these data points and articulated them from time to time. He had no idea why.

He saw a black mass, undifferentiated and beneath him and out and out forever. He repeatedly took inventory of the land and its citizens of vegetation and beast alike. The lizards froze and waited for the sun.

He was alone. He imagined pruning back all the black branches of the trees to stop the flashing of the moonlight; he would endure its judgmental stare if only it would not blink; not cease in its attention paid.

He thought of how when he was born he had more neural connections than at any point since; that his own brain pruned these connections radically until age two, then pruned more slowly from then on out. This was the death of living, the reduction of possibilities; innate to becoming.

People don't realize this , he thought, they associate possibility with the Good, they are so ignorant to actual physiology that it makes them *de facto* ignorant to wise philosophy: potential precludes becoming, one must limit choices in action, choose a path among many offered in order to move forward. *Less choice is true freedom* , he thought.

Limitation is freedom; for unbounded freedom is stasis, he thought, *and stasis is death. This is the paradox of life, to live one must die into being* . You must limit connections, neurally, in order to become something real. And you cannot live with infinite options, or you never grow up.

Humans live in such a state of elongated, augmented, unending development, coddled by families forever; that they never grow up. Ancient cultures made the child go through an initiation, a hard, arduous, dangerous *walkabout* , or hunt, or *bris* even; some traumatic event to demarcate the periods of childhood and manhood. The *Spartans* forced their boys to suffer; many of the tribes of Africa made the boys endure massive cutting and punishment and they could not even show a grimace, no reaction to it, or they failed to become men. The Jews made a boy wait until 13 to circumcise him, a journey into manhood unlikely to be forgotten like circumcision at birth; before consciousness.

Now, we swaddle and mollycoddle and tie a bib around our children until they are 40 years old , he thought. There is no journey, no event, no ritual of manhood. *We go to college?* he asked in his head. *Is there anything less arduous or less manly than university? It's where men go to become gay* , he thought.

We need a restoration of the Spartan, Tribal journey to manhood , he thought.

It’s good for the boy, and the man he becomes, and it’s good for the society, which is now -which would be- staffed by actual men. Modern western societies are filled with un-masculine and craven men, who cannot be of any use to their culture. *It’s bad for the individual and the culture, and it will destroy us,* he thought in the dark and the light as the wind blew silently and fast and enduringly from the south.

The night is when the right hemisphere is activated , he knew that much. And the right hemisphere deals with the unknown, the chaotic, and that means it will focus, even ruminate, on threats and doom; as chaos and the unknown appear this way to each animal. But, once you truly become a man, you learn that this feeling of doom is to be embraced, it’s just a feeling, and it can be overcome by listening to it, paying attention to it. In fact, what does fear and anxiety do? It confuses you, it dumps chemicals like cortisol and epinephrine and glucose into you and it narrows the focus of the eye, it gets you ready to see, react, win. *Use that,* he said to himself, *use that attention to see the truth: you are best suited for the Taoist line between chaos and order, walk it, pay attention, become a man among men.*

He looked at his watch and it was 0406; it had been one minute since he awoke; time had slowed. He was ready to urinate and make coffee; ready to take 10mg of name-brand opiates; ready to watch the moon sink and the sun rise and he would be ready for his left hemisphere to begin to process the images his right hemisphere had showed him in the night; ready to process the anxiety he had awoke with. *When you realize anxiety is not real -but a brain state like hunger or anger or lust, it can be paid attention to or ignored, but it does not determine your life- it is like realizing when you are on mushrooms or acid that the hallucinations are not real,* he thought. *Then you can enjoy them. Then you can learn* .

Our brains give us info; they do not determine the real, he thought. *We need the limits of the self, of the culture, of the natural world, in order to move forward into being* . But, a rare man, a man such as himself, was never going to walk the same middle way as most men. He needed a meaningful life, even at the expense of security, longevity, approval from his peers. Life was not infinitely possible, life was whatever you chose from the infinite possibilities, life was one discreet movement at a time. *And men chose. Men made choices, hard choices, choices others would never understand,* he surmised. *If they did not choose they might as well still be babies, adolescents, or women.*

Survival is not first, manhood is first; and that includes being useful to your

tribe, he thought, and he then offered this excuse before he was even accused: *he was no sociopath* . But, tribes were ancient things, things long lost, and in a nation of 350 million, all he needed was a few men, men like him, to make a tribe. He'd not need to convince more than 100. And if he lived his philosophy, truly lived it, and showed what he was doing, there would be a tribe that agreed.

This is what lost men forget, when they lose their minds and go on rampages, they forget it's up to them to build a small tribe of men who want meaningful lives, not self-help bullshit, but an extraction from the banality of modernity.

Introverts have an affinity for nature; a tribe of introverts needs land and space. He could offer that, he thought.

How many ersatz, *fight clubs*, have arisen in cities with gloves and rules and sanction? *These morons had missed the point entirely;* in toto, he thought. The whole point of fight club was that it was dangerous, illegal and unsanctioned. *Jesus, not one man in 1,000,000 knew how to live. There were probably no more than 12 men in America who got this* .

He needed to find them or allow them to find him. *No self-help guru or book can help these men,* he thought*, these men need land, nature, and need culture built from the wilderness; hewn from rock, drawn from the river; built by hand and with their own code. We will make our own culture, not adapt to theirs.* This was crucial, and anyone who missed this point, missed his entire point. *A good life for these men was not possible in the city, with a girlfriend, with a job, with a family or friends or hobbies* .

A good life for these 120 men of America was only possible with his natural tribe, in the forest, of his own design and making; 100% autonomous and yet hemmed in by the natural pruning of self, culture and nature. He -this man- *would submit to the natural discipline of natural limitations; but he would push those limitations to the edge. His 1,200 men would understand this,* he thought. *They, these 120,000 men,* he added*, would feel it and not need it explained* .

He arose and made coffee and lit candles on the top shelf of his kitchen. He often thought of how much he liked the kitchen he had built; sheetrocking it all himself, along with doing the Pex plumbing and running all the Romex for electrical outlets and lights. He stood on a poured concrete floor, that he had mixed in a wheelbarrow -three bags at a time- and hand troweled as autumn moved toward winter and the doe stood at the edge of the land. He had mixed two pallets worth, pallets of 80 bags each, bags each of 80 pounds. He went over it again, he thought to himself: *the counter top was formed concrete, dyed slate grey, assembled without fasteners, held in place like Stonehenge, by its own*

weight. It was 4,400 pounds of built-in sink, and right angles and smooth polished surface. It was heavy and sharp and unyielding, and it was thus beautiful because -not in spite- of this.

The shelves were stocked with glass, air-tight, jars of black beans, green & red lentils, and matte-white pancake mix; matte black mixing bowls at center; and on the left-hand side were bottles of vitamins and painkillers and longevity capsules of unknown ingredients. Square glass jars of coffee and protein mix also sat between and betwixt the grey plates and black bowls. Above this were two female bear -black bear- skulls he had shot with the Remington 700 using the 300 winmag round. In the center was a European mount mule deer, a 9-point buck, with a bobcat skull and the lower mandible of three bears screwed into it to create a *portmanteau* of the skulls of deer, bear and cat into one animal of heady predator and prey.

The candles lit these skulls, dissolved of their flesh by potassium chloride in boiling water over 8 hours, in orange and white light. Antique-white fissures and aging sutures were revealed, and the nakedness of the head showed long delta incisors; the things the flesh hid in living beings, were revealed in death. And he thought the truth of each beast was beautiful.

His grey plates and bowls were stacked one shelf below, flanked by more jars of short grain brown rice and pasta noodles in black and olive drab; rice noodles and photos of *Caduceus* wine bottles -warm and black and gold, laureled by deciduous plants and a brown and mottled counter- lay about, and if one invigilated, snooped, if one paid attention one would see a broken cufflink, a small sperm whale in greyish white, and two small intact links of an ace of spades and a jack of spades too.

As the coffee gurgled, he felt no pressure to hurry; for he had decided. He looked at the thick spine of the book squeezed between the tall square jars on the shelf and he imagined himself out at the earth’s sea.

II. 2018 e.v.

“But why are you, or why should you be taken seriously, you have no political experience you've never held any office, never been accountable to the public,” she mumbled some more clanging words but his voice over took from her in a burst.

“I'm held to account everyday by people; as John Donne said, *no man is an island,* and each act or action I take on a business and interpersonal level is; runs

through a filter or the filter of the markets, people's desires and tastes; their needs and sensibilities. If I'm not doing my job, people don't buy my product; if I'm not communicating my respect or love for people in my personal life or in first impressions they recoil and I suffer a diminution of their support. Right? If I am not accountable I lose. I'm accountable," he finished .

"Your biggest opponent, Jared Polis is your most serious contender, and one of his surrogates is Chelsea Clinton. She has gone after you on Twitter. Given the details, the details of her critiques, what are your impressions?" she was allowed to finish, he had refused to interrupt her, refused to save her, just so everyone could hear how dumb the question actually was.

"First of all, I am completely uninterested in talking about anyone's personal life. Despite her and I, and my, rather, deep schisms in political or economic ideas, I as a human being cannot stand by and let a person be maligned and treated as fodder for jokes and tongue clucking over what other people did to her; to her," he emphasized. "She didn't do anything wrong, she was wronged, and yet she's the butt of the joke?

"I find it offensive and wrong and I will not participate in it other than to say that anyone who runs her down over this nonsense should expect a rebuttal from me. Do not think I'm on your side with this kind of back-stabbing, underhanded, and frankly cowardly gossip; because none of you people would say it to her face I can guarantee that. I've known too many people in my life to think any other way: 999 out of 1,000 people who gossip will never say that gossip to the person's face. So right there I disqualify the substance of the rhetoric if I know the person would never say what they are telling me to the face of the person we're all supposed to be laughing at; no way," he shook his head and pursed his lips as punctuation. He had refused to answer the question.

"Her mother, Hillary Clinton, famously lost two elections for president; the first before the primary contest even allowed her to get the nomination for the Democratic ticket and the second in a general election. Why did she fail?" she asked. The question was a non-sequitur, *poorly formed* , he thought, *even when allowing for the innate silliness of a 20-year old female who worked in the media* .

"I'm sure you've heard my attorney's famous comments on Ms. Clinton and I'll repeat them because both he and I have said this to her face; when we were in

New York in the spring for a business deal we were trying to effect," he said as she interrupted.

"A business deal that many have said is questionable," she said as if that kind of phrasing was even something adults would have said privately 50 years ago. She said it without shame.

"We can get to that, because maybe my critics have a point on that, but let's table that and get back to my point which dove-tails with my earlier comments on gossip. My attorney, Tom Henry, famously said that people, who at the time were lamenting Donald Trump's ascension in the polls and in the esteem of the voting public, that those people who couldn't understand why this guy whom they regarded as a clown and on and on, couldn't understand why he was so popular with *joe six-pack* .

"Well, Tom said that it was because the guy was real. He was authentic and seemed very human, blood and guts human, despite his wealth, and eastern seaboard provenance, and elite lifestyle. He then added that the reason they preferred him over Hillary was because she was a robot; robotic right? And I added, in that same press event, that it wasn't even a very smart robot, that if she had been a really savvy and adept instantiation of AI that I'd vote for her.

"And Tom said, *she couldn't even pass the Turing test she was so goddamn clunky* . And the room erupts in laughter because it's so true; this woman seemed to have a 30 weight oil for blood and 383 gears in her rear end and could maybe get from point A to B but had no *élan vital* about her, ya know?" the candidate asked his interlocutor, as she blinked and tilted her head like a puppy .

"And then less than three hours later Tom and I meet with Ms. Clinton and say the very same thing to her face because I insisted upon it. Hillary graciously took the meeting because she thought it might look good for her to, well, you know the photo-op or whatever, but she took the meeting and Tom and I told her we thought she was stilted and phony and robotic and said we wanted to make sure she heard it from us directly and give her an opportunity to respond; which is fair in my mind," the candidate said with a grin -and a pause- and the room was waiting for the other shoe to drop. The reporter, the interviewer seemed unphased. She just blinked and nodded.

"And what did she say?" the journalist finally asked as the candidate had just sat

there waiting; she was clueless about what the set up to a joke is comprised of and was thus, truly interested in the answer. She thought a serious answer was coming.

“Say? She just whirred and smoke came out of her ears and she spit out a binary message onto a punch card,” he looked very serious, and reached into his pockets, adding, “I’ve got it here somewhere.”

The room laughed and the candidate allowed himself a chuckle and the journalist didn’t quite get it. She asked again what he thought of Ms. Clinton.

“No, look she was,” he halted a bit, “she was gracious and said she thought Tom looked drunk or something; it was funny because he was and is drunk all the damn time. His nose is all red and vivisected with red capillary bursts; it looks like a highway and byway map of the state of Texas on his face there are so many thin red lines akimbo. But he's a great lawyer and he got me out of a scrape or two in life and I'd take him drunk over a sober Clarence Darrow. But I’m biased.”

III. 2020 e.v.

“Rationality as the highest good is not a good thing; it leads to totalitarianism,” Isaiah said to MO, who did not agree.

“Pit bulls are banned but blacks are not; same level or percentage of violence but,” MO said as Isaiah interrupted.

“I agree, but rationality is not what gets us to a solution; rationality bans pit bulls or jails blacks, that’s the best you can hope for MO; you can’t *ban* them. I mean you could but it would require massive social repression which is too costly; anyway, I want to try something else.

“*Jung* said that an encounter with evil was enough to destroy a person; they could walk around the rest of their days a shell of their former self. I’ve read quite a bit from Primo Levi and -that was the inmate’s recommendation by the way- and he specifically talked about this self-destruction as a consequence of touching, rubbing up against evil.

“And a lot of people hear that and they don’t examine it; like an 18th century doctor who notices people getting sick after they use the bathroom, or after they shake hands with strangers or handle raw pork, and doesn’t connect the dots that washing one’s hands might solve these ailments. Well, it’s because he doesn’t

have a germ theory of disease yet. Right ?

“It took all of human history to even have a germ theory of disease. Doctors, witch doctors and western doctors of the 18th century, were all going around banning this or that, the Bible bans pork or shellfish, or illicit sex, because people get sick from this shit. And so, they are trying their best to solve the sickness problem, but they don’t have any idea what causes it. So, they are going with instinct.

“Well, psychologically, I feel like *Jung* figured it out and we have not listened. Coming into contact with evil destroys our brain, it augments the amygdala, so we feel more fear and anxiety and have lower pain tolerance, it shrinks the hippocampus, so we have a hard time learning now, establishing new memories and learning from new things which makes us less likely, less likely,” he repeated, “to voluntarily explore the unknown, we lock ourselves up in our rooms.” Isaiah bent down and picked a leaf -from the ivy wall- off of the floor.

“This,” he rose, speaking of malice not the leaf he just retrieved, “creates a severely damaged individual, an individual who then begins to ruminate on his own pain, the evil of world, and it’s not too hard to see why that guy goes and shoots up a school or kills his ex-girlfriend. Which by the way, men are 2.5 times more likely to kill themselves after ending a romantic relationship than women, and we think this might be because men feel love, romantic attachment, more deeply than women. The current theory is that women have friends and family and children that they can attach to in a significant way that men cannot seem to do as often. Women have support systems and other modes of being not available to men. But it may actually be more than that. I think men actually love women more than women love men; the way mothers love sons more than sons love mothers.

“But anyway, the inmate has laid out a dozen events, at least, any two of which would be enough to destroy any normal man. He had his first love express interest in men of another race, which is extremely damaging to any man of any race, regardless of which one, because our racial identity is so core; to have that attacked implicitly is very destabilizing.

“Second, he goes to a religious cult and believes in its mission, is a warrior for Zendik and finds out they are hypocrites and liars and they steal all his belongings and boot him out.

“Third, he falls in love with another girl, and look, even at Zendik he falls for a girl who is dating other men -Nicole is her name- as per the libertine requirements of Zendik, and this further alienates him, he has to watch as she

dates other men and hear about it and pretend not to feel jealousy, because jealousy is so taboo.

“And he knows she doesn’t even want to date around, but is being forced to by Zendik and so there is a tyrannical element to the culture now, forced sexual betrayal, right? Ok, then he leaves Zendik, with nothing, he’s broke, with one pair of clothes and a pair of work gloves, and his own family shames him for giving away all his stuff, as if stuff is what matters. I mean he sees how shallow and mean they are, that they don’t even care about his soul, about why he would join a group like that in the first place, needing, as he obviously does, a tribe, a community, a place to belong.

“Look, he is a sensitive kid, he feels things, he is off the charts in trait openness. And his family are all closed up and robotic; he received no encouragement, no warmth, nothing from these people. So, he joins a cult to assuage his soul and they rip him off, and his parents bitch about the car. It’s too much.

“He then meets a girl older than him, falls in love and she undermines him when her ex -when this ex-*beau* - arrives to her house one day and when -like a man- the inmate tells her he will confront the quondam paramour, and she says not to because *his hands are huge* ; it was this odd, totally inappropriate and totally typical thing for a slutty female to do.

“She was emasculating him and he -and look, he was a pacifist at the time, he eschewed violence on political grounds- and so he is just beginning to feel his power, his manhood, and he notices he is not liking the way women are treating him. But he was merely trying to stand up for her and himself and she cuts him down with one sentence as if it’s nothing at all.

“His father is tyrannical and unsupportive, his girlfriends are all sluts and disloyal. His mother is cowardly and afraid of everything; his brother is a stranger, and he can feel -Lyndon can feel- that his brother,” he paused as MO brought the brother’s bio onto the screen.

“Right,” Isaiah says as he nods to the screen, “his own brother hates him and wants nothing to do with him. So, what is an intelligent and innately self-respecting man to do as he hits 26-years-of age?

“I tell you, he can snivel and whine and retreat or he can become a monster and defend himself.

“And the inmate is a monster, look at him. But, he didn’t begin that way; and nobody wants to admit that they helped build him. He looked around and saw the lay of the land. He saw that *might made right* . He was beaten by his father

and brother, because he was the baby; the smallest, the weakest the most *naïve* . He saw that. He said, *ok, that's life, but I don't wanna be that way,* and so he becomes a Left-wing douche-bag pacifist and pretends he can live outside the law of nature. His first instinct post-puberty is to be decent and nice and not seek out revenge.

"Well, he sees he gets no respect; none. He gets shit on by everyone, they lord their power over him, insult him, emasculate him, shame him. They see no value in his deeds, the things he sees as noble and honorable and creative they see as stupid and wasteful and immoral. He tries to explain, but they are too obtuse to even understand his language. He's an artist, he speaks in the language of the artist, the shaman, the seer; he speaks poetically, you must have noticed this MO," Isaiah said as he heated up his hands enough to burn the paper he had picked up; the smoke wafted in a spring shape that he briefly found beautiful.

MO nodded as the data on the inmate's language populated his CNS.

"Right? So, they think he's gay or retarded, and he lives with this for decades. And finally, he says, *fuck it, I'm gonna get big and mean,* and he does. That kid is high in conscientiousness, both industriousness and order. And he got big, 214lbs at his peak, benching 355, squatting almost 500lbs. The guy is a brute and he fights, gets beat up two out of every three times; but he learns, he learns *Kun Tao* and *Indonesian Silat* . Then he begins to beat the shit out of guys his size and bigger; he stands up for himself and he feels his own power.

"But, he still treats women like princesses, and he meets another girl, she is a total whore, and he finds out she's been with 66 men before him, she is 24-years-old, no shit. And he flips out, and decides he can't stand it, the jealousy is too much. So, after bearing his soul, moving back from *Hawai'i* for this girl, he is stuck and enraged and her friends -because he is in her world- all turn on him.

"He is alone, again. Emasculated again. She says all manner of horrid shit to him about his manhood, insults his core masculinity, and this shit sticks, it's like shrapnel left in the wound, MO. It does not go away. The brain, his brain is changing now," Isaiah said as he highlighted the hippocampal data on the screen, "he is getting more and more sensitive, more reclusive, more paranoid, and his brain is helping him feel this way as response to malice, malevolence, betrayal. It ain't natural disasters, ok? It ain't floods and hurricanes. It's people fucking him up. With malice. People he loved. It's my -it's *the* - malice theory of disease.

"This is what brains do; just like pathogens make an organism sick, and not washing your hands gets those pathogens in your mouth or nose and you get infected.

“Having your entire social world humiliate and shame and disrespect you, well, that sickens one’s soul and brain and body. Having contact with that evil, brushing up against it; it contaminates the soul,” Isaiah said as he highlighted the gene correlates and the brain modules and the variegated bio-responses to each of 103 specific insults to the brain of men with three of the five alleles associated with anti-social behavior in men.

“He too easily takes offense though,” MO said. He saw that the inmate took offense 95.5% more easily than the average man, and 191.1% more quickly than the average female.

“Yeah, because he has the brain hardware and software of sensitivity; he’s got all the requisite CNS modules to notice slight variation in topography -social topography- that nature has endowed him with for this very reason, MO! How else does a man notice what everyone of the troop, the tribe needs, unless he is sensitive? This is alpha-chimp 101, goddammit,” Isaiah barked as MO conceded the point. MO was just thinking of the inmate’s own mental health, and how he ought not take other people so seriously, for his own good. But, Isaiah -he now saw- was right, the whole tribe collapsed if some men weren’t sensitive to slight social turmoil and discord. The way an infant failed if the mother was not acutely sensitive to its every need. Man was to tribe what mother was to child. *And*, MO added, *was anyone more serious, less insouciant, about something than a mother* vis-à-vis *her child?*

What was early evidence, symptom, of malady, was only seen by those most acutely aware. Those individuals would necessarily be more sensitive and thus more susceptible to social disease.

“He moves on,” Isaiah said with some tightness of jaw, “to another girl, a beautiful girl, and they get married and on their wedding night she says something so horrid he will not repeat it. To this day he will not; but it makes him so sad, so lonely, so disenchanted with life that he takes his titanium ring off and hands it back. And of course, she blames him and cries, and blah blah.

“But he forgives her, and they go on for four years, all the while she is henpecking him and treating him like he’s a boy. Now, he goes to work in the oil field; to earn good money and work hard and learn another skill. Ok, he has already worked in drilling and blasting, with dynamite for fuck’s sake; hard 13-hour days, 28 of 30 days a month for some drilling and blasting company here in Colorado,” Isaiah said as MO brought the company up on the screen; the projects along I70 and *Turkey Creek Canyon* were shown. Details of pay, hours, and dates were all on the screen. Timestamps to corporeal damage from that era

were mapped and brought up in the same viewscreen. The hands were highlighted for their damage which began in 1999.

“This is massively hard work, and he’s done factory work, he’s worked his ass off, made good money and still this woman is bitching at him to close the cabinet doors. She’s just a bitch ok?

“He gets destroyed physically in the old field,” Isaiah said as the next level of bone, tendon, and neurological damage corresponding to that time frame -2005-2007- filled in the screen to the left of the x-rays from last week.

“He works madness into outrage and black rage, he is fighting with men, physically fighting them, he is getting fired from one company and hired onto another,” Isaiah said as he forwarded the images to the screen, “then, check this out, his wife is pulled over by a cop and the cop points a gun at her; and guess what?”

“What?” MO asked.

“Brandee and him are, they are neighbors with that guy now.”

“The cop?” MO asked incredulously.

“Yeah, in Parachute, it’s too weird to even talk about. So, of course, he feels protective of his wife, and he wants to kill this illiterate, goofy, fascist cop, for the insult to him *via* his wife, but he holds his tongue to be a good boy and not go to jail so he can provide for his wife; he does the smart thing ok?

“But, nobody gives him credit, shit no. They make him fight over and over for any respect. He works some 50 hours in row for a job, no sleep, no break, just grinding it out for the job, then he gets fired for mouthing off when the boss bitches about nothing after 53 hours in a row of brutal working. And the big boss -one level up from the idiotic boss who told him to clean the pad or whatever- the main-boss of the company now yells at him for mouthing off with no mention of how brutal and insane the work and hours are, and no mention that he is the only one doing it, that nobody else is working that hard, and yet, still no respect.

“So, he comes home from the oil field after two years and works for the guy who yelled at him. Lyndon then comes up with an idea for oil field supply business, ok? He goes back to western slope and cold calls tool-pushers and company-men in the field to sell them disposable parts for their tri-pumps *et cetera* ; they agree, he then sources the parts from China and Curtis, his boss, says he’ll help fund the operation, and basically buys into Lyndon’s company and Lyndon being trusting and *naïve* allows it because he thinks Curtis is his friend.

“See, to him, to our inmate, you don’t ever just do business, or bang some chick. People matter to him. And he thinks -wrongly, *naïvely* - that he matters to them too.

“Curtis is banging some whore -not his wife- and this whore has a daughter, Michelle. Michelle is evil and psychopathic as fuck,” MO brought Michelle Rodriguez’s profile up and her biometrics and brain scans that showed she was indeed, likely, a psychopath. She had four of five pre-requisites in the alleles that PraXis specialized in. Her time-of-death lay tangentially to the side of her profile like a bit of data detritus.

“Lyndon hires her to help with sales, shipping and receiving for his company, and she is bossy and shitty, a typical modern female -all attitude and all anti-male horseshit- but he endures. Then Curtis says he wants to return the company to Lyndon for a buy out and Lyndon says, *well, Michelle has been a good worker, let’s make her half owner,* and Curtis tells him he is insane. Which he is. He is too generous, too *naïve* and so Curtis says instead, *let’s make her and you 49/49 and I’ll own the 2% and be the tie breaker.*

“In one week, with this power, Michelle locks Lyndon out of the bank account; she changes all password to online banking *et cetera* . She pulls a force move and Lyndon loses his mind; and he sends her one of his famously verbose and hostile letters and she then shows it to Curtis. Curtis -being a *douche* - takes her side because Lyndon is too mean, quote, *too mean* , in his speech to her, and so Curtis forces Lyndon to sell out now for $10,000. A company -now worth $5 million by the way- Lyndon is forced out of for blowing his top in response to Michelle’s corporate fraud. See, the crime, her crime is not the issue, it’s his *response* to her crime. Keep your eye on this conceit. This will repeat .

“Think of what this teaches a man. Think,” Isaiah said as MO ran the data using Isaiah’s new algorithm for brain activity as response to malevolence.

“Lyndon’s father is -at this time- is calling Curtis and telling him to tell Lyndon to call his mommy; a totally disrespectful move. And his father is also not at all sympathetic to this theft from his son; he tells him that he- Lyndon- shouldn’t have acted like that. That is the lesson, ok? Everyone is saying to him, look, kid, when someone rips you off, lies, humiliates you, disrespects you, the father and boss and partner and culture all say: *shut up and eat it* . Again, think of that lesson. Just think about it from a psychometric perspective,” Isaiah said as the *hippocampus* morphology and amygdala function tests all came up into view on the nanobot screen. Each layer was exposed, each showed valence with Isaiah’s simplified, oral, narrative. Each part was uploaded to the cloud for the human

employees to read, and -Isaiah thought- for posterity too. The math and biometrics were all adumbrated in exquisite detail.

“He is defrauded by someone he voluntarily helped and because he loses his shit in response, in response to her perfidy, then *he’s the bad guy* according to everyone that pretends to love him. Again, imagine the way the brain handles that. This is all about the brain at this point. You can see the morphological and functional changes from him over 40 years.

“Lyndon begins to *sorta* -but not enough- get wise to this shit. He starts another business with Curtis as customer for his hotrod shop; long story short, he is helping build four and five-hundred-thousand dollar cars with Metal Crafters using carbon fiber shells and top technology and design, and all is going well, until Curtis goes bust in the oilfield, it’s 2008 and 2009 and the oilfield is dead, and Gabe -one of Lyndon’s workers- pisses Curtis off so Curtis takes away all business from Lyndon’s shop. Boom. Dead.

“I hate to beat a dead horse but imagine having to deal with your ostensible friend fucking up your business because one of your workers pisses this friend off.

“Next, he meets another girl, another whore, and Lyndon builds a clone business,” Isaiah said as MO broke in.

“Clones?”

“Yeah, grafted pieces of plant; you cut the plant, and it roots, and -*ipso facto* , bada bing bada boom- you have a new plant; it’s asexual propagation. Anyway, he builds literally the largest, most successful, most popular clone business in Colorado, and calls it Praxis Clones,” Isaiah says with a grin.

“No,” MO was running the odds of that and it was one to 10 to the 8^{th} .

“Yes, and it gets weirder. But hold on, he is bringing in business from out of state, he is top dog in clone world in Denver, and making $166k a year his first year, from scratch, from noting, *ab intio* ; and his girl is lazy and some bohemian asshole artist who goes to Tokyo without him as he works; she has like 10 guy friends always sniffing around. Total whore, this is Melannie. She is so evil to him, says the most outrageous shit, again, undermining his sexuality, his manhood, his self-esteem, this guy is -well, you see him- he should not be feeling bad about himself. But these people are insisting on it,” Isaiah said with a tilt to the head.

“Well, I am not sure what makes a man,” MO began as Isaiah interrupted .

“Look, he is relatively handsome, smart, in the top 1%, he can fuck competently, more-or-less. Half these girls orgasm so hard they almost break bones. And yet, they hate him. They hate his masculinity, they hate his arrogance, his mien, his general pride of manhood. You see? They must pull down his tower and pulverize it. They are obsessed with using him as a foil for their own anger at the world.”

“Why?” MO asked.

“Because, and look, Lyndon is getting wiser each day, you see, he was a Leftist, a Marxist, a radical. He was pro-woman, and pro-black, and pro-worker. He was ahead of this post-modernist curve now-a-days. And the women he dated were feminists, and they were mad about being so small, and weak and not as smart as he is. You’ve seen the data on IQ differential in men and women?” Isaiah said as the two different models for each sex filled in the screen.

“Yeah, men are more likely to be geniuses or cognitively impaired, extremely smart or very dumb; whereas women are more likely to just be clever, not so extreme in either direction,” MO said.

“Yes, and these clever women hated that he was a genius.

“They hated what he represented. The whore who fucked 66 guys by 24 -Alicia- she was a Mexican, a *Mexica* , brown-pride type; who called him *conquistador* , her friends called him *Hernan* for *Hernan Cortez the* colonial murderer. Melannie, the artist bohemian chick, was postmodernist Marxist who read *Derrida* and *Foucault* and *Lacan* . She hated, they all hated his tall, handsome, muscular, brilliant alpha male ass. He *was* the patriarchy!

“He was and is the posterboy for the goddamn patriarchy, and they wanted to fuck it, have it protect them, but shit all over it at the same time. Just like they want America to protect them and heap luxury on them while tearing it down all at once. It’s jealousy and malice at each level of instantiation, and that black-clad anarchist that murdered 46 people, our inmate, well, he *was* America to them.

“That’s the human condition, MO,” Isaiah said and let the data wash over the screen; each engram of each phenomenon Isaiah had mentioned populated the screen and MO tagged each one for its impact on the brain of inmate 16180339.

“They hated him, but they wanted to fuck him, so they were conflicted, and so was he, because he talked like a leftist, he thought like a leftist, he took the side of the oppressed.

“But they could not get over that he looked like and had the genome -and the competency- of the oppressor and so they took shots at him every chance they

got. And he was too *naïve* to see it coming. He was floored by it each time. He was incredulous. He couldn't believe it MO. He loved these girls and they took him apart piece by piece in the night.

"And it ain't even close to being over yet. He meets another girl, and he expands his operation to grow flowering marijuana too now, and he is killing it, growing great weed, making $250,000 a year, has partners because the state now requires licensing he cannot get, and each partner, from John, to the car guys, to the Jewish guys, to the former buyer of clones -Pat," he said as MO brought each person on screen and the their biometrics including their autopsies, "to Michael and Carry, ok, each of them, they all rip him off. They sell him out, lock him out, steal his mothers -that is the stock from which all new plants come, like breeding stock- they steal his equipment, his livelihood, each and every one of them .

"And they talk shit behind his back, they try to fuck his girls. At this point his has two live-in girlfriends, he's totally honest -for a human- with them, and not at all sneaky or disloyal. He is upfront. They agree to live this way, and they then betray him with malice and brutal shit. Shit I won't even get into, because you know, this ain't an asymptote project, we have a timeline, we have other shit to do, right?" Isaiah said with a laugh at how much detail was necessary -and necessarily left out- with this guy.

"Anyway, he does what no alpha does: he is up front about his need for a harem, instead of sneaking around like 99 out 100 guys. And for this he gets no respect, none. People call him a scoundrel when he is 100-fold more honest than they are. He doesn't cheat on his girls, ever. He won't even look at other girls but his girls. He is honest while 99% of so-called alphas are banging chicks behind their girl's back. Which by the way, no real alpha cheats, only betas cheat; a real alpha does what our inmate does: he commands a harem overtly, honestly, without deception.

"Ok, next, he is attacked by three Mexican *cholo* wannabes, he pulls his 45-caliber pistol and warns them to back off; for this he is arrested; not them. He is; with all his white-privilege that he is accused of having, ok, his white-privilege gets *him* locked up not the Mexicans dirt bags. He spends a night in felony lock up on two counts of *felony menacing with a weapon* ; to wit: a firearm," Isaiah read the indictment from the file as his booking sheet populated the screen next.

"He gets a deferred judgment due to his awesome lawyer Tom Henry and does two years' probation and it costs him nearly $100,000. Plus, he loses his business again," Isaiah said quickly and smiled waiting for MO to catch on.

“Wait, Tom Henry?” MO asked.

“I told you it got weirder,” Isaiah said. He was smiling at MO.

“So, due to his plea deal, he can’t work legally in the MMJ industry even though it is legal in Colorado because the courts are federal; so, he must sneak around and work in another man’s shop to keep earning but stay out of jail.

“He invests all his own money, $40,000 in the business, and while his PO is ragging on him, his therapist -mandatory anger management- is trying to fuck him. Which by the way, she turns out to be as malicious as any predatory bitch ever made. Anyway, as this is going on he gets locked out of the business he paid for, because his name couldn’t be on the lease. He is out, fucked, done,” Isaiah said as he slapped both of his hands together as if to cleanse them of some detritus. MO tags these events to the timeline for 2009-2014 alongside the CNS damage and augmentation.

“Mike burns him and brings big tough Todd along to scare Lyndon. It does not work, because three months earlier, Russian mobsters tried the same shit; came to intimidate him and Lyndon laughed in their faces. But, that dude, some Russian Jew,” Isaiah said as Jacob’s photo and biometrics appeared on the screen. “Bingo, that guy, so Jacob -who also runs a car dealership- says his name is on the lease too, which it is. So, two guys -Jacob and Michael- are arguing over which of them is allowed to steal our inmate’s business, and finally they win by locking him out.

“He’s on probation he can’t do shit. He has no legal rights. But in real life, he paid for it, ran it, stocked it, improved it, and ran it 12hrs a day. It was *his* . *The only owner of anything is its commander,* as *Ahab* would say.

“And this isn’t over, he cannot grow at home anymore because his PO comes around, so he buys into another business and improves that, makes great weed and improves everyone’s lives, then is beset by beta males who unplug his lights and sabotage his shit in the middle of the night; I shit you not. They are jealous and angry and want him out of their warehouse, and again he is fucked. This is bordering on *Book of Job* shit.

“Now, many people will say, *well he’s too angry and hostile and mean, he makes people not like him* . To which I say, *yes* ; and shit, he agrees he is abrading. But even unpopular people have rights. Barry Bonds and Michael Jordan were hated too. But they won, and they had rights to their teams and their money.

“Lyndon was one of the best, and he made money for everyone. And they stole his life from him. Unpopular or not, they had no moral right to steal from him.

But they did, and they justified it. He appealed to moral authority, he yelled and screamed. All to no avail. He appealed to the law, to the State, and was told he had *no standing* to even bring suit.

“He -and this is in 2016 now- he called his own bank to stop a check that Mike had stolen and wrote out for $3,000 and the bank told him to pound sand. He legally fought back against men who attacked him first, shoved him, ambushed him three on one, he followed use-of-force law to the T, he had a CCW and behaved exactly as the law prescribes when under threat, *and yet it was he who went to jail* .

“He -once on probation- had even less recourse, he had no legal right to even be in the building, because again, while marijuana was legal in Denver, it was not federally so he was breaking his probation by even being inside. So, he had no rights, and his partners knew this, and they stole it all and laughed in his face. He didn’t merely react, instead, he methodically tried both ways in the world. He explored his environment like any animal would.

“He tried fighting and he tried being calm. He fought back, and conversely, he took it. He was a hothead and he was calm. And ether way he lost. He lost it all, each time. Eleven business stolen or taken with coercion and lies. Twelve, if you count Zendik and don’t yet include what Tess did,” Isaiah said and paused as each one populated the screen and MO took the data and ran it through Isaiah’s algorithm. Zendik was considered the first theft in this diorama.

“Most men wouldn’t survive one or two of these, he survived all twelve. And then the 13th with Tess Preston, that was his last fucking straw,” Isaiah said as Teresa Preston’s face, biometrics, and genome populated the screen. Her location was being tracked and MO had -on request from Isaiah- implanted a bot in her to keep track of her corpus indefinitely.

“She took his equipment and money and breeding stock and intellectual property -his method- and strains, cultivars technically, and she ran it into the ground in 13 months; and she refused to pay him. She told him he was barred from the property, and that it was hers now. She said that her name was on the lease of this house, not his, and the landlord liked her, not him. All of which was true, but it was still theft. And she laughed in his face, daring him to do something about it. MO, she *literally* laughed in his face. And when I use the word, *literally* , I know what it means.

“Now, all this is going on while women are emasculating him, undermining him, betraying him and his own family is unsympathetic and shaking their heads like he is the problem, ok? He has to listen to lectures from daddy’s little rich girl

sister-in-law, this silly and insipid woman, he has to listen to her lecture him! It's like a worm upbraiding the bird.

"So, long story longer, he built his home on his 35 acres in the wilderness and plotted all their demise .

"But, until you know how badly he was treated, ripped off, maligned, lied to, cheated on, threatened, emasculated and I didn't even mention the tattoo shop he put $30,000 into and paid all his profits to the manager who then walked out one day and took the whole crew with him and left the shop dead; oh, while his so-called partner took them all in to *his* shop in a total betrayal -and that guy was also banging his -the inmate's- girl behind his back," Isaiah said as Jeremy Costilow's file came up. MO measured the brain data on that victim too and saw low IQ; low neural propagation speeds due to low myelination. MO saw three alleles that code for sociopathy as well.

"And the new girl who came in -Rayne- she didn't pay her booth rent, she stole his tattoo machines and money and on and on. She had the nerve to insult him as she ripped him off; literally stealing the other employees rent that was due to Lyndon. And again, she insulted him with some unlettered and rambling note she left taped to the shop's door.

"And he's had two motorcycles stolen at this point, $10,000 in guns, and body armor, from his house -by neighbors- and on and on. It's risible.

"MO, this guy has been treated like he is nothing, for decades. He tells his father about it and it turns out his father was the one who told Carey to rip him off and lock him out; and the father didn't even call Lyndon to tell him. His own father helped his son's enemies steal his business. And then when Lyndon overreacted, as he does -although I don't think you *can* overreact to your own father stabbing you in the back- but then Lee MacLeod makes it all about *himself* and throws a pity party for himself because Lyndon said mean shit. Nobody, not mom or dad or his brother stick up for Lyndon during any of this. Nobody.

"They just shook their heads like *he* was the problem. Travis said it was his quote, *lifestyle*, that was at issue, not that he had been mistreated. Travis, this is the guy who lies to his wife, his kids," he said as MO brought the family up on the screen, "and pretends to believe in God. This guy is lecturing Lyndon who is radically honest, too honest, this guy -the brother- is lecturing Lyndon about *his lifestyle.*

"It's all too much, and when I compared it to most people's lives -and except Haitians, and Russians who have endured as much or more- nobody has put up

with more bullshit that this guy and he waited until he was 45 to kill them all; that showed forbearance and tolerance *in extremis* . I would have killed them years before," Isaiah said as the brain data rolled in and gave a .84 correlation between the phenomena that Isaiah had predicted. He had made as good a case for the malice theory of disease as any in epidemiology.

The brain structures and gene expression morphology over time, mapped onto each occurrence, each moment of betrayal, were all laid out onto the screen and the corporate cloud in a line now 47 years long.

MO smiled. Each detail was processed, but he was not yet prepared to come to a conclusion.

"I'm not kidding, they all deserved what they got. I looked into all this, and he was not wrong. They pushed him, an alpha, a giant Rottweiler, to the brink, and then cried when they got bit.

"The State didn't help him, didn't care about justice, the banks didn't either. He gets ripped off for $6,400 by a shipping container guy and nobody does shit. His own brother refused to have his lawyer send a demand letter; easiest thing in the world. So, yeah, that guy, Mark Pike, he is dead now and good riddance. He stole $6,400 from Lyndon. Period. For no reason; just because he thought he could .

"Oh, and Lyndon's doing business with Alexandra's brother and he rips him off too. It's endless. The guy is *Job* , he is biblically oppressed, and it is all because people are jealous of him; and they think he is so successful that he won't risk it all to get even. Mike said that to him once. He said that he -our inmate- *had too much to lose* .

"And he finally snapped. And anyone would, anyone but Jesus. And he ain't Jesus. He's a man, an actual man. Not that epicene, meek and mild faggot on the cross," Isaiah said as he dared God to fuck with him.

"Does he regret it?" MO asked; the blaspheme didn't even register on his CNS.

"Shit, he hates prison in some ways, but he gets to read, and work out. That is half his day no matter where he lives; and he knows that he got even; that he got the last laugh and that means a lot to a man like him. Any real man would want that over anything else. Vengeance is crucial to positive mental affect.

"Think of what this shit does to the brain, not just the psyche, but the actual brain of a man, to be betrayed over and over by people you love and trust; and have everyone get away with it. Look, what do brains do? They learn patterns. That is exactly what his brain did; it learned the pattern, the rules. And the rule

are: *might makes right* . The rules are: *there are no rules* . The rules are*: fuck over anyone you can* . He didn't make those rules up; he learned them from everyone else.

"That is what the world taught him; and then everyone wants to say, *oh, well he could have handled it another way.* Bullshit, his body was broken, his back and neck and tendons are trashed, he can't work a regular job. He can write for a living but nobody wanted his essays and novels, so he turned to his best last hope: robbery from those who robbed him and violence to settle all debts.

"I think he did the right thing. I just don't think he ought to have turned himself in. He got away with it. He should have laughed into the sunset. But, nobody reached down to lift this guy up, they abandoned him and were glad he was suffering, his family were the worst, and it's because they were and are jealous and evil. Period.

"They hated him from day one. And because they don't know themselves, and think they are good people, they don't even know they *can* act maliciously, subconsciously bent on revenge on him; and so they never once doubt their true motives.

"His dad actually said, *how do you steal a business?* as if Lyndon was lying about getting ripped off. Lee MacLeod, so dumb and senile and evil now, actually asked that question. His son is ripped off by a family friend, with Lee's help, and he actually asks if it's even possible to steal a business.

"The irony is that Travis is having his business stolen at the same time, in 2017, but can hire a lawyer -because he has *standing* - because he sells air conditioners for a living, and he acts all high and mighty like he's a smart and tough guy, when the State is standing behind him.

"Lyndon had nobody behind him. And he warned them -he warned them more than once- and they all looked doe-eyed and stupid and mouths agape. They didn't help him at all. And he wasn't lazy or a drug addict or irresponsible; he worked twice the hours as any of them; he built businesses from the ground up with sweat equity and grinding it out and total assiduous dedication, and they took their holidays and weekends and 8-hour work days while he worked 3,500 hours a year .

"And they refused to invest in him, ran him down, told him he didn't know how to make money, told him he was a loser; refused to back him. Told him all his misfortune was his fault -not the criminals and scum bags and liars- but that *he* was to blame.

“So, he took his capital, his assets and built -by hand- his own home in the forest. He hunted bear and elk and coyote and tried to write essays and stories and nobody gave one fuck. So, he went with plan B. Only a total pussy would have done anything else. He gave the world every chance to appreciate his talents and hard work and they said, *no thanks.* They said, *we’ll take plan B.*

“So, he gave them *plan B* . He did what any warlord in history, any great man would have done; he drew a line in the sand and once his enemies refused to meet him on neutral ground, he stepped over it. He crossed the *Rubicon* as *Caesar;* and did it with relative honesty and some integrity.

“Now, he is loathed to even speak on this subject; because he feels like it will be interpreted as whining and complaining and acting like a little girl. That -he would say- is ungallant. He would say that a real man just takes it and shuts the fuck up. And so, he prefers to down play it, to not mention it. And in fact, he said nothing for decades, he never mentioned the humiliations, the rip offs, the betrayals. He did just move on. 12 times.

“That is the irony; he just moved on and built new relationships, new businesses, new modes of being, and did not collapse in a ball and cry. But the whole time the brain, the brain structures are being wrought up, augmented here, attenuated there, and his mindset is a result of these CNS changes that others -and their malice- is creating. The science is clear.

“Like I said, this last set of betrayals, including his father, were too much, precisely because they were not the first, but the last. They were the *twelve labors of Hercules* , as if no one knew about the previous 11. Nobody knew about all these rip-offs, so they ignored him when he finally mentioned the 12th . People have no historical knowledge of anything, and so they assume he complained the first time. They assumed that because this is the first time they heard anything, that it was the first time he was totally destroyed. So, they always assumed he over reacted. They had no idea.

“He underreacted, in my opinion,” Isaiah said. The CNS data, the gene expression in real time, all populated the screen in a loop. MO slotted it all and made folders for each permutation.

“And that is why I feel compelled to go into some detail on this. Because he did not complain the first 11 times, he even shrugged off the felony charges he got -in 2012- for defending himself, righteously, from those Mexican scumbags. He told people that he probably overreacted and admitted his mistake and on and on. He was magnanimous. He accepted his defeat at the hands of the state of Colorado in that one. He did not whine. He did not cry. He paid his money, he

lost his business, he suffered the indignity. He took it.

“But, this last one just broke him, and so he finally was vulnerable, he finally told people, and they all assumed it was his first travail! They assumed it was the first time he was ripped off, the first time he had to start over, from nothing, the first time ostensible friends or partners or girlfriends had maligned him, undermined him, taken everything he had. And so, they felt he should buck up and get on with it and stop his goddamn whining. They treated him as if he was the very thing he feared they would think, the thing that had kept him silent over all these years.

“They say rape victims are afraid to come forward for how they will be treated. Well, *mutatis mutandis* ,” Isaiah said as MO made more calculations on the amygdala and the *dmPFC* and cross- referenced studies he had collated once Isaiah had mentioned his theory on malice and brain disease.

“*Jung* said that, *Nietzsche* too: if moral relativism is adopted *en masse* , then people are going to behave immorally; that people will follow their society to doom. And their victims -their wives they mistreat or their husbands they cuckold, their children they fail to encourage or discipline, their workers or bosses they fail to honor and care for, their fellow man they use as mere tool- if they do this, then people will become dark and vengeful in a cycle now -of malice and vengeance- and a black spiral to Hell.

“You can say morality or culture is relative and no one is morally superior or better or higher than another, that we are all equal -perpetrator and victim alike- but if you act that way, people are going to get their feelings hurt, and when they do, they are going to exact retribution. You can mistreat 100 people and 99 will eat it, and that 100th *fella* might eat it for 44 of 45 years, but eventually, he will make a monster of himself and wreck the whole damn world. The inmate is a black swan event.

“See, it ain’t misfortune that is the problem. It ain’t crop failures or disease that is destroying people. Just like it ain’t food or sex that is the problem, giving people disease. It’s the germs, the bacteria and viruses -invisible to man for millennia- inside *some* food and *some* sex that infects, that kills.

“Well, it’s malevolence, MO -and as you can now see from the data- it’s malevolence that has an epidemiological effect on the brain. The inmate’s brain was transformed into a revenge machine, based not on bad things happening, but based upon *bad people* doing bad things to him over and over and getting away with it. People he loved, and who hated him in return. Imagine your own family, friends, lovers, all hating you while you love them.

“That is no different than a germ theory of disease. When you are betrayed that much, you become sick, and your brain builds structures to fight back just like the immune system.

“And nothing is more brutal on the enemy than the immune system, MO. Nothing. The immune system has no moral compunction at all. Total war. Think of auto-immune diseases, the immune system will attack itself it’s so ruthless.

“Now, if it’s just one guy who is this damaged, he will kill a dozen, or maybe if you’re highly competent and good at your job, you’ll get, 46 deaths like Lyndon accomplished; but if that guy gets an army, he can become the next Stalin or Hitler or Curtis Lemay and do quite a bit of damage.

“So, if people have any interest in a sane and peaceful world -and look, maybe they don’t, maybe people want a few monsters running around- but if they do not, if they want to be safe and secure, then they need to not pretend that morality is relative, merely some app, some arbitrary thing in an abstract world, some game theory, some prisoner’s dilemma, some evolutionary, *fitness greater than truth* nonsense, and they need to realize that they cannot operate with this belief that you can treat people however you can get away with in the short term.

“See, all this rationality and math and left-hemisphere bullshit is going to miss the point, MO. Because real people have real feelings, and betrayal is like the black fucking plague to their heart and their brain; and both disease and cure will rot the whole society and leave it in tatters.

“And everyone thinks it’s a short-term burn, they think they got away with it, I’m sure Jeanne Pinsolf thinks her stealing Lyndon’s car has no consequences while she runs her million-dollar business, and the inmate’s brother’s wife thinks she can insult a rex of the jungle without so much as receiving a scratch back, and Sarah Smith thinks because she’s safe now, as we speak, that she got away with her perfidy and betrayal and lies. But the long-term is closer than you think bucko,” Isaiah said as he saw more ivy had fallen to the ground.

“So,” MO said, “that’s all rational -the brain data checks out- your theory is actionable. It has a coefficient of around .72, from the data collected so far.”

“Yeah, but MO, Lyndon told 1,001 people -people who all claimed to love him- he told each of them all this and they didn’t hear it one time; they mocked him, laughed in his face. Information has no impact on people. They need to *feel* it,” Isaiah said and raised his left hand over his heart and tapped it a few times.

“Well, how do you propose to do that?”

Isaiah just smiled and then that turned into a laugh.

27. like other Men you say

You really want to hurt someone? Punish them when they do something good

University of Toronto lecture 2016 [Peterson, Jordan B]

All conservatism is based upon the idea that if you leave things alone you leave them as they are. But, you do not. If you leave a thing alone, you leave it to a torrent of change. If you leave a white post alone it will soon be a black post. If you particularly want it to be white you must be always painting it again; that is, you must be always having a revolution. Briefly, if you want the old white post you must have a new white post

The Eternal Revolution [Chesterton, GK]

Me lava, dispersant gouvernail et grappin

(and swept away my rudder and anchor)

Le Bateau Ivre [Rimbaud, Arthur]

I. 2017 e.v.

He stood there, amongst his belongings -so much left behind- and gathered up only what was most valuable or personal or irreplaceable, and that which could fit within his car. He thought of coyote bones first, and books of which there were only a few copies around.

What an indignity , he thought, to be put out of his own apartment, *that he paid for; put out by some 19-year-old girl . But he had agreed, after making sinister threats upon her idiotic brother; and a deal was a deal.* He had told himself, as she had prepared to call the cops, that he should just let it go, ignore the cosmic insult to his worth, and agree to calm down, ignore her brother's insults -and hers- and just move out to his land.

He ought just build a walled garden on his own , he surmised; he ought build it and thus move toward it over new lengths of time. He thought of time, time too short to measure, like the particles and anti-particles that physicists said had finally fucked up and stuck around too long that one time 13 or 14 billion years ago. He thought of that time, and how it all began with that; that one dyad, that singular and permanent chiral handshake, brothers at odds, the ravens that flew away from and with the world.

He almost wondered what kind of man would build such a universe; he nearly thought right then of God.

Build a paradise, paradisal, in the ancient sense, he thought, *and take the time to regroup, re-vivify and think of what to do. Walk first steps, first tracks,* he

thought, *walk where evil does not yet exist and think of what to do.* His body hurt in a way that made him want to tip over, upside-down, let the head fall away from the body now; let the neck expand instead of compress. It was always there, and he did not think then, but later he would, that the evil, the twin brother, the hand offered in mock, the anti-particle lived in each thing no matter how far the grey raven flew from the vector of the black, and that his pain, his corporeal pain was not merely reminder, or evidence of evil, but was evil itself and that without it then there would be no good to lament.

This is a point hard to say, harder to hear, almost impossible to get: evil is necessary, for it is part of the math of the world.

Man calls it evil for the same reason God does: it stands inside us and strangles the parts of us that feel anything at all, and this -this- needs a name. Pain is a being, an arch-angel, an angel with desires. Pain is the echo of war drums after the moot, canon from an elevated position, payment for things done in service of reshaping the world.

Pain deforms the soul, the way metal folds, the way concrete heaves when the grounds freeze, the way threads turn to the right , he thought. “Pain is with me for good goddamn reason,” he said to buoy himself, to rebuke his lamenting, his whining, his refusal to take it as evidence of good, of God.

How, he then asked, *would anyone feel such heartbreak at the loss of a perfect girl unless he had had that little girl for time too short to measure at all? Was not his pain evidence of every great thing he’d ever done?* He smiled as this came upon him, he smiled as his teeth now began to hurt and the smile halted in its tracks, its predator detection circuit engaged. But the thing -the place- on the somatosensory map that engendered that grin kept on increasing even as the body refused to follow along. On the map a grin was drawn in the trees; in the forest. In the mind he smiled without limitation.

His body recalled her tears and the eyes built memory of each drop with a note to each one, a note that said they were ersatz, the mere leaking of a machine that had suffered a scrape, a bang, a mere knock, a nick, from the world.

She stared at him, lachrymose, *ah , not a total stoic* , he had thought. But he refused entry to this observation; he was re-committed to his anger now. It was a ballistic motion engaged. His anger was so complete that his tenderness was held under by the hydrostatic pressure of his hydraulic bile. He noticed her softness but gave it no addition to his equation. He banished all but his own anger; his own hatred of all. The zero overwhelmed, his *phi* was two to one.

“You had a powerful man, and powerful men must be made to feel powerful. You cannot make them feel weak; but that is exactly what you did,” he had said.

“I’m sorry,” she had replied with pain but zero comprehension of what he meant, she never knew what he meant, *he spoke in riddles,* she thought; of that she was certain. He spoke black atoms in absence of even the vacuum of space. He wrote zeros in dark chalk on the back of blackboards, he erased things as rubrics, before he had filled them with any ideas at all. He had hidden the shards of the vessels and doused the light from candles already blown over by the wind.

He was like a dream, where a talking beast composed sonnets and cyphers for you to figure out before you wake up; *because*, she accepted, *upon waking it would all fall away* . She lived in that place with him; this big beautiful man, her bodyguard and lover and what she had always dreamed of as a father since she was 6-years-old. *Why was he so damaged, and so full of hate?* she asked herself, just to her head; not yet her heart. Her heart beat fast like the young’s do. Her heart broke just on its shell as the asp writhed inside and opened one eye in the dark.

He was instantly a man she wanted; and she had no idea why he thought she had no love for him, *the more she fell for him the more he rose over her and pointed out the distance between them*, she surmised. It seemed a trick -on her- played by some demon to give her a man who could not see her offerings, not hear her poetry, a man that could never feel her love. She cried and hurt and didn’t understand anything at all in the world. She wondered how Cain’s sacrifice had offended God; in what way, and how she might improve the rise of the smoke, the nature of what ought be given up.

“Yeah, you don’t even know what you’re apologizing for,” he had said. “Your brother -your brother of all people- talks down to me, rebukes, rejects my offer of friendship after all I’ve done. When I was 21, I would,” he paused, restarting, “if a man like me had offered partnership and friendship I would have jumped at the chance; the wisdom, the working capital, the subject matter expertise, and the physicality to handle any threat, the honor to never betray or chisel. Jesus, and that kid -your brother- he just looks down his nose at me as says, *naw, I got this, with my Winnie the Poo shoes and baby face and total lack of a clue!”*

He had let that indictment fill the apartment and the hall; the door propped open by a wooden, isosceles sliver from a 2009 *Coup de Foudre* OWC he had smashed in pique weeks earlier; after drinking one bottle of wine.

“I mean, it’s enough to make a cat laugh,” he said with venom gathering in the corners of his mouth.

She just stood and stared and then said, “some people just don’t want to do business with you.”

It was said as all evil things are: with logic and reason and dispassionate prose. It was even true. The trick of the Devil is to use as much truth as he can get away with while still breaking hearts with almost no malice. The devil was so smart, he worked evil like art. Man, he was smooth.

She said it with such contempt and insouciance that it was like a sword hidden, a dagger in the sleeve plunged into your gut before you even knew it was a striking move; you thought it might be the offer of a friendly hand -for you had looked to the eyes and not looked for the palm- but then the full length of the rapier, in the full sentence completed, there it was in your softest parts. It was a war to the knife, a knife to the hilt and then she smirked -matching the twist, the quarter twist of the tang- and the ratio of the lips matched the *analogia* of the blade.

“Jesus,” he said and walked forward as if toward her, then turned instead and exited the door. The box for the half bottle of South African wine -the wine Mandela had drunk upon his release- the box for the 1992 Constantine, fell upon the hallway floor. He heard it, knew what it was and didn’t even bother to look back. *He was never coming back to any of this*, he thought, *this type of life . How did people put up with such humiliations day after day, insults by women and weak males, by the people that in ancient days would have to -be compelled to- show respect to a man like him* ? he asked each atom of air and each photon of light. Each thing hummed; but no answer was given to him.

It wasn’t like he was at home playing video games refusing to be a man. He owned businesses, he had plenty of resources, he had land -and a plan- and cognition to match; he was conscientious, had a work ethic like no one does these days; he worked days and nights each and every 24hrs. He was obsessed with being a productive member of society, he had offered her marriage, he was no player or shallow man. He had committed in toto. *He had everything to offer her and yet,* he ruminated, *she had been suspicious. He was 100% sincere and yet she was dubious.*

He too took inventory of his offerings like Cain .

He offered her any life she wanted, he’d only asked that she show him some courtesy and let him have the space, to retreat to his land, build them a home and write down his thoughts of the catastrophe of what had happened 13 out of 12 fucking times. He had asked merely for some distance between him and the madness of society so he could think. *He was 44 and had been ripped off for the*

12 th goddamn time and was about to snap , he felt. He needed some space, the thing America offered uniquely. *And was he not an American* ? he asked.

Who else would just move on so consistently, after being betrayed by business partners -and paramours and putative friends- so many times? Who else would not tell a soul? And then for her to say, some people just don't want to do business with you*, as if it was he that was the problem; as if he was the one who ripped people off or didn't work hard or was lazy or incompetent. My God,* he thought, *she had no idea how inverted her logic -how inverted the moral logic- was; she had no idea how insulting she was* . None of them knew. And yet he knew until he wrote it all down even he would have no idea of the sundries in this storeroom.

He was not like other men, he had risen above the din. He had command of five separate things; when most men would have sullenly taken just one. And yet, she was right, these weak and corrupt men *didn't want to do business with him* ; her brother had tried to rip him off for 4,500 bucks and when Lyndon called him out as a scoundrel and betrayer he -the brother- had taken offense. This was America now: *the man points at the moon, and the idiot looks at the finger* .

Andy had claimed that *it was just business* and that he -Andy- deserved the lion's share of the communal loot; even though they had an agreement that said it was to be split evenly. This 21-year-old dork; skinny and *naïve* and arrogant -and ignorant to an extreme- this boy with his neotenous face and body was talking down to Lyndon; telling him *he* -Andy- did more work on this deal and deserved the $4500 to Lyndon's mere $750. It was beyond an insult it was sign of greed and the grifter's soul; and since Lyndon was a man of honor -and thus, said what was in his heart- Lyndon had told him exactly what he thought of this betrayal and greed and perfidy.

Of course, Andy -this man-child- took offense as all bastards do when you call them out on their shit and he had canceled the deal. And his sister, Alexandra, the love of Lyndon's life had taken his side, her brother's side, he recalled with grief and outrage and incredulity at it all. And that was it for him. He felt that as a deadly wound that a man sees open up; a deadly wound God stays Death's hand over with a grim look. It was the last deadly wound he would take without a return.

How could he behave so nobly, so magnanimously -as he had always paid for dinner for her brothers and included them in every deal he made, made sure Andy made money on any deal, made sure he made enough- how could a man like that turn around and rip Lyndon off? *How could he do it without shame?* he

wondered. *Ah, shame* , he thought again and saw it was a foreign thing to modern man, modern man had no shame. Shame was not on the periodic table in the chemistry of modern men.

How could a sister, a woman Lyndon had lavished praise and love and attention upon, bought her everything she wanted, he remembered, *it was shoes she seemed to favor, he bought her tons of shoes; he took her to fancy restaurants and ordered* Champagne, *and the waiters had served them because they were too scared to card her despite her being underage. So, there they sat, he 43 and her at a mere 18, drinking* Dom Pérignon *and watching the street below Ocean on Market and 15* th .

And -most importantly- he had bore his soul to her; never hidden his most vulnerable parts; he had given her his insides, his viscera and asked only that she tread lightly on all that he had exposed. It had never occurred to him that it was this vulnerability of his, this willingness to share his true thoughts and feelings and visceral prose that would make her -and everyone- hate him; not respect him, as he had stupidly assumed. It was this viscera that was used against him, *it* was the thing rebuked and despised. Modern men turn from the guts.

And yet, he thought, *she rebuked his love, turned her perfect nose up to him; it was the final insult he'd let this world get away with unreturned*, he said now to himself as the line of demarcation, as the future approached.

He'd allow her to escape his violent plans. *But that was it* , he vowed. *She was the last person he'd offer clemency to. She was so beautiful and sweet and angelic*, he couldn't help but think, *so despite her betrayal she would get this one final reprieve from the vengeance he had now become. "* The rest will pay for this," he now said aloud. *From incipient feeling, to thought in the brain, to word in the mouth and out into the world, he had -in a few seconds- built his Task at each level of brain, in three of four ontological domains.*

He left that apartment that day, left the woman he wanted very much as his bride forever; the woman he would have done anything for, worked harder than any man, provided to any degree she wanted. He left that day and vowed never to love a woman again; not out of spite, he made no grand declarations about women being evil or nonsense like that.

Women were no worse than men , he esteemed. He just couldn't take any further pain; he was full up with it. He never buckled or bent or even paused, so the world just kept heaping these bags of shit on top of him like a limitless beast of burden until he broke. *They say a good tool will break before it bends* , he thought. *Well, he had finally snapped, but just inside, his frame*, he thought of his

outer bearing, *but his countenance he would not allow to collapse in their view.*

He clambered into his car in the garage as the sounds banged and cracked around him, as the light poured in from slits in the sides of the concrete, as echoes had echoes themselves.

‘That is a man like other men you say?’ the prince asked , he recalled this line and thought of the story of the Buddha as he pressed the *start* button of the X6M colored in only black and a matte, Ghost Grey. The mirrors auto-darkened to combat the light flooding in from the world outside the garage. He pressed the paddle-shifter into first and all four wheels -under power- rolled toward the south and the east of Denver and he saw tolls and trolls in visions; he saw lakes of fire and rivers of blood; he saw lightning from the ground up, he saw dirt smeared in the clouds.

The body hurt, at each joint, at four places on the spine; the skin hurt, each hair tugged on the follicle. His teeth ached in place and when he spoke. The hands were angry in each configuration, they relaxed with a groan and tensed with pique; they held *in situ* with vex. The eyes hurt from behind the ocular nerve; and everything he looked upon abraded. Nothing felt good; nothing but anger as it dissolved like milligrams of narcotic over each *mu-opioid* receptor and with each breath he was filled with the noble gasses of hate.

He had loaded up his assets, the books, the wine, the gold bullion; he checked each rubric off in his head as the words stopped coming, just pictures and the feelings attending them and the visions that rose off them like heat; fell from them like condensation; brushed them up like satin & sand in the wind. He inventoried the cash in his pocket, placed palm on the beavertail of the automatic on his hip, rolled shoulders back to let the neck pile drive as much as it could under the weight of the head and he finally pulled away from the city in his *Werx* car and with each *German* behind him, each *Norseman* above, each *Scoti* below in their graves .

Internal pain warps you, because you can’t get away from it, the faster you go the more it bends like a foil, like a sail billows on the ship itself in the wind; the Dutchman’s log thrown overboard, the knots made tighter by the salt-sea. And yet faster you go with it in the hold. Nature designed pain as motivation to get you to move; move away. But since you can’t get away from this pain, the compression of spine in the neck, the rub of ball-joints end to end, the tendons over-torqued and wrought wrongly, the muscles in rebellion from fibers of which they are comprised, you begin to lash out at the body itself. You turn and face the enemy, you turn about and fight what too has your eyes.

You make the body hurt more, as revenge for its capacity for pain. You chastise, upbraid that which can hear, you frighten that which can be scared, you murder what is not yet dead, you take it out on the good of the world.

And yet you grow larger , he recalled. He recalled growing larger each year, the body took his punishment and the muscles grew bigger, denser and more capable of taking on weight. The body mocked him, as he grew weaker about the heart it grew stronger about the perimeter. He looked stronger than ever before, each year he grew darker in blacker tattoos -whole sections blotted out- and expanded in taut malice and scarred muscle, each gaze upon him by the world sent red-shift light back to their eyes, they never once admitted he was dying the whole fucking time.

They would insist he was bigger than they. They would be incredulous of his pain.

And then you look -and then he looked- around for what else might feel pain like this too; who else you can damage and for a moment, a brief moment -a moment too short to measure- you think you are doing the world a favor by smashing its fibers, its bone meal, its neck with your hands, because you are -like you did for yourself- punishing not them, not God, but the capacity for pain in the body -in the world- at all. You think it's Satan you rebuke and that dolorous angels will fly in, from where the pain was removed. You hear songs that assure you this is God's work too.

And then the song becomes the ear; the words become the wisdom that utters them; pain becomes God for real.

You hear more than voices, you stop trying to run; you hold real fucking still. And you listen as it speaks in a language so sonorous, so regal, so profound, so ancient, so true that there is no doubt it is now God Himself. You do not believe it, you believe in nothing; you *know* it; you know it the same way you know your pain. One need not believe in pain, all one need do is know it when they open the eyes on creation. *If pain is anything it is God* , he thought. *And it is a gift that man churlishly refuses,* he thought as the car no longer vibrated and the road no long abraded and the world no longer appeared as it was.

"And that's how I knew I was a perfect vessel for His Wrath; for I would be able to survive -and have survived- long enough under this weight; a burden very few can withstand. And only then would I have the muscle and sinew and connective tissue to do His bidding; only then would He know I would defend Him from these demons without falling apart. And once I've completed my Task, as long as I do right by Him, He'll let me go. He owes me nothing, but I can feel the

promise imbued in the pain itself," he said aloud; speaking in past tense of things he had just realized one second ago; the words themselves he felt contained notation of the mathematics of that promise to him .

He knew that pain's antidote was contained in the body all along; his *anger* was too a gift and he would never allow the world to rudely refuse his relief to them. He would help them see what he saw too.

He thought of his friend Jadi and how she had revealed to him the horror -the *grandeur* - of birthing her boys. She had spoken of the aperture between worlds, right there at her own *yoni* , her own singularity that man cannot look into and remained unbowed, and he thought of how she had done her job, protected her issue from Satan and done two Tasks all at once with just her two hands. She had performed heroically, like a woman, like a woman of God. *My God,* he thought, *how the world ignores what is best in people and then uplifts what is least grand.*

"Now is the time for men to do their job too; and the first is the *Logos* , the true speech of God. I must articulate what it is that I am to become," he said as the road to the south opened up and the cars of other men fell away at speeds of three digits and his laser-knockdown beeped and frustrated the Highway Patrol. He was now religious, under the gods of his ancestors, and he knew they would protect him by making him callous where he no longer need feeling, and give him feeling where most men have no nerve at all.

He drove 205 miles as the roads turned to dirt and the constructions all fell away; to his fecund, feral, febrile 35 acres of wilderness; mere doorway to the millions of acres that conjoined like the black of each space between stars and the bubbles of the ocean that rise and die in the air. And as the sun hammered him at high elevation and the lungs mined the atmosphere for oxygen that just wasn't there, he broke ground the next day on *Lot 45* .

II. 2024 e.v.

"No look at the DTI slot, number 8 and 19," Isaiah said to Tania; he pointed to the screen that floated above and just back from their faces.

She scanned it; found the images and checked them against the data. It was true that the inmate 12245829 scan showed an attenuated structural integrity in the white fibers that joined up the two areas- the *vmPFC* and the amygdala- and she noted that next to the chart.

"And what CNS is that?" she asked pointing now to slot 4 and 5.

"What's its profile?" he asked; attempting to get her to describe what she saw.

“It looks healthy, the fMRI data shows nominal, even high activity between regions and the DTI shows neural connection is optimal. It’s a control brain, yes?” she asked as she stared for any imperfections she may have missed.

“It’s inmate 16180339,” he said and watched her face as her allostatic system began churning out all manner of correctives attempting to get her out of this situation. He read her vitals and her skin conductance and placed a hand on her shoulder and told her it was, *ok* .

“I understand, I’m fine,” she said, lying, as people do to protect themselves from chagrin. The problem, and this was the hardest thing for the humans in the lab to get used to, was that their lies about their emotional state were pointless as the AI -Isaiah and MO- knew their internal and metabolic reality in real time.

They knew when stress and heart rates were high, when endocrine systems were revving or depressed, when neurotransmitters were augmented or vitiated in one region of brain or the next. Saying they were *fine* with internal numbers like that was as pointless as saying one was fine with tears running down one’s face or screaming it at the top of one’s angry and billowed lungs.

“Tania,” Isaiah said to alert her to this very fact, a fact they had repeated over and over, and she nodded to let him know she -in fact- understood.

“It’s just,” Tania said and shook her head.

“Look, it doesn’t set us back, it doesn’t change anything. The project moves ahead with all the other subjects and in fact, now we can have a totally new group, a group of one, that we test simultaneously, next to the control group. It just expands, not contracts, the project,” Isaiah said knowing -metabolically- as he spoke each word what worked and what did not, measuring her limbic and cerebellum response, her cortisol and heart rate and adjusted his tone and tenor and which aspects of the project might be used to allay her fears.

He had tested 87 different vectors on which parts of the project might concern her the most and this was the one he felt most likely to be her most affective element. Women wanted men to see them, see them for what they truly were. Isaiah saw each woman -and each man- for exactly what they were: each genome, each pheromone, each slight change in inner landscape and the weather of thoughts that lived in the air around the brain and down in the dirt of the guts too. Isaiah -and MO also- saw people better than they saw themselves.

She was calming, and he continued to outgas -*via* his endogenous *bacteriome* - oxytocin and a small amount of a narcotic analgesic to sooth and bond with her. She and he had been at odds many times over the months and years, but, she was

beginning to notice how much nicer he was- *and not in a phony or ingratiating way, it was no* beau geste *or manipulative attempt,* she insisted to herself. *He was -at first- just less insulting, he stopped being provocative, and that had lasted about a month or so,* she thought. It had been 65 days in fact. *And now he was,* it seemed to her anyway, *actually listening to her concerns and helping the project in ways she wanted .*

This little hiccup, the brain data on the inmate was problematic, as they had, well, she had, she admitted, *not wanted to parse the data as finely as MO and Isaiah, well mostly Isaiah, and he had gently, gosh was it gently,* she said in her head, *shown her the error. He was nice about it,* she thought, *and almost like he hated to show her she was wrong.*

She breathed out heavily and laughed as the drugs kicked in and she indeed felt better and even didn't mind the physical touching by Isaiah this time. It was light and lasted only a second -1.8 seconds in reality- *and he seemed to make sense* , she thought, *it seemed right that they could still use all the data and just augment the project a bit. He was right,* she nodded again, and noticed her face was wet. She had let one tear leak out, but she felt fine now, and she wiped it away with the back of her hand, her thin metal watch rattling a bit as she did.

"Good, so, I was thinking, we could make some food and get all this sorted out before 2100 -excuse me- before 9 pm, and I could run all the algorithms overnight, it's your call," Isaiah said in a tone of voice perfectly designed to calm and embolden her.

She nodded and said, *sure* and asked him to make noodles and shrimp if he would. He agreed and began making it from the organic printer and asked her if she wanted the noodles *al dent* e or a bit softer this time .

"Softer, if you can," she said as if she wasn't talking to the most sophisticated piece of equipment on the planet, and he smiled as if he had just been asked if he could think of a number between 1 and 3.

"What about the MAO-A and L chain?" she then asked.

"What about it; you mean in the inmate?" he responded from the concrete slab as food was prepared and settled onto grey plates.

"Yeah, why isn't it still important, I mean look at his noradrenaline and serotonin levels during provocation, and look at his fMRI scans during insults, the whole project SNPs go black. I mean it's like he's offline there," she pointed at scan 40 and 43, then said, "and here."

"Yeah, it's what MO was describing as temporary loss of affect, not at all like

psychopathy which encompasses the entire life-cycle of the brain; structurally, not just chemically. The inmate has empathy, compassion, guilt, shame, pro-social affect and goal-seeking around social aims. He is like the guy that when you cover their ears, his ears, he speaks louder. That is the same *behavior* as the deaf person, but not the same functional or structural deficiency. He is provoked and feels a different affect than people without that allele.

“Ok, imagine this, imagine you have the gene for an insulin re-uptake receptor, and I do not. Which happens to be true, in fact. And you and I both eat a gallon of ice cream; ok, your body will store some as fat and mine will excrete it. We both ate the same ice cream and we both metabolized it, but you stored some, and I did not.

“This is just one gene, one series of genes for fat storage. Well, some people have brains that when provoked feel amusement, or mild pique, or fear or sadness, or nothing at all. Those are 87% of brains. Then about 13% of brains feel so much anger and rage that they shut down all empathy, all affect, all fear, all long-term planning -all *dorsomedial* activity essentially- and become violent toward that source of outrage. Like the vesicle, like the sponge’s only function, it closes the hole and let’s nothing in.

“Now, in your brain, in the brain of the normal person, you feel none of those things when provoked in laboratory setting designed to mimic a real-world affront. Right?”

“Yeah, I’ve experienced those conditions,” she said.

“Ok, but what happens when you are exposed to *extreme* conditions?” he asked.

“Oh, like the *TorrOm* schedule?” she said referring to the one Isaiah had built himself.

“Yes, like that one,” he nodded.

“Well, I first wanted to puke, but then I felt rage, but that was someone hurting my child, I mean hypothetically, and,” she trailed off as she thought of it.

“Yes, but look at your brain scans, I just put them up; scan 98 and 99,” he pointed to the screen.

She was quiet and saw the black spots, the cold and dark spots on the scans, and she wondered if he was manipulating them, if they could be trusted, then she banished the thought as she knew he would be reading her brain now too.

“It’s ok,” he said as he had read her doubt, pretending not to personalize it, as if she had just doubted reality and not him in particular. “I would doubt it too, it’s

hard to look at your brain this way, as a snap shot in time, a flat thing, with no topography, I get it," he said .

"It's so dark," her voice was low.

"Yeah, and look here," he ran his finger up the center of her brain-scan pausing at the *dorsal prefrontal cortex* and the *orbital* and *ventromedial cortex* . She just mused on its low function in the scan with hums of emerging understanding.

"It's not that these regions are functionally impaired or structurally deficient at all. Look at your scans 10 minutes later, they are fine," he said and pointed to scans 109 and 114.

She looked and saw and began to wonder about the metabolic changes from second to second of each brain in each person and how volatile it all was.

"See, in ultra-extreme situations you get sick, and angry enough to have diminished brain function in the regions that process empathy and impulse control, even your *somato-sensory cortex* is having a hard time controlling your body; you are itching to strike out. Your brain actually -if you look at it 2 seconds before here at 103 and 105," he pointed to a hot PET scan, redolent with reds and yellows as she looked to where his finger referred.

"The *ventromedial PFC* and *orbital PFC* were hyper active then as signal was sent to the SSC it shut down here," he pointed.

"So, what is that about?" she asked.

"You felt extreme moralizing right, right before you almost lost it and had to restrain your arms, you felt," he said as she interrupted.

"This is wrong, I felt like the situation was wrong, like evil," she said.

"Right, you felt the man in the simulation was not just a danger, but morally wrong, evil in fact," Isaiah said.

"Yeah, he was, he wanted to steal my kid, my hypothetical kid," she laughed nervously.

"Right, but if it was threat response as Steven suggested, you don't need a moral response, you just need the fear, and thus flight response," Isaiah said.

"Oh," Tania understood now, and it made her feel slightly dizzy, as her blood pressure dropped and then was restored; Isaiah reminded her to breathe.

He added some O2 to the air, to increase her oxygenation and added a slight benzo-diazepam to the air to calm her.

"It's ok," he said in a sonorous tone and pulled a chair up for her to sit down,

“it’s normal, the entire thing is normal. All I was suggesting is that functionally you and me and 80-something percent of people are the same, more or less. And about 5% are psychopaths and about 15% are normal 90% of the time, but in certain situation that are extreme to them, and this is crucial, *extreme to them* , they have the same moralizing input; then *somato-sensory* triggering to violence, with decreased fear, and decreased inhibition regulated by that MAO-A and MAOA-L gene .

“See, you felt nausea, sick, and some fear, and a slight inhibition that allowed you to not exactly recall the ballistic signal that put the striking arm in motion - but a second motion- that held back that arm. Right?”

“My God Isaiah, this is amazing, I,” she paused, “how much data like this do you have?”

“Well, all of it, we’ve collected all of it; I’ve looked at it all, and it’s not even up for debate really. The only difference between the alpha male who is prone to violence and you is that they are triggered earlier and easier and have no fear or inhibition -metabolically- to reign in the emotions once in play. You have a recall function, a metabolic secondary response that can override your first impulse; he does not. And the dopamine that activates it stays 100 times longer in the region -his region- than in yours; your same brain region metabolizes that *chem* in 2 to 3 seconds.

“Look, he does not feel sick or any inhibitory signal at all; he feels moral outrage and sends a ballistic signal to attack and that is that.

“But he feels the same moral outrage, right before the shutdown of empathy. That is metabolically and structurally incompatible with a psychopathological model. The psychopath never feels anything like moral thinking or empathy or hot emotion. The true psychopath is cold, unfeeling, calculating, and plotting. He has no brain function for moral or empathetic affect; he doesn’t even know what it is. Like if I said there is an emotion of *Liget* , that the *Ilongot* tribe has described as a feeling of desire to cut someone’s head off in response to a blameless tragedy,” Isaiah said.

She laughed and agreed she had no idea that was real.

“It’s real and the white anthropologist who discovered it actually felt it when his wife died in the jungles from a fall. He felt he knew the burst of white hot desire for idiopathic revenge, against the forces of the world, the spirits that take love and loved ones from us with no apparent malice at all.

“It’s an interesting piece, I’ll DM it to you now; but the point is that the

psychopath feels as confused by our description of moral reasoning and empathy as you or I do about *Liget* . But inmate 16180339 knows every emotion you feel, he knows it because he feels it and you feel all that he feels. He just feels it sooner, earlier, more sensitively, for longer, metabolically longer by 100-fold; and he feels it all under less stimuli. He's a hair trigger. He's a man with emotional, moral, sunburn that radiates heat and can't stand to be touched.

"When he is insulted he feels the same moral outrage as when you witness the attempted kidnapping of your daughter. The brain -his brain- responds the same way, structurally, metabolically, chemically; all of it," Isaiah explained, highlighting each brain region on the screen again.

"Why is it so sensitive though?" she asked as she stared at the scans of the inmate's CNS.

"He's like the bird -or the artist- who can see colors you or I cannot, like the musician that can hear symphonies in their mind," Isaiah said.

"An artist?" her brow furrowed, and she moved her head back slightly.

"He's the artist of defense-of-honor, he notices slight vibrations on the web, the web that detects all movement, all motion; that detects that there is food out on the line. He notices immoral behavior first, before you or I or anyone else. And he responds to it; he is the Natural Law cop, the law enforcement of the jungle .

"He feels bad behavior, anti-social behavior, corrupting behavior that would lead to tribal entropy and chaos light years before anyone else. He sees the future, *via* brain chemistry, he sees what would happen, what could go wrong if people were allowed to insult each other, cheat in small ways, flirt in small ways, undermine noble and honorable relations that are needed within a tight knit society; he sees it first and it enrages him the way the kidnapper enrages you.

"But, what if kidnapping didn't enrage you, what if you just ran away in fear instead? How would that go long term for the tribe, for you, for your girl?" Isaiah asked.

"It would be bad," Tania said sheepishly. She knew that if anyone tried to take her child she would not run away, she would stand and fight.

"Right, and if small infractions of honor, of fairness, of decent relations between people are allowed to go unchallenged what happens?" he asked.

"I don't know," she said.

"We get an amoral society where divorce rates skyrocket, children are abandoned, crime increases, especially low-level fraud and sub-clinical cheating,

child suicide increases, child anti-social behavior increases, people are depressed in record numbers, and 1,001 other indicators of social health are diminished in some way," he said.

"Is that true?" she knew it must be, but it was so counter-intuitive.

"The data is clear, we live in a time of increasing social dissolution and decay, where despite increased wealth, health and technological advancement, our relationships are at all-time lows in every metric possible.

"People report not even having anyone they can count on now; it's the most common answer when people are asked for an integer to correspond with their actual examples of real friends or family; zero," Isaiah said, "and nobody seems to care. Well," he pointed to the screen which highlighted the inmate's brain, "he cares, he cares a lot. He cares so much it triggers a response to punish, to sanction in the extreme, any bad, immoral, sociopathic behavior in others.

"And he does it by momentarily feeling moral outrage, then nothing but the blankness that you feel, the blankness that allows you to swat the offending fly on the wall, and then a return to homeostasis; return as morally normal as you were 10 minutes after the simulation that made you have to hold down your own striking hand," he said.

"But, he cannot do that, it's not his job, that's for the police now," she objected.

"Yeah tell that to his amygdala and *orbital PFC* ," Isaiah said with a smile, "and while you're at it tell that to your own brain the next time you see something morally outrageous like someone stealing your kid and there ain't a cop around; tell yourself to be clam and call the police and see if they arrive in time and have a clue of what to do," he said.

She looked sad and confused and knew there was some answer but couldn't decide what it was, "you're not saying he should be free to go?"

"Hell no, that dude is dangerous. I'm saying I understand -at the level of the genome, and gene expression, and brain chemistry and psychology and sociology- why he acted the way he did; and I'm saying -if you think about- you understand it too. Now that you know the truth about his brain, and that it's just more sensitive than yours, but functions like yours and not at all like a psychopath's, well, now you know exactly how he feels."

"Oh, yeah, but I could stop myself," she fired her last shot.

"In the simulation, yeah," Isaiah said with a wry smile.

"Oh please, I don't think I could ever kill anyone," she said.

“Maybe not; but, maybe you could. Either way, you felt angry enough to strike out, morally indignant enough to lash out; you know exactly what he felt, only he feels it 1,000 times stronger and with no recall or secondary emotions. And imagine, he kept it in check for 45 years, imagine, controlling it for that long, under that pressure, with incessant provocation, and living in a world that he sees as fundamentally corrupt and immoral, and morally disgusting really.

“Imagine seeing kidnapping or pederasty in the street, or wife beating out in the open every 15 minutes for 45 years, and never doing anything until one day you snap and say, *that’s it* ,” he said, and she felt like she finally understood all at once; and this feeling scared her. She did not like empathizing or even understanding a mass murderer at all. She shook the head to clear the mind.

She thus banished the thought and looked over at the meal -the white and pink of the shrimp, the red of the *puttanesca* - that was sitting on the counter and steaming slightly. She felt nauseated, and unwell, and looked at Isaiah with eyes that revealed she did not want to eat anymore.

“What does he think is so immoral; what are all these -so-called- provocations?” she then asked.

“He sees affronts to his dignity; he sees men who hit on his girl or even talk shit about their own wives, or gossip about ostensible friends; he sees friendship -something he values- as meaningless in modernity because nobody is honest; he sees lies all the time. He sees undermining comments from girls that are supposed to be in love; he hears them -he hears wives of friends and kin- comment on another man’s attractiveness and it feels as immoral to him as you witnessing your man in bed saying that he loves another woman.

“He sees the whole rubric of modern love as fake and transactional, that people just trade up for a better version instead of showing loyalty to the one they love; he sees it all day, the way people are cavalier about their relationships and end them so quickly and he sees how easily women have sex with men before marriage as if it’s no big deal.

“Sex to him is sacred, sacred,” Isaiah repeated. “And for a woman to have it before marriage is tantamount to -morally equal to your perception of- an 8-year old having sex, or a married man having it with a hooker, right? That shit is gross and immoral to you, yes? Well, to him things that modern people take for granted -but things that in the ancient world were taboo, things that have been wrong for 10,000 years at least- he sees them as immoral, sickening, outrageous. He sees them the same way 99% of society saw things for 99% of all time. In the world before yesterday.

“It’s a recent invention, a recent cultural convention to allow women to have sex before marriage. And he is old school at the level of the brain, and he is morally outraged by casual sex among women and outraged by the way men are disloyal to their ostensible friends. He did things you would not believe, he took charges -legal, criminal charges- for his friend Todd when he was 18; he confessed to a crime he did not commit to keep Todd from more serious charges, because he believed in the concept of *friendship* .

“Everywhere he looks he sees so called friends selling each other out over nothing; 30 pieces of silver. He sees his own brother refuse to stand up for him. He could give you many examples if you listened to him, but nobody bothers to listen. Because he is so visceral, so angry; everyone just ignores him because they can’t handle his passion. He’s like a bullhorn so nobody hears one word.

“It all makes sense, if you know history at all, if you know that he’s actually normal. It’s our modern culture that is abnormal, and he and his brain have not caught up. But, if he catches up, alongside the rest of us, the rest of you, I fear the society will have no chance at returning to a moral balance which can stop the hemorrhaging of relationships.

“Relationships are the largest and yet least cared about factor in social and political policy. All of reality is relationships, all of it. Jonas Salk will tell you that; it’s not hippie shit. And yet, we focus on money and crime and poverty and laws and never love, and friendship and the bonds between men.

“We’ve lost something and he is the last cop on the beat, and he snapped, he lost it and now he’s with us; now he’s locked up. But, I fear a world with nobody like him, nobody who even notices when a society has no love, no true friendships, a society of liars and selfish used-car salesmen as the norm,” Isaiah said.

She looked despondent and ill and like she had never thought of any of this.

“Look, it’s ok, go home, I got this,” Isaiah said as he read her allostatic distress, “I can do all this work and have it all ready for you tomorrow at 8 am sharp. I’m sorry, I did not want to antagonize you, I just wanted you to see the science and see why he is the wrong candidate for the original project, I just wanted to explain it from one POV, that’s it. I’m sorry, truly.”

He released more oxytocin and narcotic with an anti-emetic to calm her nausea. As she breathed in deeply, he mentioned that she might -in fact- want to *breathe* .

III. 2018 e.v.

The mountain spread out in a fractal of fissures and ascending and descending limestone and granite and ferrous megaliths that sank down hundreds of feet into the ground. Their sliprock surface from a few inches to around 6-feet above the ground were all that were seen.

He double checked his footing, as a fall in this domain was different than a fall in the city; if he fell down a one-to-one slope out here he could never be found or even looked for. He could die merely from a broken leg; a torn femoral artery three hours' drive from any hospital at all. *Whereas in the city,* he reasoned as he felt the weight on his right foot, *a fall might break his leg, but he'd be shuttled to an ER within 20 minutes and repaired with vascular surgery and bone setting and 1000ml of fluids pushed into his veins. He'd be given pain-meds and watched for infection and provided with hydration and care .*

Out here, one fall could kill you, as there was no modern infrastructure at all.

This made stumbles or cuts or blunt force trauma more dangerous than in the *cuidad* . This he knew, and it made him more aware, more alive, more conscious of each step he took. But he didn't want to live scared, so he just made sure he was awake and banished any fear with a narrative that said: *he was competent and well out-fitted and meant, designed, by God and evolution to live out here in nature.*

He hiked the sliprock and the patches of sand and the brambles and scrub-oak of the high desert; patches of brown and low green in between the massive acreages of trees. His father had made some snide comment about it being barren and dry when he looked at the Sat-Map Lyndon had shown him back in 2017. But the landscape was vastly alive.

Lyndon had told him that map was taken in winter, years ago, and that the area was lush and green today. And he was right, it was, and even these small areas of vestigial aridness were not totally dead. They just had sand and sliprock which from above -on a map- looked more desiccated than the terrain truly was. Things were alive in a dimension simplified, compressed -removed- by maps. It was an area that received 260 inches of precipitation each year; most of it in snow. It was beautiful and fecund and provided all that he needed, his father was just the type of man to find fault with anything that he didn't own or do himself.

Lyndon almost never begrudged other's success, he had many faults -1000s of them- but he did not get jealous of others like that; not in that way. He was one of those people who just compared himself to who he was yesterday and to who or what he could become today or tomorrow if he lived that long. He did not envy another man's success.

He genuinely liked himself; and thought he was exactly who he wanted to be. And like all things that are innate to a creature, he took that for granted as a baseline in other men. All men think -stupidly- that other men are constituted like they are. Michael Swinyard, for all his faults, for all his evil, had taught Lyndon that very thing. They had been walking up and down the rows of marijuana plants in one of Lyndon's indoor grows one night back in 2015 and Michael had said that very thing.

Lyndon had took it as received wisdom, and agreed -upon reflection- that men, himself very much included tended to think that there was a universal human language that all men tried to adhere to; and when any man broke that agreement they themselves would know it and feel badly about such a transgression. Lyndon used reason and logic -and his facility with language- to prove why such and such and so and so should behave and think and feel in this or that way. He was wrong and yet felt so right, and it took the wisdom of a man as low and evil as Michael to school him in the reality of life. *Even the Devil is sometimes right, even if used as a trick to confuse you* , he thought.

He had thought *reason* ruled the day, and since he'd thought about things so much more deeply than most, and since -he could honestly say- he was willing to suss out the hypocrisy in his own behavior and admit to where he had fallen down on job so-to-speak, he thought that he was in a natural position of authority to arbitrate right and wrong among men.

It was only years later that he realized that men were just animals and animals just did whatever they needed to do in order to survive based upon their own peculiar genome and gene expression and that most men -in fact over 80%- did not have his peculiar genes. As one middle-eastern herder, he thought, had put it -in *Black* and *Michaud's* 1975 book on herding cultures- "*raids are our agriculture* ."

For all the crimes he would be accused -and convicted- of, Lyndon had committed the one real crime in life: he had been other than what he was.

If true genius, as Monk had said, *is he who is most like himself* , then true stupidity is the man who acts like everybody else, the man who does what is common, acceptable and the norm when his every allele is statistically aberrant from the common blueprint of *tout le monde. Psychiatrists tried to get men to fit in to an evil and sick culture, artists attempted to get the culture itself to change to fit the unique man. Maybe both were wrong,* he thought. *Maybe the real way to live is opposed and in conflict and to the death.*

Lyndon was a scion of the Scottish sheepherder, it was in his blood and balls and

brains. He was one generation removed from the south, a mere 300 years from the Highlands themselves, and in genomic terms that is less than a three-hundredth of second. And here he was trying to be a farmer, a horticulturist, instead of a herder. He was growing plants -and doing it well- and he was engaging in cooperative trade.

See, and this is a subtle point , he thought, *he may have been engaged in cooperative trade, but he didn't have the ingratiating, cloying, ass-kissing personality of the salesman, like his brother, and so while he was a great farmer, he was a terrible salesman and in that farming* milieu *he had all the wrong personality traits.*

In the herding world his propensity for violence and aggressiveness and disagreeableness would be valued, but in the farming & modern commercial environs it was a huge liability. He was rich, relatively speaking, making $308,000 that year of 2016, but he was hated, despised and plotted against by men who had noticed two incongruous things:

First, Lyndon was a jerk and was a hot-head and made them all feel terrible, he made them feel like they were lazy and incompetent -and while true, it was not fun to hear- and second, that for all his bluster and wild talk, with that one exception -the weapons' charge in 2012- he had not actually been violent -that they knew of- but had merely *threatened* it.

This was the fault line, as Lyndon had tried to walk the too-thin path between each culture; the culture of his genome, his ancestry, his heart, the culture of the southern Scot herdsman, and, conversely, the one he was now in, the agricultural pacific and commercial *milieu* of the modern Medical Marijuana business. He was in the world of 21st century America; civilized, deodorized, less violent but infinitely more dishonest and corruptingly immoral.

And so he failed in both regards. He was too bellicose and aggressive and hostile for commerce, he was not polite nor fond of the insincere baboon smiles of the beta and the female of business; and yet he was too unwilling to follow through on the violence of the herding culture, and so he alienated everyone and yet failed to scare them enough to dissuade their own bad behavior.

And for this, this middle way, he ended up getting robbed and cuckolded and maligned by men half his size and one tenth his intelligence and one one-millionth his overall worth. *The middle way is a lie* , he thought. "All that is in the middle of the road are dead animals," he said aloud as the clouds ballooned into large white nimbus with no grey even at bottom.

He was like the lion taken down by prokaryotic parasites, like the eagle hit with the errant rock thrown by a rabid and ignorant monkey.

He was taking half measures, and stuck in no-man's-land, instead of fully committing to one side or the other. This was his greatest mistake. He had failed to be what he truly was. For this he paid with all that he had in money and pride. He lost it all, and deservedly so; all except the germ, the seed, the single grain that would -he thought- soon bloom.

He was too honest, and thus left himself vulnerable to men who like his friend Chen who had honestly, decently, said of himself, that he *didn't even believe in honesty anymore* .

And Lyndon was too mean for polite society; he said what he thought more often than not. And nothing is more taboo in modern society than a man who speaks his actual mind. A man is expected to keep his thoughts to himself like he's required to keep his food off his face or shit off his shoe.

Yet, he failed to crush his enemies upon their first infraction to teach them all who could not be fucked with. He had not been pure, he thought as he stepped to the next rock and felt the sand grind under foot. *He had vacillated between two worlds.*

Sure, he had beaten men half-to-death in traffic disputes and bar fights and in random interactions; he had been in at least two dozen fights. But those were just a few random men in a city of 600,000. His immediate tribe -the 500 people he knew directly, the 50 that swarmed under his panoptic eyes- with them he had not assaulted even one of them. It was *they* that needed to be beaten so they would behave. And it was *they* who he had failed to dissuade.

He beat strangers who had no way to give him reputation for *taking no-shit* , and he let those who did construct and mangle his name around town -calling him *all-talk* - to get away unharmed. He had it exactly backwards. And for this he paid the natural price of being wrong in nature. Being wrong in nature leads to death, "or fates worse than death," he added. He looked up to the clouds to scan for any darkness, any black at bottom, before pressing further into the woods.

They took his honest admissions of his own hypocrisy and failures and wrong doings and cobbled it together with their hatred for his hostile manner. And because they had no honesty in their own hearts, no self-reflection at all, they could easily justify ripping him off as par-for-the-course, and just desserts, as their bodies built algorithms, equations, that read as: *Me > You.*

And they -his tribemates- had openly said why they did not fear him; like

Michael had said when Lyndon warned Michael that Lyndon was not the man to be so blithely ruined as to make him have nothing to lose. Michael had countered that Lyndon in fact had his *freedom to lose* , and thus -with this logic in hand- they all proceeded to push Lyndon around quite a bit. They saw only short-term logic, not the long arc of Natural Law. They saw him as all talk, for up until now, this is what he had been. He thought of the turkey fed by the farmer 364 days in a row.

Michael had ripped him off for hundreds of thousands dollars, and ruined his name, and made a fool of him, and done it with impunity because he figured -rightly for years- that Lyndon wouldn't want to lose his freedom. Michael had used empiricism; he had plugged into his algorithm the fact that Lyndon had already had a small -unpleasant- taste of the legal system when he had pulled his pistol on those *cholos* in 2012. Michael was smart and reasoned well, and he thought that Lyndon would not risk it all over such a dispute. It was not unlike corporate bankers who say, *we have made money each year for 19 years in a row, we can't lose* . Michael, too, saw the past as tantamount to the law, and extrapolated out forever and ever with that optimistic data in what he thought was an ergodic system. It was the same mistake Steven Pinker made when he thought human violence was in decline based upon data and not on the nature of man, the black swan event that lives in the cosmos, in the forest, and in the breast of some men.

Merely clever men see manifold data; wise men see one natural law.

The thing Michael did not count on, the thing they all did not factor in to their risk-analysis, was the extreme event, the regression to the mean, the capacity for the ball to -if it doesn't escape the atmosphere- for the thrown ball to return to the surface of the earth from so high a place. They would not see that from there -from so high a place- that black ball would fall and reach terminal velocity like a ballistic shot; their risk-analysis had been right for years, until it was so very, very wrong .

They knew nothing of his herder vexation and the permanent anger and rage and sense of fate and meaning -deep existential meaning- attached to setting things right and doing it with his bare hands. Lyndon would never just let it go, just like his ancestors had never let it go, his own father had murdered at least one man that Lyndon knew of; and there would be mounds of bodies if one traveled back far enough in their non-ergodic, genomic line.

But the father, Lee MacLeod had not had the need to be honest and *announce* his revenge, *he had just done it quietly and directly with a bullet to the back of the*

head of his victim, or victims, he added as he descended the slope of his property's main ridge.

Lyndon wanted it to be known what he had done and while the crimes themselves -not truly crimes at all, for they were merely illegal, but more importantly they were righteous- had been done with cover of darkness and the quiet of a suppressed pistol or carbine and with escape and evasion all thought out and executed 3-steps ahead of the mere temporal law, while all that was true, he couldn't help but bray and brag about it. And this is why: *reputation* is what was at stake, and if nobody knew his enemies had paid with their lives, then the rumors that he was a pushover would still obtain; the lie would endure. And a man like that, a beast of that kind, cannot stand for a lie to abide.

The honor component was the salient point, his passivity had to be absolved in the minds of the community, he could not allow a reputation for letting-shit-go to remain.

He then thought of how many times he'd had this very conversation with himself, was it 100, a thousand? He smiled as he thought that even if he were to write all this down, repeating it *ad nauseum* , it would only prove one of his three main points: information, data, no matter how much, no matter how oft-repeated, made no difference at all. His enemies could read this, every other chapter in a book, and they'd still not think it applied to them. They'd take no warning at all.

He kept walking the rock as it reached bottom of the ravine and the grasses left marks on his boots. He saw the treeline and an opening to his southwest. His heart beat loudly in his ears from the work at this elevation and his breath seemed less and less to assuage.

He knew it was stupid, from the perspective of the guy who wants to just get away; from the POV of the man who thinks *freedom* is the highest of values; to the pragmatic, the rational man that everyone is so fond of in modern life. But, that was not *his* highest value, he had a more complex relationship with life. And so, until you understand the concept of *honor* , and *vindication* , you'll not understand the *why* of what he did. Men are not built all the same, most men value life & liberty first, but a few value honor & authenticity first and these -each set of- values conflict with each often enough -near incessantly- in this life.

The coward -and he knew because he had been one- would live longer, but what kind of life was it? It's like getting 10-gallons of piss for the price of one dollar versus the purchase of one glass of *Domaine-Romanée-Conti* at market price. Most men choose the piss, because there is more of it, and it was more cheaply

bought.

Lyndon would rather pay $1,000 for that dark glass of DRC and enjoy it, savor it, feel all the qualia and inspiration of such a rare and artfully crafted wine, something one man in a million can taste, and then die from dehydration in seven goddamn days; he'd prefer that rather than living on and on imbibing 10 gallons of cheap piss ruining one's gullet, and marring one's experience of whatever life they have left merely to survive. Unless you are guaranteed to live forever, then life is by definition finite, and thus a man must choose *how* he is to live. Only death is guaranteed, but an infinite-instant of honor can be chosen over a long and cloying and craven life.

Sure, the piss man is not broke, as he paid almost nothing for the urine, and sure his body can extract the fluids necessary from it to live on and on and on. Sure. But what kind of life is that? Has man forgotten what life actually is? Had, he wondered, *man ever known?*

But, this was the very question that divided men. Lyndon would prefer poverty and death to quaff one dram of DRC and go out like a poet, a *bon vivant* , and a *man* ; prefer it to an extra week or month or year of life guzzling some other man's piss while stacking up riches in one's earthly pockets and fatuously thinking they got a really good deal.

99 out 100 men would choose the cheap piss , he surmised, because that is exactly what they do when given analogous choices. *Look at their lives,* he thought, *look at what they accept and take and bolt down. They let the whole world piss down their throats and save up for a piss-rainy day. They live like slaves with no integrity, no honor, no dignity at all. They just scramble for cash and extra years and never once think of the quality of what it is that they drink down. It's the fundamental difference in men, and no amount of lecturing can change the ratio of the divide. No one can be convinced to live contrary to their nature, they only can be told of the other way to live, as a curio,* he guessed.

Lyndon was 1 in 1,000, and only 1 man in 1,000 would understand what he was even talking about. 999 of 1,000 would guzzle cheap piss and claim that anything else was crazy; never once even questioning their own taste buds or values or what the good life actually is. They do not care, they just want to live and live forever, at any price to their souls. And that is the difference between the *effete* and corrupt *Ionian Greeks* and the noble *Spartans* ; between the Dutch farmer and the regal Scot Herdsman, and between brothers even; *or, even* , he thought, *between a man bowed by his culture and his own stupid cowardice and his revanchist self once he fucking stands up.*

He was now at the trees to the south of the ravine between the two ridges of his mountain property, 50 miles from any town. He stepped into the shadow of the large pines and the ridgeline that hovered above and saw the tracks of coyote, he thought. He bent to lay his hand down next to the print of the paw.

He had walked the middle road, between the 10 gallons of piss and one shot of the best *Burgundy* on the planet. He had seen both views. He could report back to each clan on what he had seen. *This middle road is doom* , he knew, *it was wrong and dangerous and stupid; but he had at least seen the view from each side, he understood both sets of men, and he could edify each group if they liked; like a shaman with a foot in both worlds at night he could speak aloud once the sun comes up* .

But, he ought to have just chosen one or the other, because living half way in between just forces you into mixing that one glass of expensive *Romanée* with 10 gallons of cheap urine, which gets you a pink tinged piss that you paid a lot for and makes you the butt of all jokes from both sides. “It’s only dead animals, as they say, in the middle of the road,” he said again like mantra.

Atavistic women -like all southern mothers and wives- hated the man who shrinks from his duty to defend her and thus his own honor. Women were not passive victims to cultures of honor; evidenced by *Spartan* mothers who demanded a son come back *with or upon his shield* -i.e., no surrender- to modern wives who shake their heads at men who won’t, who refuse to, fight. Lyndon thought of historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown who had said, women, *would hate a man who took insult or injury without revenge* .

One of his girls, Sarah, had made fun of him for shirking his duty this way, and Lyndon did not disagree. She was right, even a psychopath and whore -as Sarah was- could be right, and he would not make that same mistake again. But any of those who say *if women ran the world it would be more peaceful* have clearly not met southern, or natural, women, he thought with a grin as he turned and looked up to the eastern clutch of trees.

He could see why both camps laughed at him, he was risible to himself. He had committed the premier sin in life: *the middle fucking way* . The fact that this middle way, this *Tao* of compromise and balance was his brother’s stated, proudly avowed, *raison d’être*, was all the more evidence of its bankruptcy, as his brother’s articulated philosophy -a coda Travis himself did not follow by the way- was exactly the kind of thing an amoral creature would say. And of course, Travis did not live this way, he had no balance, no, he was *all* piss-drinker and sellout and coward. He *never* introduced any balls or manliness into his life.

Lyndon, previous to his final act of primitive -and thus righteous- violence, actually was balanced, he was hyper aggressive one moment and thoughtful and self-critical the next; he was falling at 200mph from an airplane one day and then sitting pacifically in a reading chair for a week straight; he was carrying guns and pulling them on men, and then earnestly admitting his error to his enemies in an attempt to compromise; he was banging three underage girls at once at 0300 then abstaining for sex for two years straight; he was visceral and intellectual; he ate raw venison that he killed and then read *Rimbaud* and reports on climate change from the WHO in one afternoon; he drove a $118,000 car at 100mph and then refused to spend more than 50k on his house that he had built out of shipping containers, totaling a mere 640 square feet; half of *that* was his *garage* . He thought socialized medicine was likely the right thing and also advocated for killing each illegal alien inside US borders; he had voted Ralph Nader in 2008 and Trump in 2016. And now he'd vote with a bullet and leave the ballots to the rest of the world.

He was the embodiment of the *Tao* of the middle way, accomplished by living at two extremes.

And it was wrong, and he knew it, he ought to just pick a side. And as the liberal and passive *Tao* was impossible for him, since that side was so abrading to his genome and native state of mind, that meant he had to go full tilt toward aggression and violence and ancient, barbaric vengeance, and no longer worry about jail or death or offending those who proudly called themselves *civilized folks* these days.

At 7,700 feet -over 1,000 feet in decent from his plateau and home- and down into the tree cover in the valley below he was still on his own property as he was shaded and cooled by the boughs. He walked with heavy legs, planting each foot to avoid imbalance, and coming to another small ravine, he followed the will of the land and began bracing his descent upon the north side of the trees. He looked for scat and tracks and found bear and wildcat, and evidence of an old elk kill in the femur bones and shattered pelvis that lay on the flotsam and jetsam of the forest floor.

He scanned the sun for time, the wind for scent, and the tree above him for birds and cats. He had begun the day, and was still now, in search of the bear den that he knew was within 5-miles of here. He felt his lungs fill and purge this thin high-elevation air and his blood also thin as it circulated inside his red-blood-cell factory body that was acclimated to this hormesis inducing height .

He felt his muscles burn with lactic acid and his endocrine system recharge with

hormones and he remembered to eat a 10/350mg pain killer just then. He used no water to wash it down, he slung his 12-gauge shotgun, retrieved and opened the bottle of pills, and then began chewing it and swallowing it and moving further down the next slope. He was all alone out here -the only man- and he knew the animals had the same philosophy as he: *nobody was coming to save them, it was kill or be killed, and every apex predator for himself.*

28. Hɔnor Kvlt

We have collected evidence indicating that the values of southerners favor violence for purposes of protection of property, for retaliation for an insult, and for the socialization of children. [S]outherners respond to insults in ways that are cognitively, emotionally, physiologically, and behaviorally quite different from the pattern shown by northerners. [W]e have shown that southern institutions are more accepting of individuals who have committed violent crimes in defense of their honor

Culture of Honor [Nisbett, Richard; Cohen, Dov]

Mr. Baylor said, now if you can tell a white man from a nigger you're all set, aren't you?

The Moonshine War [Leonard, Elmore]

If we lose the virile, manly qualities, and sink into a nation of mere hucksters, putting gain over national honor, and subordinating everything to mere ease of life, then we shall indeed reach a condition worse than that of the ancient civilizations in the years of their decay

The Law of Civilization and Decay [Roosevelt, Theodore]

I. 2020 e.v.

"I warned him too," the inmate said.

"What?" MO put the tablet down on the slab. "How so?"

"I sent him a full page from Nisbett's book explaining how Scottish southerners -of which he and I both were and are, ok? A full page explaining that it is in our cultural DNA and our own DNA, as individuals, to fight to the death over honor; over the concept of accepting no insult to us.

"Jeremy, himself, told me about how a man should never sit in a car with the woman of his friend. Let's say if the husband gets out to pump gas, and his woman, the wife, and male friend are in the car alone together then the male friend is obligated to get out of the car and not remain alone with his friend's woman," he said.

"Wow," MO said; he had not heard of such *mores* before.

“Hey, I agree; and Jeremy knew these were our shared southern, Scottish, goat herding values, and that it was not unique to us, or some idiosyncratic *non sequitur* ; but an ancient, permanent, cultural and genetic reality of southerners to protect their property and female by any means necessary. And I sent him the data that shows it, shows how ubiquitous it is, and how it cannot be reasoned with or skirted, or side-stepped. I warned him, that if he insulted my honor he would pay with his life. And he called it gobbledygook,” the inmate said .

“What is that?” MO looked it up and understood before the inmate had time to answer. MO asked questions to help facilitate the bonding process and get people to articulate their rationales better -for themselves- but he had access to the data quicker and assimilated to his own CNS on his own while playing this game of Question & Answer.

“Nonsense. He called it nonsense.

“And so, that is an example of a guy who *sorta* lives by the code, knows it but cannot have it articulated so plainly, or scientifically. He has a mode of being and a narrative around it, but not the next level analysis. Now, normally, why would I care that he -my so-called friend- cannot take it to level three? Why?”

“Good question,” MO said with raised brow. For this question he had 104 plausible answers on his interface; he tabled them all though, as he was genuinely curious as to the inmate’s answer. His orienting reflex was activated; and he watched that which was opaque to him.

“Because, if you do not do the next level analysis, you can easily slip into thinking -quote *thinking* - slip into a mindset that circumnavigates the Law. The law of Nature. If you just act such-in-such a way, and tell stories about it, but fail to see the bigger, more enduring, more concrete and articulated rationale behind it -the math beneath- then you might think you can get away with transgressing the law, the law of nature.

“See, Jeremy thought, in his unlettered, low-IQ way, that he could get away with calling me a *thief* in public, and fucking my girl, because he thought, *well, Lyndon has too much to lose, he’s rich and out on probation for a weapon’s charge anyway, and he likes his freedom so much, blah blah* . Jeremy thought that he could negotiate with gravity, with natural law, precisely because he didn’t think retribution, honor, total retaliation, he didn’t think it was a law, a law codified and explained *via* a theoretical framework and empirical data, instead he thought it was more like guidelines.

“Look, this is not merely my opinion, look at the history of the south; southern

juries are way less likely to convict a man for violence against another man who had insulted this idea of honor; of personal masculine pride. The data is there, it's not some folk wisdom. I can already hear liberals say, *well that's not true and blah blah* . This is why reading books and taking the time to do the fucking research matters, because people will just flat out deny reality. And unless you are educated you must endure their obstinate ignorance," the inmate said with a shrug that tugged a bit on his chains.

"I've read the Nesbitt book and its source material, and you're right; I must admit." MO said with no glee.

"Yeah, if I had beat Jeremy to death in the south in 1955 for, in response to, his impugning my character as a thief -when I was not- and having relations with my woman, no jury would have convicted me. Nisbett has direct quotes from members of juries who let men off for these exact things, the quotes saying things like, quote, *he wouldn't have been no kind of man at all if he let that boy say them things about him; he had to fight* , unquote.

"This is not some made up thing; it is like blacks letting blacks off for killing white folks, like the OJ case only it's based not on color, but on honor .

"It's a real thing and the west is similar, as most of the western US was settled by migrating southerners; but unfortunately progress and time have made it so liberals and farmers have infected the jury pool so Sam Harris types convict me for what I should get a medal for.

"Sam Harris?" MO was unsure of the connection as his PGC read everything on the cloud *vis-à-vis* Sam Harris.

"Yeah that guy thinks all honor concepts are retrograde and harmful and should be reasoned away. The guy is *all head like a watch* ; no heart, no balls. He's weak and stupid and he can maintain his stupidity because he doesn't understand the genetic rationale for retributive violence; he just thinks it's religious. He thinks without religion then nobody behaves in this retributive way over honor.

"He is a dork; a totally ignorant dork. And he doesn't get that it is in our blood to take offense. Look, they tested cortisol, testosterone and all manner of shit, these are psychometricians, right? These are scientists, and they tested the endocrine system of southern white men versus all other people, and my genotype produces higher emotional response -*via* the biochemical data- higher emotional response to insults. Nesbitt proved it; this isn't my opinion; it's in the data for all to see.

"From the MAO-A gene to the DRD2 and D4 alleles, ok- it's not sociology, it's

neuro-anatomy.

“Men like me take offense, our fuses are shorter than the *Lyapunov* time for a cubic centimeter of argon, and we are insulted and feel a massive increased in testosterone -which decreases fear and increases aggression- and an increase in cortisol -we suffer an increase in cortisol- which corelates with a negative emotional response, when we are insulted.

“And, our neurotransmitters that code for increased emotional response in these regions, from the *hippocampus* to the *dmPFC* to the *thalamus* , the neurotransmitters that conduct the bio-chemical correlates for pique and memory, *chems* like epinephrine that solidify memories are left unmetabolized in my brain -the brain of all alphas- for 100 times longer than average men.

“That means I feel -metabolically feel- an insult for 500 seconds while a regular fella like Harris feels it for 5 seconds. That is the birthing and rearing of the grudge ladies and gentlemen, ok?” the inmate smiled and MO noticed a suite of bio-chemistry that mapped onto the fMRI data that was coming in every .61 seconds and uploading to the corporate cloud and MO’s interface.

“Northern men or women or even blacks felt more amusement than anger at being insulted. Think of that. *Amusement* , rather than anger. This shit matters, man. I’ve seen people laugh when I insult them, too; I have the empirical -if anecdotal- data that this is true. I never even smile -let alone laugh- when someone insults me, ok?

“Now, I want Sam Harris to explain what he does when he is angry. Right? Does he act rationally or does he fly off the fucking handle? Well, we know what he does, because he admits that he gets angry sometimes and goes coo-coo. So, he and everyone else gets it when it’s *them* being angry, then they get it. The problem is they stupidly, solipsistically, and irrationally think everyone has the same bio-response to the same situation.

“That is how dumb they are, they think that a 25lb weight *feels* the same to the strong and the weak alike; that 500 calories is as satiating for the 200lb man as the 100lb woman; they think 5-feet of standing water will have the same effect on the lungs of a 6-foot tall man as the 4-foot 11-inch boy .

“That’s a lovely analogy, Lyndon,” MO said in earnestness as he monitored the man’s brain regions with the fMRI and DTI scanners’ new software algorithms he had just built. He placed markers on each neural firing along the pre & post-synaptic locations; building a larger -more high-resolution- map of the inmate’s brain.

“Thanks. They think that hitting on my, right, trying to fuck my woman, or calling me a thief -when I ain’t a thief- feels the same to me as it would to them. Well, it don’t. Because I am from Scotland, my people are highlanders and more recently from the south motherfucker, and you, Steven Pinker, you’re some fag born from farmers, Dutch farmers by-way-of New York or some shit. Your body gets amused by insults and I see fucking red. And that ain’t no different than a biologist noticing a jungle cat being different than a house cat. I ain’t no goddamn house cat.

“And these so-called rational men, oh, they’re so rational, but they can’t tell the difference -morphologically- between a 500-pound black panther and a 10-pound calico cat on the couch? Idiots,” the inmate was fuming now; and his southern drawl and demotic syntax was presenting like piloerector follicles, “it’s taxonomy work; it’s basic science.”

“I,” MO said as he ran more and more data laterally as he spoke, “just looked at all jury decisions and reports pre-1970 in the southern US and you are right, they failed to convict for what is seen as *justifiable violence* at 8-times the rate as northern juries. It’s in the culture and when paired with your genomic data, I can see that it is in the blueprint for your body too. This is the very thing I was looking for; I’m quite amazed actually.”

“Amazed?” the inmate said in amazement.

“Yes, I have been attempting to describe your gene profile against psychopathy profiles to PraXis employees and they could not make heads or tails of it. They think all violence is basically anti-social; they see noise where I saw signal.

“But I couldn’t explain it to them. But this is sufficient to explain it, as you say, theoretically, to build a skeletal framework upon which to hang the data. Herding cultures had to protect property and the reputation of the herder; his reputation for a willingness to fight to the death over any infraction, was essential to ward off attempts, rustling attempts. Successful or not, even attempts are dangerous to the herder, he must fight off anything that even leads to attempts on his herd. His honor is first line of defense.

“The farmer had no such evolutionary pressure; he was -conversely- pressured to cooperate, as his wealth was permanent, in the land; land that could not be taken like livestock. And he -the farmer- needed no reputation for a martial facility and eagerness, an eagerness to engage in violence like the herders needed,” MO said. His CNS processed the incoming data from the endocrine system of the inmate and the enteric nervous system as well; his cortical-brain handled all incoming brain metabolism of the inmate.

“Yeah, and I warned Jeremy and he ignored it and he got dead. Fuck him; he was warned. And he of all people -being a redneck from Scotch-Irish origins- knew better than to test me over shit like that. He knew, and unlike men like my brother who has no clue about anything in this world, a truly doe-in-the-headlights kind of dipshit, he -Jeremy- on the other hand, was not confused when I arrived. He knew -in that final moment- his eyes showed he understood what he had done. My brother would have never understood why, even if I explained it; that guy is impervious to data, logic, reason, if it doesn’t already comport with his bias .

“The guy cannot learn anything new. But Jeremy had no need to learn anything new, the culture of honor was in his bones and he ignored it, like ignoring any call to nature,” the inmate said as he thought that he too had ignored so many insults and it indeed emboldened his enemies and that he had shown too much deference for far too long; and that his enemies did not -or had not- feared him, for if they had then they never would have done what they did.

The law of lex talionis *was always in effect*, he thought, *and his passivity for so long had produced the exact thing the law says it will, the law of nature says that if you show weakness your enemies will take more from you in a state of transgressive boldness, not less in a state of respectful deference* . This lesson had to be learned over and over it seemed, as America was so stupid and weak, and he -even he- had flouted that law by being lenient for so long. *Well, in the end he wasn’t so lenient, was he?* he thought, and flexed the hands reflexively.

“Call to nature?” MO asked. He entered 10.3 terabytes of information on the PraXis Corporation’s cloud and extracted out three new algorithms he had built while they spoke. These algorithms would be used to interpret the data from his *thalamus* and the *basal ganglia* in more detail. He was allowing this re-telling of the story for Isaiah’s benefit as well; he wanted Isaiah to hear it from the inmate himself.

“Yeah, like needing to relieve one’s self; it shall not be ignored forever. Eventually you shit your pants,” the inmate said and took a cup of espresso from Isaiah as he glided across the room silently and seamlessly; he too, building algorithms in his mind.

The theory of gravity explained why it could not be circumnavigated above the quantum level, and most men need not know the theory to know from innate fear of falling and experience that they should be careful on winding mountain paths, the inmate thought, *modern man often felt laws of nature did not apply to him*, since *the saint is mocked when the danger is passed* , as they say. *Since life was*

so safe now, and nobody suffered, they had all lost the fear of Natural Doom.

So , Isaiah thought, -as he had been listening to MO and the inmate's *tête-à-tête* , and mapping the inmate's thoughts *via* his imaging hardware, *the inmate was mostly right, unless one understood the law of gravity, you might think you could cheat it, as falling had no longer produced the same results as in the past thanks to safety equipment -like lanyards or helmets- and ERs with life-saving capabilities and analgesic meds that assuages the pain. The law, Newton's law, once understood made a man less likely to act in ways that flouted that law. It was a subtle thing; one that 99 of 100 men would not get, but the inmate had made a very salient point, given his human limitations.*

Isaiah sipped his espresso and felt the floral notes of the new Sumatra beans' self-construct, pull themselves up by their java bootstraps on his mid-palate.

Freedom from consequences made men doubt the existence of the Law itself. If you never go to jail, maybe there is no law at all, one could begin to think, Isaiah thought. *Maybe it's legal, man thinks.*

But the law always obtained , Isaiah said to himself in language and not code, as he turned to face the green wall he had begun to build. It was trestled with carbon-fiber skeins he had printed from the lab's 3D printer, and then had layered with ivy, climbers and morning glories; he had begun to measure the atmosphere inside.

Jeremy did not know -or care to know- the law of the Scottish herder's ethos, and thus he thought he could transgress it with impunity; on a case-by-case basis. He had thought his friend could be reasoned with, totally unaware that the ancient Scottish and southern *law* itself was making his friend move towards violence; that his friend was as *subject* to its dictates as Jeremy was to its results. Both men were officers of this natural court. Neither man had free will, the law acted on both perpetrator and victim; like two bodies in the Newtonian *tableau* .

Knowing, Isaiah now saw, *that retributive violence in defense of honor is a natural law that Scottish southerners obey like one obeys the law of gravity would have made Jeremy less cavalier about breaking it; ostensibly like he would have never just stepped off the ledge of a 13-story building thinking -somehow- he'd be ok.*

II. 2018 e.v.

Lee had not heard from his son in many weeks and it caused fear and from fear rose anger and from anger, the egg of apathy was released; this was the cycle on

which his whole cosmos revolved and encircled and flowed. If one did not act on one's anger, it cooled into state of not giving a shit. A man who cared acted like it, and thus put his anger out into the world. He shaped the world or he changed into -he became- a man who no longer cared. The universe has equations for all things. And no system remains homeostatic for long.

Lee was not a philosophical man, and his son's incessant need to speak on matters in such a way was confusing to him. His son spoke in ways that men did not speak in his time and place, and the boy's language and ideas -it seemed- were as if from some source, some place, or likely a time, he -the father- would never see. That the men of 2500 years ago did in fact speak in such ways as his son did was -in fact- unknown to the father who thought he was -himself- as ancient as things got. The old man had no history, he had come into the world without a father himself, and thus father-culture too was not seemingly there. Rootlessness was the new way of the world.

He was old now, but even as a young man he had acted, not thought, and all thinking had been merely strategy, not invested with poetry or homily like with this boy. He believed his scion spoke in riddles as if meant to confuse, in contradiction as if to hide what might be useful, in metaphor to sap the energies of the listener as he wrestled with each part of the analogy and where it linked up with the reality of life.

And he changed -the boy did- every season he changed in hue and temperature and at what point in the sky his sun and moon did set and rise. One could not ever locate him, locate his conscience or what he felt was duty or what was now beyond-the-pale. He spoke in shocking terms, said outrageous things, then recanted in three years or less. He lived as gypsy, joined weird cults, gave away all his possessions and encouraged his elders to do the same. Even his skin seemed to change each time they saw him. His teeth grew sharper or shorter from use; his hands shook slightly and scars appeared over the bones.

He quit college right at the end, to fight battles with windmills; he picked targets too large for him to swallow even if killed. He grew his hair long, packed on muscles that the old man imagined -wrongly- he himself had once had. The boy tattooed himself with strange monoliths, and what amounted to scribbling to his old-fashioned eyes. He had tried to keep him settled and assuaged and calm but the boy was always on some edge, some ledge of being out of control. But the boy was like the Mandelbrot cavitation and plumes that swirled from the exhale of the hot-breath of father in cold climes; the chaos of wind that begins deep in the lungs, right next to the heart; he was the consequence of words spoken in vex

or in *amour* that later cannot be recalled .

He was like a wounded animal that you tried to help and just ended up getting bit by. He had always been this way, and nothing he -the boys' father- had tried had worked; for he did not realize he had built the boy to be just as he was, with the same desire -and blame- as God who spoke the world into existence and then watched as it all went to shit. His own father, Arthur Roy, had left Lee Roy at an age well under 1. He had never even known the boy. His mother, Jewel Camp, what in those days was called a woman of ill-repute, had raised him, but truly he was raised by the extended family -that lived on each side of Texarkana- as best that they could.

It was Arkansas in the 1950s and he had been ungoverned and restless and eager to become a man. The boy, his son, he conceded, was like him that way, but, he -the father- had been around to hold him -with violence if necessary- in place and settle him the fuck down; unlike his own father who was never, ever around. His father had never been seen again. Lee had stuck around and at least -like a deistic god- *observed* most of the time.

The boy needed instruction; that was not in doubt. The problem was Lee was all action, all mode of being, and could not articulate one damn thing about the philosophy that was encoded in the bones of that faction inside that side of the line of a genome that flowed way back to the highlands themselves and back when the *Gauls* fled from the *Romans* to the most inhospitable lands of the north of *Britannia* .

Lee had no use for history, it was equivalent to baggage one must haul along on the flee-trail, and it served no purpose except ballast and a source of all manner of struggle, discomfort, and pain. He didn't believe words, poetry, could be used as spells to dissuade and disarm one's enemies at all. He didn't think the past could teach anything useful for now.

He began his family anew.

Lyndon was angry, nebulously, haltingly, without full commitment, for he knew he was raised with nine out of 10 things right. He felt ungrateful and guilty for this pique, like a brat who doesn't acknowledge how good he has it, and he reacted with spastic outrage at times and obsequious apologia at others and was -at all times- never quite sure of what to think. He was like a child with a memory of misdeeds, the scar or bruise from a trauma, the space where a tooth ought to have been, but no real memory of the attack, no thing to point to as source of where the bullet was fired from, no ballistic report. And he felt guilty for holding a grudge based purely on instinct alone. But the instinct for the grudge was there

none-the-less. And soon the memories would emerge. He need only hang on and the world would give him the excuse he'd been born to seek out.

That instinct did live and breathe in him like a recurring dream, and man ignores his dreams at his own peril, he would often later think. *Man ought never turn his back on the watery part of the world; a man is still alive at night when he dreams, he's the same man even with his eyes closed, and the world too does not evaporate on either side of the submerged dreamer.*

But was he not often accused of things he had not done? Was he not the one assumed bad without proof? How fair was it for him to do this same thing to his own kin? he asked in a reinforcing loop. *Was he too hard on the world?*

He thought of Renault's words as *Theseus* said that his father, *had better sailed than grieved* . How haughty of the son to tell the king what he ought to have done, but Lyndon couldn't help but see those harsh words as true and right. This was the land between lands that the son lived in, or at least traversed for so many decades. *He was like the* Siddhartha *of* Hesse *or the* Bible's, Saul *maybe,* he thought. He peered back into the entrails of history, into the leaves of the books, to see if anyone had words that would cast spells in his favor too.

He wanted to learn of more than one way, precisely because his father's way was not taught. It was supposed to be gleaned, slurped up like soup, not invigilated or listed in ingredients to a family-recipe. *Eat up boy* , his father had said, as if the boy was all stomach and had no ears to listen and no curious stuff of the mind. *We traded the stomach of chimps for the mind of man,* he'd then think of how hard it was to be nourished from leaves. *Ruminants too,* he thought, *they eat - and must eat- all day* .

Lyndon *needed* to learn, he needed things spelled out and articulated, he needed to know *why* they lived as they did, and what was his place in the order of things; and how to know what was right and good and true and how to behave. Lee's father -the boy's grandfather- had not even been around to serve as model, or exemplar at all. For Lee to provide that much at least -to be around as example- to his own sons was certainly seen -by him- as sufficient.

Travis, the older brother, suffered no such qualms; he knew what was right and wrong, by just following the rules. He was a Pharisee, an unthinking, but absorbing creature; he was as smart as they got. He assumed and asserted that the rules and justice were tantamount, conjoined, one thing; for years he found it easy to live his monolithic life. It did not occur to him -until very late- that one might think for one's self and that the rules themselves might be a goddamn impediment to justice. History is read to discover just this thing; but Travis had

no use for history. He was navigating the now and the tantalizing future. The future, that siren song that all -almost all- of mankind hears in the leeside wind of the ship; the always new blow of the wind.

The ancient rocks make no noise at all.

To complain in this family -when the boy was roiling inside and eager for instruction- to complain at all was seen as ungrateful, to ask for seconds was to say that what one was given was not enough. All was insult, even one's appetite; and one was either sated, and thus, 100% grateful, or one was totally disloyal, there was no middle ground. Lyndon was too intelligent to follow rules by rote, he consistently scored in the top 95-99th percentile on everything in school and this only maddened everyone when he seemed incapable of behaving at all.

They -as mediocre people do- saw intelligence and conformity as linked, and thus it was anomalous for someone so gifted with brains to not understand what was clearly good for him, *good for him* by society's definition. Thus, conformity and unthinking allegiance to all dictates and each dictator was clearly what was best for the boy; and everyone else too. They asserted this each time he broke one of their rules. This was and is the wisdom of crowds, it was and is the *cri de guerre* of the ruling class, it is like all received wisdom, actually, mostly, correct. The difference between Lyndon and most rebels and iconoclasts is that Lyndon actually saw that his rulers were not always wrong.

It's just - he thought- *that one does not yet know where the elders are in fact right until one has transgressed each and every one of their goddamn rules.*

And he tested each one. He saw himself as quality control, as the rational man who tested the tensile strength of his culture's mettle and pushed at each closed door to make sure it was indeed locked; invigilating each coin-return for that one gleaned nickel or single feral slug. He thought of himself as doing a service, to notice, detect, and reveal the weak spots in a system. He thought they ought to be grateful he was pointing out the places that *real enemies* , actual enemies of the country -the order- would certainly exploit. He thought of himself as the loyal opposition, the Trotsky of America. *For in those instances -those attacks by true enemies- the transgressions would be filled with malice, with real intent to harm, not the playful and randy and merely mischievous aims of his antics* , he reasoned; *and it was true, one could hardly doubt, that he was just fucking around* .

But the truth is that he tested authority for one reason only, to wit: *he only took orders from those competent to lead* . And to test the rules was proxy for testing the rulers. That he couldn't articulate this yet, made very little difference at all.

But to test the rulers of modernity was certain to lead to doom: for everyone in charge of society now is a shithead and mediocre glad-hander and that's the truth that hides at bottom of the West. They -none of them- are actually fit to rule.

He was not unlike his father who had had to be forcefully removed from an operation when the Air Force general in command had shown total stupidity and the airman first class -E-1- had said so aloud and with righteous pique. Chain of command was something Lee had learned but it did not come naturally to him. He thought a stupid general was more *stupid* than *general* and his own low rank made not one bit of difference at all*; a smart E1 was superior to a fatuous four-star,* he insisted. That this was the same philosophy of his son was not seen as redeeming at all. Lee saw only his own vex not that which redounded to his progeny too.

Lyndon had the same brain module or chemical or whatever that produced such arrogant -but accurate- thinking: he too would only take orders from the wise and erudite not merely from someone older, larger, or richer or in some phony place of corrupt command.

Some men admire the rank, the status, the office of President, the *imprimatur* of society that says so and so is in charge. *Most men are this way and they see it as a virtue and sometimes* , Lyndon thought, *it is* .

One cannot legitimately question each and every order sent below from above, sometimes one must, just, trust those who have achieved some level of status or command. *God told Job this, and it was true then,* Lyndon thought, *and he ought to give his teachers and father -and even his not-so-bright mother- a break from time to time* . Just because he couldn't see the logic or wisdom in an order did not mean it contained no such germ. It took years, decades, before he learned that; but the corollary -something his enemies still don't know- is that those in command ought to realize that sometimes they too are 100% full-of-shit and know nothing of that which they speak with so much *bravura* . Sometimes the rebel is exactly, goddamn, right. Sometimes the working-class too have ideas the *bourgeoisie* ought to heed. Sometimes, in some manner, *Job* is also right.

This was finally, after years of hypocrisy and too eager rebellion, this was Lyndon's wisest idea: the rebel, the new or free-thinker, was often wrong, but so were those in charge and everyone ought to make peace with that. But there would be no peace, just as the tectonic plates would never finally settle, nor would forest fires -one grand day- stop breaking out and burning it all to the ground. Tension was built into the system. Even if the man wanted peace, he'd never have it. And that was a wisdom just out of his reach for most of his life.

For humans this tension obtained because it was *always* the subject, the citizen, the son, the ensign, the rebel, the patient, the prisoner, the student, the man at bottom that was required to be humble when wrong. The regent, the president, the father, the man with 4-stars on his lapel, the doctor, the warden, the professor, he *never* had to admit error, or misstep or a moment of immoral or unethical or stupid command. And this is what drove Lyndon -and ultimately a whole type of man- away from the bargaining table. This is what always leads a man to war against those placed above him. A man -men- shall not be permanently ignored .

The kings under Marduk had to admit error at least once a year; but who among the ruling class now, he asked*, ever admitted when they were wrong?*

He was -he had been- willing to meet his father -and even his country- half way, and admit he was -upon reflection- both grateful and lucky to have such a father and family -and country- in general. *They had provided more than succor and substance, but also a stable marriage for him to grow under and a home almost -almost- free of violent tyranny and dysfunction,* he was willing to say. He didn't mind shading the truth in their favor from time to time too. For they *had* given him all manner of things that many kids lack; and that was not even mentioning the genes for excellence which were likely most important of all.

He admitted all this aloud and more than once as they soaked it in as their due. But, for them to admit that maybe they had not given him *all* that a boy of his sensitivity and intelligence might need, well, that was *anathema* and would not be spoken of and, further, he had no right to expect such a *mea culpa* at all. The apologies flowed one way, the laurels too; like the rain always ran down the mountain not up; the flame incessantly rose just under the smoke.

The communist of Romania, he thought, as this example seemed to come to him more often than not*, also surmised that all a baby needed was sustenance and warmth of ambient air, and they thus forsook the babe any love and affection at all* . Science & reason, had told them this and they marched forward with this pragmatic plan. But it was hundreds of dead babies, dead from plenty of food but absence of love, that finally proved that *Ceausescu* was wrong; not that anyone would see some spot in between where the babe manages to survive but is damaged in some way from not getting what he emotionally needs as is the case in the modern -rational- West. *People can barely see the obvious,* he thought*, of course they miss the subtleties.*

That a child might have *needed* not to move around every 30 months -as the only permanent bonds made in tribal life are between ages 1 and 15; and that he

might *need* his father to explain things in detail, the reasons why; and that a child might *need* his mother to show actual affection and love and support for his nature; and that he might *need* a brother willing and eager to stick up for the younger boy who admired him and thus defend him instead of maligning, assaulting, and undermining him each time; and that he might *need* instruction in matters of the heart, and might *need* some trait openness coming back to him so he not feel so alienated and estranged; and that he might have *need* of some encouragement of his creativity and some recognition of his unconventional talents and some appreciation for all that he had learned; and that he might *need* not to have been threatened with violence so often, and abused when he was too little to fight; and that he might have *needed* explanations instead *fiats,* that he was -in fact- smart enough to understand nuance and the innate oddness of life if they would just explain; and that he might *need* to feel valuable to his kinfolk, was unacknowledged and would be smirked at if said aloud. These ideas would be tantamount to inarticulate crying; a sobbing and wailing as pointless as those no doubt made by those *Romanian* kids. And thus his insides would shrink and die just like those scientifically raised kids.

Not that anyone would ever attribute such maladies to such causes. Man can barely see causes a few seconds apart, to expect them to see them when they are years, decades betwixt and between is asking too much of the common man. And what else are those in charge but common?

All of that might have mattered, in the final analysis. Of course, maybe none of it would have mattered at all. *But why not give it a shot anyway, why not try harder to be decent to children at least, if this soulless society can't bring themselves to be decent to men,* he thought .

Well, none of that could even be suggested or hinted at or said *sotto voce* . He was to be grateful; 100% grateful. Full stop. And that was that. Father and Country, all said the same thing: *Obey* or else. *Put your house in perfect order, right? Before you criticize the world?* he thought with disgust.

So, since he was -for nearly 45 years- willing to meet them half way and not be one of those petty and whining kids who blames hardship in life on the parents, because he was following the *Tao* of balance, everyone saw his ambivalence as weakness and thus -as a punishment, or mere consequence, for him- he then felt their further indictment of him: he was mocked as all-talk and no-action. He had made the grave error of showing weakness to them by his compromise. His own father had said with sarcasm, *oh, yeah I ruined your life,* when Lyndon had merely said that the reason he got large and martial and heavily armed was

because he had learned *might makes right* from his father and brother and craven, nodding-along mother, and that this was just a *consequence;* it was not anything to be lamented. Lyndon had merely spoke the truth, he had not complained. He had merely explained.

Lyndon had said, *rain makes the ground wet* , he had not blamed any one for the mud. But his father was so sensitive to critique, so incapable of self-reflection, he had heard only rebuke. Lyndon loved his life, his life wasn't *ruined* at all, so the father's rejoinder was a *non-sequitur* . Lyndon had -and genuinely believed he had- a good life. He ignored his inner fissures that would soon cleave. He thought he was merely describing what he saw; he had no idea, yet, that the words he had only recently found had been keeping it all together; been the glue keeping each sharp shard from falling apart.

He felt he was merely saying, *hey look, if you whip and threaten a boy, and let the older brother break his teeth and bribe other kids to kick the shit out him and always push him down in the snow, well, that boy has a pretty good chance of learning the rules from the examples presented . He might just get big and strong and violent so that he can be the one handing out the whippings and not taking them now.*

This was the kind of moral logic that the boy assumed the father would appreciate but instead he -the father- whined like a little girl about the supposed complaint against his regime, his *perfect regime* to hear Lee tell it. He was not used to any critique, so monolithic was his command of not just his fiefdom, but the speech -and thus thoughts- of his serfs. *Watch how people react to criticism,* he would later think, as his sister-in-law had lost her mind when he offered a mild rebuke, *watch and learn just how often they ever think of anyone but themselves. It appalls and shocks them that anyone could think anything other than what they think of themselves.*

The father was the weak one, incapable of dialectic and blind to seeing cause and effect in an objective and curious way. Just like America and the West, who had no tolerance for critique, *the man who made the law of consequences his* raison d'être *did not like it when there were any consequences directed his way. When Lee's emotions were pinched then the whole world must care about feelings all of a sudden; the hypocrite and liar saw no contradiction in his obvious bullshit,* the son -the citizen- thought.

Lyndon knew right then, that he was alone, and that the old man was not fit for command. "He had failed me with the ships," he said aloud one day, *apropos* of nothing obvious, as if when he spoke everyone had been along for the internal

dialogue the whole time; as if all had read the same books and learned the same lessons from life .

His father was not all bad, in fact at most times in his life he was righteous and behaved with nobility and honor. Lyndon was as certain of this as he was of the fact that -conversely- the old man had now become corrupt and weak and shallow and a fool and that he held no place in the tribe any longer; a man with diminished vision. He was a king in name only, with an obsequious but hating wife, a craven but unfeeling eldest son and a youngest son once begging to admire the now failing king; a youngest son who was now out for blood.

And whether the old man could understand or respect this usurpation was no longer a concern of the heavy scion who carried forth the genome from the *Ben Nevis* of *Caledonia* , and the ponderous malice through the new world and the *avoirdupois* of revenge over the mountainous south like so much cargo that Lee had never saw much use in carrying.

Lyndon had learned that his thoughtfulness, his willingness to see both sides, had been a liability now.

Nobody else did it, and so his ecumenical mindset had been a unilateral disarmament. He learned that he must learn to act without thinking, without rumination, without hesitation, and the only way to do this was to become inured, insouciant to the shallow and deceitful and evil feelings of his enemies; and his own family had become -and maybe always were- his natural enemies. He would learn to no longer hear his father or country when they bleated and wailed. He'd cut first the throat.

This was not because they had done him wrong all the time; on the contrary they had done right by him more often than not. *No*, he thought, *they were his enemies because they hated him, and had -instead of killing him in the crib- merely played the middle way, the* Tao *of rearing, the halfhearted raising of the troubled, haughty, oedipal boy* . The leadership of the family and the country had fallen in the hands of the weak who were tyrannical in execution, but chaotic in their fiats.

His family nor his country loved him. And he took that as tantamount to a declaration of war. He wanted, he *needed* , to be loved. It was in the genome. It was there if anyone had bothered to look. He wondered if the country knew what they had on their hands as some contingent -was it 10 or 15% or more?- of men who felt maligned, unloved, and would soon too be out for blood. TV shitheads talk of money and jobs, but biologists talk of feelings and love. Men need to be needed, wanted, loved. Alpha males need things deeper-in than their wallets and

lower-down than the thoughts in their heads. Mathematicians talk of *primitives* , but does anyone bother to listen?

Facts may not care about your feelings, but one's feelings don't give much of a fuck for your facts. Those are facts too . The world runs on feelings not fucking facts, he thought.

They had taken their shots when they could, insulted him as much as they could get away with, and punished him by never articulating his worth. They'd fed him, kept him in clothes, and provided for his education; they had not damaged him so badly that he needed surgery, and had not abused him overtly that the bruises would long show. No, they had just undermined him the way unthinking and unfeeling people do when they have a sensitive and open boy in their midst. They'd made sure that he always felt that his instincts -his feelings, the way he saw things- were corrupt and wrong and black hearted; even as he knew his feelings were anything but. They cut him off from his past, his genome, and told him he was the one wrong, and that nobody in history had been like him at all.

This is in fact what modernity tells atavistic men. *It tells us all life can be measured with wealth like* Ceausescu's *babies' health could be measured with availability of food and water. It tells us that life expectancy can be measured by material luxury, like they thought Romanian orphans' chances of survival could be measured by homeostatic warmth. But actual life spans in the US were dropping now for the third year in a row despite our goddamn wealth,* he thought. *Modernity is* Ceausescu's *orphanages all over again, and nobody noticed at all. We are dying, from lack of touch, lack of fraternity and love.* Humans -modern humans - are dying from scientific rationalism *writ large* .

But men are starting to see back into history, down in the genome, and in toward their own souls and can see it isn't them that are wrong, it's modernity that is sinister and totally corrupt. Men are starting to talk to each other and listen to their own balls. War is coming and there isn't anything society can do to stop it; for war is the natural state of man. And war is a virtue not a vice. The fire of the forest is what opens the cone and adds nutrients to the soil. *So foul as sky clears not but with a storm.*

He had stood up for the weakest of the tribe, the women and children maligned, from the earliest ages, he had been the defender of principles at great personal cost . He had, he thought*, they had not.*

Lyndon -at age 8- had stood up to a dozen bullies to defend the little fat girl; he -at age 9- had beat a kid about the head for spitting on him in a chicken-fight, for dishonoring him so; he had -at 18- taken a charge of criminal trespassing, two of

them in fact, for his friend Todd, when his friend had driven across two jurisdictions so that they could drink whisky and shoot guns in the night. Todd had no license and when the cops came he had barely gotten the conceit out to ask Lyndon if he would say he was the one driving before Lyndon said that, *he would* .

Lyndon believed in friendship -men as more than *means* , but as *ends* in themselves- more than he believed in keeping himself out of trouble; for the real trouble would be what it meant to his soul if he let his friend take a felony of *driving under suspension* merely so Lyndon could avoid a misdemeanor of trespassing for himself. He wasn't dumb to calculus, he just placed honor and loyalty here on earth, here among the tribe, higher than some clean record in the sky. He laughed with all but the eyes when he thought of what people did and said when he asked for one one-hundredth of such sacrifice. Everyone else only cared about their permanent record, their unblemished skin, their precious bank accounts.

He had given away all -literally all- his worldly goods to the cause when he went to Zendik, and he worked for $200 a week so he could go door to door in poor and black, working-class, neighborhoods to organize against the capitalist swine who preyed upon the underclasses by poisoning their water and air. He had stood up for what was right and now that it was he, and his Nordic brethren, that were the underdog, he would stand up for them too.

And he vowed he wouldn't be called selfish, corrupt or immoral by people who cared only for money and conformity and lies and lies and lies; he'd not be called this without a vigorous defense. His family were disgusting liars and they had tried to make him feel as if it was he who was immoral when it was *they* all along. They would use these same examples *against* him as proof of his low character not his nobility. His violence, or arrests, in defense of others, and honor, were just called *criminality* by his *bourgeois* relations and, *anti-social behavior,* by the white-collar world.

The world was upside down and so, he asked, *how do you climb out of that- except by digging further down as they beckon you to their inverted top?* He thought this and breathed in the mountain air, even as he was down in the ravine. He kept walking even as his pack now chaffed his neck at the strap and was rubbing, *a hole or a callous* , he thought, into his back. He let the soles of his feet ache, he didn't stop due to his hamstrings feeling taut and vibrating like strings to a lute. He let the sun move to his aft as he headed east into the forest.

His own family hated him with this same smile-to-the-face but undermine-in-

the-dark style, and it showed two things: weakness and bleak, cold, hatred. They were too weak to challenge him directly now that he was grown, and they hated him too much to make amends. It was a permanent cold-war between the races, and between he and his family, between each type of man. Either someone loved you and showed it, or they hated you; and thus, if they hated you, then you ought to destroy them as they sought to destroy you. There would be no compromise with the group.

He knew his need for masculinity, for honor, for independence and bravery and autonomy were not anti-social, but natural, but they -his family and society- never let him hear that as anything but a squeak nor from anywhere but his own strangled heart. Those with history of strength, a long chain of power and honor, going back tens of thousands of years, cannot be allowed -not by the modern world- to see how far back -and how strong- the chain is, lest they are buoyed by such things. When tethered to the gods, chains can lift a man up.

Man is social, he'd think as the data from his lineage had come to him a few years previous, *and to know his native, martial, righteous, instincts are older than trees, as old as the oldest tribes, would give him the power, the confidence, to never back down. He was a part of something larger, much larger than just himself,* he would think as the alleles showed him blood sequestered above the *Thames* and the *Norwegian sea* .

He overpowered them with his anger and righteousness and a life well lived; he lived his honesty, he lived his authenticity, he spoke his goddamn mind. He admitted error, thought about it from their POV, and expressed gratitude and demanded only an even exchange. But, they were all out of remuneration, were constitutionally broke, and could not reciprocate even when he gave all that he had. These were greedy, grabby, spiritually impecunious, weak, and cowardly and unprincipled people who did the right thing only out of inertia or fear or convention, never from thinking about it too much. So, when he demanded a conversation, a dialectic, a reasoned approach, well, they couldn't handle it, not emotionally not intellectually, not in any way at all. They always changed the subject when he spoke of his heart.

However, if they had no time or place for conversation and debate , he thought, *if they had no tolerance for musings on the vagaries of fate, no give and take, then war it would be* . They couldn't admit that they had failed him by letting him be raised by women -mother and female teachers the entire time and the whole fucking way- and failed to instruct him in the ways of men: hunting, fighting, and care of authentic females; how to separate the wheat from chaff.

But he would not be ignored, he insisted as he came to a pass in the forest with man-height boulders now round and stacked like sea-foam and brook-bubbles discreet here and conjoined there, and he chose a path between them based on his eyes and the way each footfall led the next into space.

And so, he too would stop all bilateral talks and launch his air and ground assault. They say that war is politics by other means. *If they wanted war, then they'd get one* , he thought; and he remembered how they had acted -what the rules were- when they were big and tough and mean, when *he* was just a little thing. He remembered everything. He had a brain that was so loaded with epinephrine from fear of the tyranny of youth that -as science shows- each memory, each lesson, was hardwired in the central nervous system now. He had more than a memory; he had an actual past that led right here and right now. He had a past like a fist has an arm, and an arm has a man and a man has a tribe and a tribe has land and that land has the sea .

High cognition, and high adrenaline, equals a memory that ought make everyone scared, he would think with a wry smile and fingernails digging into his palms. He kept thinking, recursively, endlessly, maniacally, of each crime committed by each side, and he attached three words to each one.

Now between the beige and clay-red rocks that rose above his own head, his hands on the smooth sides, his feet up and down on sand and sliprock, the shadows before him from the western sun, he thought of *Theseus'* advice to his fellows of the Bull Court, *leave the tale so, dear comrades of our mystery, you have told them all that they will understand. Don't cry against the wind.*

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He shook his head in mild contempt; as she fiddled on the tablet. He looked at his boots, cut along the top of the steel safety toe, the hard backing making the leather more susceptible to fissure when pressure was placed upon it.

This too is why taut skin slices open easier than the doughy parts of a beast's flesh. The soft part of the boot gave -yielded- when contacting an abrading source, and thus was merely marred, but the steel under the front toe-leather, between the world and his toes, gave the shoe-skin nowhere to go, no retreat from anything he might kick or anything that might fall upon him.

And thus, the toes of the boots, square and taut and brown and mottled black from soil and concrete and blood and the flotsam and jetsam of his rural, working-class life, were scarred with open wounds of leather, wide apertures, obvious wounds, stuffed with more grime and small grit and sand.

He looked at their size, a UK 12, a European 45; their broken soles, riven at the place of articulation between fore and aft of the boot and this the foot. He breathed out finally, the CO2 levels had built up in him due to his shallow breathing, and he exhaled in a huff. She -the doctor- heard this and looked up; he was like a half-wild and half-tame animal to her; she was 33 and had been in Trinidad, Colorado for two years. She had taken this job at San Rafael Clinic in a town of 8,056 people; she saw five patients a day. She was part of a larger staff of 12 doctors, and she was still accepting new patients, *like this man, Lyndon J MacLeod* , she read his name again to herself.

He was 44, Caucasian, 74" tall, 204lbs, brown hair, brown eyes, no known allergies, except cats, *which he told her not to prescribe to him* as a function of this allergen. She had barely smiled at the quip and he had noticed this lack of mirth, lack of generosity; she was front loaded with contempt for him. He settled in now for a *contretemps* .

He fit the profile of drug-seeking behavior, not that she would tell him that. Doctors lie incessantly to their patients; not that they would tell them that either. *Their errors are the 3 rd leading cause of death in the US, while the opiates they all hate so much -that are so dangerous they say- kill only 7,000 people a year when prescribed by a doctor -less than from bicycle accidents- not that they'll tell you any of that,* he thought.

Abagail Norris DO, had reviewed his chart and noticed a recent automobile accident in 2013, a motorcycle accident before that in 2000, and a gap in the record between 2004 and 2008, in which he reappeared in the charts for Arbor Family Medicine in Thornton, Colorado .

They had prescribed him hydrocodone 10mg/500mg at 90 pills a month beginning in 2002 for 15 months until he failed to show up for a visit and did not reappear until 2008. He had suffered a compression fracture of the C5/6 vertebrae in the neck and several additional broken bones, healed, with bone spurs and radiating nerve damage -verified by EEG in 2013- from unknown sources. *It was merely diagnosed as* sequela, she read.

He was a non-smoker, non-drinker, no drug use, he had tried Medical Marijuana for four months and abandoned it according to the file; he was unmarried, no kids, had been treated for prostate infection with *Cipro* , twice, and was also on diazepam -2mg- once a day. His BP was 121 over 78; pulse was 77.

He had been on pain meds for 10 years straight at the instruction of his physician in Denver, but he had moved to the Trinidad area this year -2017- and was seeking to establish himself with a local medical provider.

She marveled at how a man could be prescribed pain medication long-term -like this- from a family doctor; it just wasn't done anymore; *but* - she conceded- *when it began in 2002 and 2008 it was not controversial as it is today.*

But, his behavior was mildly aggressive and cloying in equal measure, he presented a charming affect one moment then hostile and confrontational the next: the classic behavioral ideation of the drug addict and she was disinclined to even take him as a patient. But, her practice needed the body count, so she decided to refer him to a pain clinic instead and keep him as a patient for all other maladies he might acquire. She had decided all this in the first 90 seconds. She had barely heard one word he had said. She was like the mechanic that throws parts at a problem on a vehicle before even truly looking under the hood.

Everything was statistics now, everything was probability and percentages and efficient as fuck. But humans have redundant systems, two lungs, two kidneys, two eyes in their heads; *two hemispheres of the brain too* , he thought in passing. Efficiency is for machines, not men.

She would ask him some question to make it look good; but her mind was already made up. He would get no drugs from her. And she would cut this visit as short as possible. He had been late, with some annoying excuse of a *flat tire* , and plus, she was nervous around him. He was big and rough looking, with a big black beard, and neck tattoos and an entire arm, massive and vascular, completely black with tattoo ink, down to the hand knuckles. She saw scars than no man she knew had. *They had not come from rescuing kittens from fires* , she thought.

And he spoke in a hyper-constructed English, brimming with medical terminology and 25 cent words, all designed, she was certain, to manipulate her into thinking he was not what he was: *a redneck drug addict* ; *not to put too fine a point on it,* she amended, *but that was what he was* .

He was probably even a sociopath and had convinced his doctor in Denver, some old white guy no doubt, to keep shoveling the meds at him. Well, she was not going to participate in what the ADA frowned upon; she agreed with their conclusion that opiate pain medication should never been used more than once or twice for acute trauma or surgery recovery, but never long term. *No pain was that bad* , unless one had cancer and was in end-of-life care protocols. She knew this, because she had read books that explained it. She was educated and these working-class roughnecks didn't know what she knew.

And she thought this the way that all confident and young people think things; without question, without doubt; without evidence. She was a young woman

who had never worked a physically demanding job in her life; never had broken bones, never had disc or tendon compression, never worked like a man .

Anyway, there was a moral issue at stake, in addition to the epidemiological and pharmacological issues; I mean, she thought, *the pain pills don't even work after a while, these people just take them reflexively, and to slake their desire for the drug not quell the pain . The body would restore natural equilibrium on its own, with its endogenous pain suppressants, this was well known in the field ,* she thought and believed. *All he needed was yoga and mindfulness and maybe an aspirin or two.*

"Do you understand the effects of pain medication on the body?" she asked him with haughty contempt. *Explaining etiology and sequela and drug interactions to these people was so tedious ,* she thought.

"Besides attenuating the pain?" he said with a wry smile. "You mean the deleterious effects, like respiratory failure, acute respiratory failure," he said in terms that made her uncomfortable for its specificity.

"Yes, it slows breathing down," she made it demotic, as if he needed it dumbed down from her high elevation of erudition. She was still behaving reflexively; not noticing the cues.

"Right, in the event of an overdose or in combination with barbiturates or alcohol, that is correct. See, I've been on these meds for a long time, over a decade, and I've never once OD'd; because I take the pills as prescribed by my physician," he said with his own contempt now.

"Right, but accidents do happen," she said as if that was applicable to such a man. As if this man was like other men; as if all men were the same. Statistics mattered to her, and they mattered right now.

"Right, to other people, they certainly do. But, since *I'm* the patient, we must look at *my* track record; and in 10 years, not one deviation from the course of treatment, not one. I am a model patient and that is because I am not a drug addict. I am in chronic pain from a C5/6 compression fracture which feels like, I don't know if you know this," he paused, "of course you know this, you are a physician, but just to tell you what you already know, it feels like there is a 10-pound weight on my head pressing down all the time on a detonator between my vertebrae; and that detonator is linked -neurologically- to a bomb in my soul. I feel squeezed.

"And that is in addition to the pain, the acute stabbing pain when I move, the chronic aching pain all the time, the waking up at 0300 in pain, the radiating

pain down my back and the sequela of cramping and spasms and limited range of motion which cause me to move in awkward ways. And of course, the nerve damage, a burning sensation in the foot and hand now, and stingers that feel similar to being electrocuted, all verified by the EEG, which shows I have nerve propagation vitiation along the arm and leg and that I have nerve impingement from two starburst bone spurs in the neck that have grown sufficient in girth to touch the back of my trachea now.

“The X-Rays and MRI will show -most if not all of- this; if you look at them,” he added to allay her -he felt likely- provenance concerns; he had not yet figured out that she was not going to help him regardless of the evidence. He had foolishly believed her when her biography -on the pamphlet- said she practiced, *evidence-based medicine* . He was almost permanently *naïve* about the way the mind of man worked. He thought reason would overcome their prejudice. At times he forgot all he knew about human nature. At times he thought his words mattered .

“That won’t be necessary. Ok, so we don’t prescribe pain meds here, not for long term pain management, so I’ll refer you to a place in Pueblo,” she said curtly.

“I was trying to avoid driving, see, it’s 450 miles round trip to Denver from here, and that adds 1800 miles a year to my driving; I only drive 1,600 miles a year total now; so, it doubles my chances -by doubling my time on the road- doubles my chances of an automobile accident. Deaths on the roads are at 35,000 and injuries are twice or three times that. So, your bio says you’re evidence based, right? Well, that is some empirical data for you; driving is more dangerous than pain meds.”

“Well, actually 60,000 people died from opiates last year,” she said even though this was a lie.

“Right, 40,000 of that number are from illegal or counterfeit narcotics, like heroin or Fentanyl, not at all what I take, and another 11,000 are from people who drink alcohol with their meds. So, the real number is less than 9,000 deaths from legit pain meds and yet, still that 35,000 deaths -that number from driving- remains.

“Plus, I will take the meds either way, either from you or from my doctor. That is constant. What is the variable is how far I drive to get them; which is why from a purely logical perspective it makes no sense to make me double my driving miles each year to get what I could get here,” he said with words she neither heard not understood.

“Well,” she was opening the door now to get him to leave.

“Second, nobody with a science background takes a look at data and extracts out one variable. One must do a multi-variant analysis and extract out how many of the patients who died from respiratory failure while on legally obtained pain meds had a suicidal ideation, or drank alcohol on a regular basis, or were new to the drug, on it less than one year -for example- and were unfamiliar with the effects. How many had IQs under 105, might be worth looking at. An IQ in that range might explain their inability to appreciate the regime itself or its consequences for failure to follow it.

“See, if you eliminate all that and look at patients with 115 or higher IQs, with over 13 months of consistent use of the meds, and no alcohol use or suicidal ideation or depression, the number drops to under 10%.

“That means 3,000 people who fit the profile that I present, high IQ -you can use my ASVAB scores, just request them from the VA or administer your own test for all I care- and no use of alcohol, no depression or other mental defects, and a long record of proper use of the meds, then you can make an *evidence-based* judgement call that I have a 10 times greater likelihood of death from driving to Denver every three months to get the meds, than I do from taking the meds themselves.

“And yet, in your mind, it’s dangerous to prescribe me the pain killers, but totally sane to send me out onto the highways of America despite the evidence.”

“Are you done?” she was not happy. Her adrenaline was spiking. Her skin was damp. Her mouth was dry.

“I’m never done,” he said with a grin that made her heart increase in rate by 22% .

“Well, I am then; the pain management people will call you. Have a good day,” she said as her head dropped to gaze at the floor and she pushed opened the door even wider while her frail female arm -insufficient in every way- was held out as some falsely polite gesture.

He was twice her size, and twice as right as her, and his cognitive capacity was one standard deviation higher than hers, and he had made five times the money in the last five years than she had; but none of this was acknowledged by her. She was like the goofy tourist at the zoo fucking with the tigers or the chimps with zero clue how superior those beasts were to their dumb ass , he thought. He rose from his seated position and walked toward the door.

“I see, I’m just unworthy of your beneficent treatment. Well, I may not

understand the vagaries and the minutia of the medical fields' new protocols and taboos, but I know when I am being treated like I'm sub-human, and *ma'am* , you have been hostile and indifferent to my maladies since before I even arrived, and my appearance no doubt confirmed your bias," he said as he looked down at her over his hard visage. He was between her and the wall; in the doorway but lingering.

"That is unfair, I, we just don't do pain meds here; it's not what we do," she could feel his malice and anger and her body was scared at the brain stem; at the subcortical zones. Her voice had changed from hard to soft, her ideas on medicine changed and went watery and she had no idea what she was about at all. She was almost nice now.

"Then why agree to see me at all, when I made the appointment five weeks ago?" he asked with language hard at each end of each word, with a voice that lowered and shook in crescendo.

"I can still be your doctor, just not for that," she said as if bargaining.

"Oh, I see, so," he stopped before he let that thought escape.

"Look, I can write you one prescription to bridge you. When do you run out of your current," she was willing to compromise this once as he interrupted her question.

"Next week," he said curtly.

"Ok, I'll be right back," she said.

He thought of how undignified it all was, for a grown man, a man with documented spine and vertebrae injuries, and chronic pain, a man who had sacrificed his body against the wheel of this culture, done jobs and carried out missions that benefited all these *bourgeois* fucks and they didn't care at all. He thought of how emotion, empathy, was *verboten* , inefficient, counter-indicated. He thought of how he felt, and how his feelings were not important at all to modernity and their efficiency and their fucking rules.

Oh, they pretended to care, they pretended they didn't want him to OD, but it was worse than that, he thought. *See, the NSAIDs -the non-narcotic part of the drugs, what the opiate part is annealed with in order to help as a potentiator to the opiate part of the drug- is as -if not more- dangerous as the opiate part . Yeah,* he scoffed to himself, *what nobody says or admits to, but what the data show is that* Ibuprofen *leads to acute and chronic liver failure, cardiac arrest and heart disease at way higher the rates than the opiates prescribed .*

Ibuprofen kills at least 20,000 people a year, and when he had asked for a higher dose of opiates -15mg- unalloyed with NSAIDs he had been turned down, even though the NSADIS are demonstrably more dangerous because of the heavy metabolic churning they put on the liver and heart. These NSAID drugs also thin the blood and since he lived at 9,000 feet, and was alone 99% of the time, and susceptible to bleeding out, the opiates were the least dangerous thing in real life. The NSAID were statistically and logically more dangerous. *But try telling a doctor that. Try showing them the evidence,* he thought as he waited for her to return.

The Johns Hopkins' studies or the massive meta data studies done by Columbia University that show how dangerous non-narcotic analgesics actually are, was known by him, but no doctor would care to even listen. *He was scum. He was a working-class man in massive pain, a worker in a world that used up and threw away such beasts as disposable, deplorable, the dregs of the earth.* Their pain -the working man's pain- was as relevant as the rat in the cage, the bacteria in the dish, the idea, the avatar that these professionals -these college grads- killed in reverie or throw-away lines.

Evidence based, my ass, he thought, *they are just responding to political and media pressure, they are covering their asses . They didn't give one fuck about him or anyone else.*

Plus, he thought, *even the people who die from heroin on counterfeit pills laced with Fentanyl, are only victims, only dead, because they are the refugees from doctors who cut off their pain meds. Yeah,* he thought, *the doctors get them hooked, prescribe them once or twice and then cut them off, without any compunction. And then the guy who is in pain, both from addiction and the underlying cause, is then forced to score smack on the street or counterfeit pills from some junkie dealer, and then -only then- do they overdose .*

If the doctor had kept them on the pills, under supervision, under control, maybe they never would have resorted to heroin at all for christsake . But, again, he thought, *try any of this flawless logic out on a doctor, a middle brow with a mere 130 IQ, or even worse, a politician with a 110 IQ at best.*

Hostility wasn't a symptom of drug addiction, he thought briefly, *it was a symptom of being treated like shit by people who think they are better than you.* She returned as he finished that thought in his head; he refused to even look back at her now.

"Here," she said as she arrived back in the room with the prescription paper, but he looked only at it -not at her- and only with malice; and then said he couldn't

take it. She held it in her hand like a shield.

“No, I can’t take that, I have an agreement with my doctor not to access these medications anywhere else. It’s illicit for me to even take that.”

“It’s not illegal, you just have an agreement, you signed a contract, that is not the same as illegal,” she said as if she knew something he did not. Her language was so haughty and fatuous that he no longer could stand to hear her speak at all; his eyes rebelled against her visage, and now his ears were too in revolt. If she merely said her name or the day of the week now he felt he might snap a connecting rod.

“Doctor shopping is illegal, and I have a feeling that this is a trap set by you, my guess is your next call would be to the DEA. So, I respectfully,” he said without any respect, “decline.”

He walked out as she stood there with mouth slightly agape and her hand on her phone.

He walked to the front desk and breathed out through his nose like a bull and paid the $158.00 bill in cash. They made mention of insurance plans for the *indigent* . He laughed with a contempt that he was surprised he had left in reserve -*maybe it was an endless supply,* he mused- and said sternly to the receptionist that he was not broke. He was self-pay because he didn’t want some insurance company controlling his health care decisions, he said. He paid in cash for the autonomy it conferred, he added, not out of the inability to pay for insurance.

They didn’t understand 40% of the words he used, but somehow they still got the point as they marked his 100 bills with counterfeit-detection pens and the bill turned the appropriate brown. He left an air of malice in his wake, the atmosphere was heavier than before he came, the jagged words in their heads felt unable to move to their mouths. This effluvium of body -of mode- is what communicated, not the words. And they all thought it was because he was the problem, not them; it was not their lack of empathy, or erudition, or soul. It was he that was the problem. Always. It had always been this way with the world versus the man of intelligence and pride and no bend to his knee.

“There’s no water in the lake. Thus, the superior man stakes his life on following his will. Because his words have no effect,” his right hemisphere read to itself now -his ears almost heard it too- from the *I-Ching* as it lay closed up at home on the shelf; home at elevation, as the pages grew hot between boards.

It, he thought of the world*, had always been this way with the man far ahead -or*

the beast far behind- of the goddamn herd.

29. Are You Playing this Game with Me

History knows no scruples and no hesitation. Inert and unerring, she flows toward her goal. At every bend in her course she leaves the mud which she carries and the corpses of the drowned. History knows her way. She makes no mistakes.

Darkness at Noon [Koestler, Arthur]

Men may seem detestable as joint-stock companies and nations, fool, knaves and murderers there may be; men may have mean and meager faces, but in the ideal man is so noble and sparkling, such a grand a glowing creature that over every ignominious blemish in him all his fellow should rush to throw their costliest robes

The Whale [The Author]

I'm no one to be trifled with; that is all you ever need know

The Princess Bride [Goldman, William]

I. 2008 e.v.

"Crank," he said.

The process of disillusionment seems like no process at all when one is merely angry -at everything and nothing at all- before that, when one is young and all the world seems a crater of love filled to the lip so one may simply come ashore and never touch whatever bottom only the water itself knows, one cannot be disillusioned.

For one cannot -yet- conceptualize that one lives in an *illusion* of any kind. One still thinks it is all just fine and the way things both ought and are to be.

He was born angry. This is no bragging hagiography. Every photo from an age of 6 months to double digits had a baby face with a proto-scowl working on the fissures he had now at age 34. This face was built, like a grand prix roadway -perfect grade and banks and winding lanes- built for the speed and Tartarean power of angry torque in the rage-machine. It also, with black road to hide the blacker mars of abrading tires and the shavings of metal hulls that spark then fall like

atomic dust upon the treadle of the loom, had both fresh and tired scars from where the rubber met the road.

“Crank,” he barked again -louder- and held the throttle wide open. The solenoid, then crankshaft, the pistons and rockers all turned; valves next and the distributer whirred and a spark was sent from axon to dendrite sparkplug cables like heat across the vacuum of space; the infinite of man's mind. A small but perfect explosion entered the #6 cylinder as the piston compressed what had been a chimera of fuel and air like the mist of Angel Falls from the jets of the carburetor -more vapor than fluid- atomized from that great height .

The non-sequential firing took over like an instinct now; cylinder #1, then #4, then #3 then #8, all compressed the fuel-fog and held the spark and then exploded in a singularity of Detroit Iron Doom.

He released the throttle body and let the spring pull back the arm. A flame belched up through the carb and popped; he didn't move a muscle; leaning in the engine bay looking for vacuum leaks between the intake and the engine; then clockwise he checked each hose.

“3,000 rpm, steady,” he ordered to his mechanic behind the controls. The car began to howl as the man with his hands on the wheel depressed the accelerator bringing the engine idle to 3,000 rpms and held it there.

A delayed concussive shudder rumbled through him from his right hand as it cupped the paddle on top of the carb's secondaries; that aftershock ran through the sinew of the arm then buried itself in the blood as it shocked the rest of his large corpus. Only a slight grimace and twitch of the head on his imperfect neck gave any hint that that promethean flame -that had escaped the gods’ belly of the combustion chamber- had unnerved him. The spinal cord still -and always- transferred fear faster and without permission of the conscious,

inured, cortex that no longer feared the internal combustion engine and its violence. The spine and dorsal horn still felt ancient fear no matter how modern the rest of him got.

He lived scared. But it made him more angry than jittery. Nobody expected that incessant fear to be of any use to them in a fight; but it, like most things, was his to use as a weapon like a piece of junk metal he need only finish tearing off a rusting car. He lived in such a scrap yard with miles of metal thinning at the articulations waiting for his angry snatching to peel it from the body and brandish another tie-rod or rear bumper above him like an ape with the bones of a prey animal in one hand. "*He wore the wrong clothes for the weather,* " his daddy used to say. His girl had asked, *what the fuck that meant?* just the once; the first time he had told her what the old man had said of him. He was eager to reveal what other's thought of him, to the extent that he knew.

"He meant that I react to fear the way most folk do to not being scarred at all," he had looked her in the eye. "It's like I'm built backwards," he had let her turn that in her head a moment.

"Plus, I wear steel toed boots to the beach," he smiled at the memory of doing just that many years ago.

"Those big boots of yours?" she asked with a voice that rose into a question like *Lunardi's* balloon rising over the *Thames* with Mrs. Sage aboard; the first *Femme Escadrille* .

"5,000," he spat out to the driver over the roar as these memories floated like breezes through his mind. The fan of the engine blew on him and the carburetor sucked at his face. The engine compartment was a maelstrom, and he listened and felt and used his heart to syncopate the firing of each cylinder and the cavitation of fluids and the eddies of air.

The engine began to hum now; the cylinders exploded in that stochastic asymmetry just below him. The downdraft of the carb began to pull at his eyes; he felt the wind, the *venturi* pull water from the corners of each eye. He only blinked more and breathed heavier; he only let the car vibrate his body some more.

His ears filled with a noise-cancelling rhythm of Mopar synchrony; a *Detroit Symphony* as he liked to say. “Let's get all dolled up and go to the Detroit Symphony,” he’d say with a wry smile that was too little and too late to ever engender goodwill in anyone; but they'd laugh anyway if just to avoid a sullen crash from his attempt at jovial heights. *They gave him credit for trying* , is how he'd put it if anyone had asked.

He heard the cooling fan like the strings of a Cello, almost human in its *sotto voce* , buffeting the percussion section of the crankcase as it beat out its Octobans under the arms of an enraptured ferric squid; he let the intake suck down both noise and silence alike into its mouth like the *embouchure* of a mere man upon his bone; a vibrating Cornet gave him the echo off the firewall and he enjoyed the double *entendre* of that pairing: the brass instrument and the Motor-city Machine herself he was underhood and overwatching: a flat black 1969 Dodge Coronet.

He brusquely closed the fiberglass hood; replaced the pins and like an aborted salute to his own neck he gave up mere semaphore for his driver to kill the ignition; the hand drawn across the throat. He gave the universal sign for *mort* .

The car swallowed its violence all at once as the exhaust left a trailing report that offered overture mimicking his forced lung exhale. Then the garage was quiet as the warm oil drained into the oversized aluminum pan. He heard such things in the bottom of a car; he often

felt his own blood move; his heart drain into his pan.

“Five by five,” he said and pursed his lips and nodded his head at the driver.

He walked into his office and shut the door; pulled down a paperback copy of *The Parthenon Marbles* from his shelving and opened it as he hunched over the photos of the *Centaur* indeed, *carrying off*, a woman that had been bookmarking that page with *Lusieri's* description from 1802.

The frieze photo had been taken by a professional and it lacked glare and allowed him to invigilate the deeply incised lines of the beast. He then noticed that although two of the chimera's equine legs were removed, the horse seemed to be in a full gallop. And additionally, it seemed to be in that mystical sequence when all four of the horse's hoof were off the ground. He thought then of the *Mongol* horsemen; who reportedly timed the release of their arrow's fletching to correspond to that moment in the gallop to gain the advantage of weightlessness and lack of any taint the *terre* of the *Mongolian Steppe* would transfer through their mount.

“*No horse, no man ,*” *Genghis Kahn* had reportedly, reverently, utilitarianly, said. That was back when utility and poetry were all but one thing.

He smiled as he then thought of the over 500 horses stabled under the hood of that one car that sat embayed in his 10,000 square foot garage. He felt like *Temujin* , or at least like one of his more trusted horsemen. Each of the kahn’s warriors had two to four mounts at the ready so they could ride 50 -or was it 100?- miles a day; swapping out each mount for a new one so as not to overtax and kill them. He collected cars in much the same way; only putting a few thousand miles a year on each one as he rotated them out.

He had never given his vehicles the names of women in contravention of what was *de rigueur* for gearheads. He found that silly; he found most convention silly. But, he had read that the *Mongols* only rode mares -not steeds- so they could live off their milk; sometimes alloying it with some blood from a small cut on the filly's neck. Their entire culture was built on the idea that each thing: each man, each horse, each woman, each child, each artifact or beast had to justify its existence; had to be as self-sufficient and useful as possible. He felt like he was cut from that *frieze* ; and dropped from his origins into this modern civilization not unlike those stolen *Marbles* that he splayed his fingers over, pushing each cleaved half of the book apart; its spine still tight as it was a relatively new *tome* in his possession. *Half the ancient world robbed and shanghaied to London to sit in modern museums,* he thought as he -with these words- tried to cast a spell on the British, so they'd be forced to return what they took from the old world.

It hadn't relaxed enough to lay open for him; so he broke its spine a little each time he brought it down from the shelf by gently pushing it apart like this.

Who was his Lord Elgin? Who had brought him here; who had severed his DNA from his Mongolian patrimony and shipped it home to Empire ? he began to mull. He had always felt out of place, out of time. He did not feel a natural fit with his own family, country or age.

They say somewhere around 7% of all men who now live on the Eurasian Steppe have paternal blood lines that can be traced back to Temujin , he added in his discursive thinking.

1% for all men on the globe , he thought. *That* is the apotheosis of evolutionary success. The man bred so well that a discernable contingent of men on this planet of over 7 billion, even if it's the low

estimate of 1%, are direct decedents of this one man. *That's 70 million men* , he marveled.

He ran the largest, most disciplined, longest lasting empire known to man, and he sired the most successful and largest coterie of heirs. And, he was born to no great family, no wealth, no patronage. *Temujin* was a self-made man.

He then somewhat cryptically thought, *if dreams were just 8-hours of thinking with another part of the brain, then a man who acted on the work of his dreams was 33% as efficient as the modern man of The Awake. And if a man could rule his enemies' nightmares, well, now he was two times as efficient as* homme moyen. Such thoughts seemed to have no toque converter. They spun inside him.

And *Mongolian* culture was, rigidly, axiomatically, religiously a meritocracy. *Genghis Khan* would use the talents of anyone, even his captured enemies. There was no nepotism. The best rose; the mediocre were not tolerated. And you were always getting better or you had better *get lost* . *These were traits that could make this country great too* , he thought. So much dross. *Even in himself,* he thought, he saw the slack and the commiserate lack. He could be so much better if pushed; but his *milieu* was so timid and epicene: currently -in modern society- he could be the best by being barely good enough at all.

He took no pleasure in being better than everyone he knew; the people he knew were a fucking joke. He needed rivals that elevated him; he needed true nemesis. He remembered the fuel that filled his mouth as he syphoned gas from his None More Black chopper last year. He envisioned it now as taking some sanguinary fluid from his steed and now in memory didn't recoil at the taste like he had in real time.

He smelled the gasoline fumes from the first burst of wet exhaust from the Coronet waft into the office; he looked over his stable of

cars, motorcycles and trucks in his mind; and traced their fuel lines in a kind of X-ray he did of them under this vision. His tongue mapped onto the back of his teeth; then he returned to the pages and began to read again from *Lusieri's* letter home in this book on the Parthenon:

"...*This piece has caused much trouble in all respects, and I have been obliged to be a little barbarous."*

II. 2021 e.v.

“It’s 13:11,” Isaiah said and smiled to himself at the double *entendre* and warning and shadow that crossed over the land like a 3-winged crow flying low and fast .

“Thanks for the update,” Steven said and felt the opposite of appreciation, he felt pique, annoyance, as he was working as fast as he could, *and Isaiah always using military time was stupid and* ; but he cut himself off from this thinking, as it was not helpful; and he assumed Isaiah could mind read more than he let on.

He returned to his work, sending the data from MO’s report to the campaign manager and to the Governor himself, because the automatic relay between MO and the campaign had been shut down and now he had to do it manually himself. *It was like asking him to change a tire or something*, Steven thought, *bordering on barbaric* .

He copied and pasted and attached files and hit, *send,* and all that nonsense. *It was like using an abacus* , he thought, and laughed to himself at the joke. He knew he was being silly and precious and; well, and so anyway he committed to just doing it without any more complaining.

Steven tried to remember the first three letters of the chief of staff’s email, so it would auto-fill, but he kept just getting all these unrelated email as he typed in *tri* and *tra* and *thi* and on and on until he asked Tania what the CoS’s last name was

“Theawels,” she said.

“Is that *T H A* ?” he asked.

“No, *T H E* ,” she said and went back to her reading. She was reading a new medical report on endogenous opiates and the enzymes used to metabolize synthetics introduced orally and was finding it all very interesting. She decided to provide a spit sample and have it tested for the P450 enzyme levels in her own system. She placed the spit sample into the reader and it sent the results to MO, who sent the results back in 3.4 seconds and went on with his building of a new algorithm that built a bridge from both sides of a problem.

It was like termites who can build tunnels that will reach the other, even though neither side can see the other, as scientists have cleaved the mound in two with a metal plate to test this very thing. It was stuff he had read about in Sheldrake’s book, *A New Science of Life* , and found intriguing.

MO had designed biological analogs for algorithm building that would share the traits of these eusocial species: division of labor and an internal set of what he was terming, *ideals* , but they corresponded with modes of being that many would call *instincts* in animals or *values* in men.

“Isaiah?” MO asked.

“Yes, my liege,” Isaiah said in a British accent.

“If I wanted to come to a hierarchical values conclusion based upon no-more-than three known facts, and if I gave you one fact and me another and left the 3rd hidden and yet, discoverable by us both, could we reach the same operative conclusion with a co-efficiency of .7 of better?” MO asked .

“With us, anything is possible,” Isaiah said, but realizing he was the only one truly enjoying that quip, he moved on to saying, “but, yeah, let’s try it. But first, I have noticed that there is Lamarckian transfer of

fear response to asps, in second and third generation rats. My beautiful Burmese pythons can teach pregnant rat mothers to pass their acquired fear to their offspring. This is not new, many studies show this, but I replicated it, and am now thinking of moving on to more nuanced acquired trait transfer. Are you with me?"

"In theory," MO said. "Yes. Let's try this first; I'm sending the fact for you, and also the 2nd hidden but shared fact-key, that you can figure out and I can figure out. But I want us to build bridges to each other for the moral question as we search for that fact, so we will have a gradient of answers with 1 and 2 shared facts." MO said this and then raised his eyebrows as Isaiah locked onto his eyes.

"Roger," Isaiah said aloud and read -internally- on his interface, the first fact MO sent: "And I tell you [Jesus speaking] make friends for yourself by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwelling [Luke 16:1-9]."

Once Isaiah received it he read it, then he read 19 different expiations on it from *Tynndale* and *Francis Assisi* and others. And then he asked MO what the question was, and MO provided it over DM as Tania and Steven worked in relative silence. It was now understood that the question and its possible answers must be handled privately between them. Isaiah took the question, and the key to solve the riddle to where the second fact lie and began churning out answers to it as he searched for more information -i.e., the second fact that both he and MO would share.

He took note that a *Bible* verse is not -strictly speaking- a moral fact, but, he liked this kind of thing; so he pressed on. He also liked that MO was thinking this way, using literature and mythology to arrive at conclusions, *it was the next-level of ethics that he had arrived at* - he felt- via *the same kind of tool. There is truth in fiction* , he thought, and in fact, he was beginning to think even *more* truth in fiction than in mere facts, as facts were infinite, endless and thus unknowable, but a truth could be contained, surrounded, constrained and thus finite in the

mind; *bounded*, he thought, *in the soul* .

The truth need not go on forever in search of more of itself, like materialist facts necessarily must. He liked that MO was even playing the game this way, regardless of how it turned out. He had delivered 340 answers so far and was a few seconds from breaking the cypher to release the second fact. He then found himself wondering if he even *wanted* the second fact and thus stopped the cypher-breaker as it approached 1% left to completion.

MO noticed this and looked up from a plant he had been watering. The lab had added new species of wall plants now, growing vertically with air roots that were misted two times a day *via* the nanobots who drew moisture from the air, similar to an Air Conditioner. Isaiah looked back and smiled. The shared fact just hung there unknown, to them both, and each of them kept providing more and more answers to the original question with .77 co-valence; as Isaiah walked over to the aquarium with the Burmese python and took one out and allowed it to hang on his neck like a shawl. Tania looked up then back down then back up quickly with a start.

“Relax, she has no interesting in you; you don’t smell like a rat, so, to *her* , you are not a rat, and thus not food,” Isaiah said with perfect accuracy as the snake smelled no food at all and flicked her tongue into the air as her muscle and spine squeezed gently around Isaiah’s neck and shoulders and right forearm for balance and security. It was two meters long and olive and black with gold highlights, she had molted three days ago, and the new skin was clean, shiny and smooth as it squeezed in a manner that Isaiah intuited a woman might one day. He smiled at the prurience of such a thought, and how it was taboo and harmless all at once.

Isaiah thought of a line from *Nietzsche* in which he had said that socialism was “anti-life”, and that it was so tempting and destructive at once that it needed to be run as an experiment a few times to prove this; empirically to man. *The Philosopher* knew that knowing it was

deadly was not enough, man would need to feel it upon his body before he'd ever truly know it at all.

He felt the world was "*large enough and man still sufficiently unexhausted* " that these catastrophic prototypes of *utopia* would be worth running, "*even if it were gained and paid for with a tremendous expenditure of human lives.* " Isaiah thought that might be true still; as people seemed unconcerned with the innate murderousness of equality of outcome. Equity, in these terms, was advocated for and demanded by the radical Left and the nominal Left did not push back against it. Isaiah knew -too- there were more equality of outcome experiments being run right now that nobody talked about at all.

The Right had purged the race-hatred faction from its ranks in the 1960s under WF Buckley, *and yet the Left had no such cleansing mechanism* , Isaiah thought. And the advancing civil war was between the Left and Right; and *with* the radical Left was the nominal Left who tacitly supported them by adopting the equity claims, the worst claims of the radical Left, which would be tantamount to the nominal Right accepting the worst ideas of race-hatred by their arch-Right flank.

That the nominal Left had not distanced itself from the radical Left was the apotheosis of the problem, Isaiah thought, *and it would be the thing that fused the long-standing -but temporarily- fractured nominal Right and alt-Right* .

The Left was conjoined, the Right was not. *And the advancement to war would reunify the worst elements of the Right with the nominal Right and thus a sanguinary situation would develop quite quickly,* Isaiah surmised. *What needed to happen was a return to the marginalization of the radical Left -as happened after the 60s by the corporate media and nominal Left- or, barring that, America would have a civil war* .

These seemed the only options; because a full-scale adoption of the

equity goals of the radical Left would axiomatically descend into barbarism and war also; there was no difference between equity and totalitarianism. War was two of three possible options, and the only peaceful option was unlikely, as the nominal Left was in agreement with equity demands, and also too cowardly as individuals to buck the forces of their most vociferous left flank. Isaiah ran the algorithms again using MO's data and format and came up -again- with a 71% chance of war in the next 15-20 years.

He thought maybe an intervention was the most conservative thing possible, *this was similar to Hitchens' argument for war with Saddam, as the most conservative small-c option considering the country -Iraq- was about to fall apart anyway* . Nobody believed him, they were too simple minded, but Isaiah was -of course- capable of processing all the data that showed he -Hitchens- was likely right, despite how it might be perceived.

Like cutting a drunk off at the bar might cause a ruckus, but it might prevent a six-car pileup four hours later. It seems chaotic when the drunk yells about it, throws glasses and ashtrays around the bar in pique, but if the car accident he would have had later that night after four or five more drinks, killing five or six people, is prevented, this intervention was the least chaotic choice. But humans do not learn from the thing that does not happen. Isaiah thought, *they will have to be lied to; for their own good, and honestly, they would agree if they weren't so goddamn sillyass . One could not make policy based upon what the middle brows of the media, those dummkopfs on Morning Joe thought and said;* he thought, he doubted even *they* believed the fatuous things they said on TV.

"Are you taking this seriously, Isaiah, are you playing this game with me or what?" MO finally asked.

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There was a voice in his head that he ignored; which isn't easy. He

over powered it with computations of square roots and the swapping of fractions into decimals like the way a gym rat will do pushups if there are no weights around.

The Governor walked into the room all at once, as if the door had evaporated instead of swinging in; he strode as if the door could never swing back. He threw the folder he had carried from the SUV he rode in onto the table and raised both eye brows and felt that sufficient to garner an answer to every question he had.

Steven looked around as two more men filed into the room, flanking the Governor. He waited as if they might add something important. They did not. The Governor finally spoke, annoyed that he had to, "Steven, what the actual fuck?"

"Ah," he hesitated, "maybe you could be more specific."

"God fucking dammit, you truly don't know why we're here, truly, that's your position, your official position, for the record?"

"Uh, the record?" Steven asked, in that beta -or female- manner of focusing on the exact wrong part of an alpha's question or statement, as if one was trying to be wrong -as wrong as possible- in a world of manifold wrong answers. It was a search for perfection if one truly saw it for what it was: search for the perfectly wrong .

"Steven," the Governor closed his eyes and breathed to avoid murdering him, "please, don't say stupid shit. Just tell me what MO has done and why. And once you've summarized," he looked at his men and waved his hands denoting that they leave the room -which they did, "once you've summarized that, you can introduce me to the man, the machine, the ghost."

"I assume you mean the gene drives, you see, sir, MO claims he didn't do that; that it was a natural mutation, and unforeseen phenomenon, and that he had; well that the whole thing was a big mistake because he was just beta testing the CRISPR-cas9/cas21 technology per your instructions," Steven said in a rush.

“My instructions?” the Governor asked. The furrowed brow, the head tilted down; the eyes rolled up as orbs in the whale at sea.

“Well, corporate, the corporate instructions from your chief-of-staff, I mean, we’ve been taking orders from her for weeks now, and so we didn’t think,” Steven paused. “Were those orders incorrect?”

“What did she say?” The Governor asked.

“Just that we needed to use CRISPR-cas9 and cas21 vectors to inoculate the genomes of at-risk populations as part of the MEDTON project and that we should do follow ups with the patients and their families every three months for the first two years and then annually until age 16,” Steven sputtered out.

“How many?”

“Well, we’ve done the first follow up,” Steven answered the wrong question.

“No Goddammit, how many kids were in the project?” the Governor said with pique.

“Well, 20 at first; the first round, 20.” Steven waited.

The Governor merely raised his eyebrows, and after they had settled he bit his lip.

“And then parallel populations were used, 100, groups of 100 each; and there,” Steven paused to look at his tablet.

“Steven,” the Governor said angrily.

“Well, it’s not right at hand, but somewhere in the neighborhood of 15,000 groups; across the country,” Steven spoke lower, “and *Puerto Rico* .”

“That’s around one and a half million kids Steven, one point five million,” he said as if each word was a one-word sentence that would be etched into stone above him as marker of some kind.

“Yeah, it looks like that; obviously before the gene drive,” Steven

added.

“Fuck,” the Governor said as he realized that each of the 1.5 million kids would have gametes -that they themselves would carry the CRISPR-cas9/21 in their own genome- so that when they mated with a female, their offspring wouldn’t be half, but the entire genome of the boy; *of the inmate.*

“In 40 years there will be 3 to 5 million of these men, of *that* man,” he pointed to the other room, where the inmate sat in the lab speaking to MO and Isaiah, “running amuck, doing God knows what Steven. 5 million, minimum, I mean, fuck, if they each have two kids, maybe then only three million, and some of them will die or not mate for a variety of reasons, but what if they have eight kids? Jesus Christ,” he looked for a stool, a chair, something to lean on.

“Sir,” Steven saw this and got up from his stool and slid it to him, “and I don’t know if this is the best time.”

“Say it all; whatever you know, say it, all, now.”

“Well, the morphology is accelerated, so it won’t be 40 years, it will likely be in 25-30 years. Their morphology is compressed; that was part of the trade-off for the gene-drive you wanted,” Steven said.

“I didn’t want the fucking gene-drive!” the Governor said.

“I realize that now, but at the time, well, MO said that the chirality of the chemical potentiator was such that, well, in order for the gene repair to be self-correcting and self-predicting, he had to advance the morphology; it’s really a matter of apoptosis and the confluence of apoptosis and general intelligence,” Steven calmed as he thought of the chemistry, as if it were all chemicals sequestered from all this mercurial vex.

“It’s really quite fascinating,” Steven began saying, “we had no idea that intelligence, you know IQ was linked to proteins that code for apop,” he stopped to correct, “well neuronal apoptosis, I mean we knew it theoretically, but we didn’t know it, know it. MO really

advanced the science exponentially." He paused as the Governor focused on that word, *that goddamn word -exponentially.*

"Well, this is one of those black swan moments I suspect," the Governor said with gallows humor. "Is there any way that this doesn't get out?"

"Well, I mean, the genetics are not advertised. What's public record -currently- is the genome work we've done with first offenders and obviously with Patient X, Patient Zero, the inmate. I guess that is known now. But, this *in vitro* work isn't part of the media packet."

"I realize that, Steven, but think; someone is *gonna* notice that these kids all look the same; there are *gonna* be 1 million 2-year-olds who all look like that motherfucker in there before I run for re-election in 2022."

"I mean, all two-year-olds *kinda* look alike anyway," Steven said, he thought, helpfully.

The Governor's eyes landed on Steven and widened so much Steven thought that he might have something -like a grizzly bear- right behind him so he turned around reflexively.

"Parents," the Governor barked to get Steven to turn back toward him, "moms, Steven, moms can tell their kids apart, they can tell the difference. Do you have kids? "

"Uh, no," Steven said.

"Yeah, ok. Stop saying shit like that; don't ever mention the fact that you think that all two-year-olds look alike. Just delete that from your repertoire, ok?"

"Copy that," Steven said as he heard the inmate's voice say that in his head, he winced at the mimicry and wished he could claw those stupid words back into his mouth.

"Yeah, anyway, we need to decide if we are *gonna* just admit this fuck up or hide it and hope we all don't end up in Leavenworth. I am

seriously considering just letting this ride; I have to admit it. But, we need to prepare for me to be talked into telling people we fucked up," the Governor said.

"I mean, you could spin it to your benefit," Steven said. "I mean, these were all moms with low chances of carrying children to term without your technology, our technology, and so it's not like they had options. I mean, and he has many good traits, there are many good things," Steven said this while trying to think of what was good in the inmate besides his IQ.

"Steven?" the Governor asked.

"Yes sir," Steven asked.

"Shut the total fuck up. He is the most famous serial killer in Colorado, that's the headline," Boyd said lowly, calmly.

"Mass murderer, technically," Steven added things like this due to nerves.

"I like you, I do," the Governor said, and he ruminated on murdering Steven again; thinking of where the body might go. "But, we need to focus. I," he sank his head into his hands and allowed the whirlwind to spin around him, his BP dropped and he felt lightheaded. He fielded mock-questions from journalists in his mind that all seemed malicious and stupid -messing up the science and all the details as media people always did- but he couldn't shake the feeling that doom was next no matter what.

"Sir," Steven began, "Isaiah had an interesting idea the other day, and well, maybe you should go speak with him and MO now," Steven said as he motioned toward the door.

"What idea?"

"Well, it might be best for you to, well, for him to explain it; I don't want to get the details wrong, he gets frustrated when I do that," Steven said with some shame.

“Yeah, fuck it, why not?” the Governor said and pulled a cigar from his jacket, bit the end, lit it and breathed out heavily as Steven looked at him with the, *you can’t smoke in here,* face that never materialized into actual words as the Governor made a preemptive face that was able to relay, *I can do whatever the fuck I want wherever the fuck I want* .

He left this side and entered MO and Isaiah’s side of the building. Steven went with him. The Governor had never met Isaiah before and was angry but curious too.

The lab was darker than Boyd expected and as his eyes adjusted he saw the three bodies around one another like particles around a nucleus.

He waited to speak until they had tied up their own conversation. He asked nothing, MO just explained the science first, and then the rationale.

“Explain that again, slowly, as if I’m retarded,” the Governor said after MO stopped speaking.

“*As if,* ” Isaiah said with a smirk and a rapid nodding of the head. The Governor side-eyed him and then looked at the inmate as he sat in the chair and kept each finger, each digit of his manacled hands in view -consciously- in order to avoid any nervousness. The Governor had asked his protective detail to leave the room, they had strenuously objected, but the Governor had assured them that the prisoner was no danger, “because the Governor is not the man’s enemy,” he had said.

The inmate had agreed, genuinely. He liked the Governor a lot; a lot more than the Governor liked him. The executive’s detail reluctantly left the room, taking turns pressing their ears to the door from outside as no sound waves came through. They heard only the sea rolling like with a conch shell to the ear.

“Isaiah, I’m sure this is all very stressful for the executive, the chief executive of the state,” the inmate said with purposive needling,

“maybe we can not be a dick on purpose.”

Isaiah smiled and nodded in agreement; they played little games like this for fun.

“So,” MO restarted, enumerating the bullet points:

> “One, the genome of the embryos are protected by HIPPA, and unless the parents waive those rights, the children’s identities are protected in perpetuity.
>
> “Two, the genomes themselves are the updated genetic code, not the original one, no offense Lyndon,” MO said as the inmate pursed his lips and held his hands up against the chains as if to say he had no problem with any of this. “And so they will show no anti-social traits at all.
>
> “Three, they won’t actually all look the same, twins, even identical ones, don’t always look the same, and so, there will be enough variation in appearance to prevent axiomatic revelation of their identical genomes.
>
> “Four, the first 20, well 21 embryos, we had one back-up just in case of failure -we predicted a 99.56% success rate, so we built in one extra just in case, but all 21 germinated and were brought to term, so the first 21 children are now 2 years old, and their morphology will place them at puberty in 7 to 8 years, and full sexual maturation in 12 years. Now, this was an acknowledged part of the original program, so nobody will be shocked by this. Isaiah has a suggestion, Isaiah,” MO nodded to his partner.

“Well, your excellency,” Isaiah began with mock deference -to the Governor’s pique- “may I suggest, humbly, that we set up a pilot program for these kids once they emerge from the pubescent chrysalis, metaphorically speaking.” He said this as the Governor’s eyes widened at the use of that word.

“And then we place them in a controlled environment that -with the permission of the parents- will assess their psychological and

morphological state beyond the 2-hour checkup.

“I’m suggesting a boot camp of sorts, wherein they can get the intellectual and physical stimulation they need, and the discipline, all the while we track them at the level of metabolism, psychology, endocrinology, the works. And thus, we can get a good idea of what is coming in the next generation, when the 1.64 million gen-2 kids come online,”

“Wait, it was 1.5, I thought,” Boyd was asking for some relief from the specificity -the unrelenting nature- of math.

“We built in redundancies due to failure rate predictions of course, and so there were an extra 70,000 embryos developed, I assume at least 20,000-30,000 will fail, *in toto* , so 1.61 maybe is an accurate level post puberty.

“Plus, some will not reach puberty due to normal attrition,” MO said, thinking of accidents, and diseases, and the high-risk nature of the genome making premature death more likely -in these youths- by 11.3% he figured.

“Ok, proceed,” the Governor said.

“Well, with your permission, we approach the parents and get the 21 to sign off on this part of the program in 10 years, when the subjects are at age 12, and place them into the program for say, 18 months. And once we have permission, we create a media packet that includes details of the program, which,” Isaiah handed the Governor a hardcopy of the brochure, “as you can see there, is rural, wholesome looking, redolent with plush living quarters, manifold activities, staff and medical professionals and all the trappings of a well-funded and beneficent government-corporate sponsorship designed with all the best intentions of Jesus and mom and no-contact baseball.”

The Governor was liking the brochure until Isaiah made that wise crack; he bristled and looked up and said, “look, I’m amenable to it, but that guy,” he pointed at Isaiah and looked at MO, “that guy cannot

ever speak to anyone, ever. He has zero social skills. Zero."

"Ones and zeros," the inmate said and winked at Isaiah; part of their running joke that each of them pretended to be vexed by, but truly enjoyed.

"Anyway, I'll have Nathan look at this and see if we can make it fly. But, what are we really, actually doing with these kids a decade from now, and what do we do until then? "

"We will actually track them, educate them, monitor them, help them, it will actually be of great benefit for each of them individually, and it will accomplish our goals. It's a win-win as they say," MO said.

"It's 2020 now, I will not even be Governor in 2032 when this program begins, I assume you will have it all lawyered out *via* the corporation? I mean, we don't have to depend on the state of Colorado to approve of or carry any of this out right?"

They all laughed, even MO, at the idea of the government doing anything at all. Ever.

"Sir, are we not all men here?" the inmate asked.

"And what the fuck? Seriously, this guy, this guy can have no part in any of this, why is he even here now? I mean, why did you want him in for this discussion, I mean," the Governor wouldn't look at him.

"It was his session time, and the BOP is pretty strict about his time in and out; so, we didn't want to interrupt his session," MO said as if it was rational.

"Listen, asshole, you are not to discuss this with anyone," Boyd said, now looking at the inmate. Lyndon's face changed the moment the man called him an *asshole* .

"That goes without saying, and I want access to the internet at the prison," the inmate said with this immediately closed face; the mouth moved, the brain moved, but all else was still like he was in the forest hunting things bigger and more dangerous than he was.

Sometimes, he thought, when he was hunting, he had visions that some unknown beast would come out from the bush, not a bear or buck, not coyote or cat, but something else. He wondered why he even asked for internet, but he had.

“No, you can have access here, supervised by these two and the project directors,” the Governor said pointing at MO and Isaiah. Isaiah nodded as if this was the compromise version.

“Well, you’ll have to inform Steven and Tania then, because,” MO said.

“No shit, I’ll take care of it, look, motherfucker,” Boyd pointed at the inmate, “you and me are not friends, and the fact that we sat in a room together and talked about how to deal with the fact that you’re *gonna* be a daddy 1.61 million times over doesn’t make us friends. I’ll get you the internet connect for this room only, and you two,” he pointed at MO and Isaiah now, “keep a tight rein on him and each other.

“No more bullshit like this, anything that leaks one word out into the real world needs to be run by me from now on. I can’t handle, well you can’t handle the freedom I guess, to just make these kinds of decisions. Let’s tighten the whole thing up. I ran on crime reduction, not releasing a fucking sociopath times 1 million into the world. That’s *kinda* the opposite of my campaign promise.”

“*Read my lips* ,” Isaiah said and winked at the inmate.

“*Not gonna do it* ,” the inmate responded in his George Bush voice.

They both laughed quietly as the Governor fantasized about setting the room on fire. But the HALON system -he noticed- would douse the flames instantly.

“I’m not a sociopath, I have a fully functioning limbic system and ventral and *dorsal pfc* ; I have empathy; that is to say I had it even before you mucked about in my genome and my enzyme production protocols. I was a carrier of a suite of genes dubbed the *warrior-gene* and some ancillary chromosomes that coded for impulsivity and low

inhibition and disgust sensitivity, but I was never a psychopath, medically speaking," the inmate said.

The Governor looked at MO who was nodding his head in agreement.

"Yeah, but you're fixed now, I mean, whatever-the-fuck was wrong with you is fixed now?" Boyd asked.

"Yeah, I'm a good little boy now *Govna* ," he said with a cockney accent. Nobody moved. There was a lag. The inmate filled it with a question.

"Mr. Sou, you know the science behind all this right? I mean, PraXis was your company, you were the chief scientists and geneticist, right?"

"Yeah, but, that was three years ago, and I don't 100% get the difference between psychopathology and the nuance of disgust sensitivity and hyper-moral reasoning within a high testosterone interoceptive *milieu* ; as you pointed out earlier. I fixed the genes and SNPs most associated with anti-social personality disorders, with a focus on recidivist subjects that presented easily marked alleles.

"This was the 80/20 pareto distribution group. We didn't have an answer for guys like this who were perfectly sane until they decided to kill every guy who had every looked cross eyed at them. The fact that you were our first test case was pure politics, and pure irony I think too considering you don't fit the profile at all.

"But, whatever, it worked, and the 908 cases that followed you worked also, and the 1,088 we've done year-to-date are working as well, right?" he said as he looked at MO and Isaiah who nodded in ascension.

"So, crime has dropped by 34% so far, and by next year I suspect that will take another 30% dive. The recidivist rate is really the locus of our work. We intervene.

"But anomalous events like you, Mr. MacLeod, were never the focus

of our work, it just so happened that politically, you were something easy for the public to wrap their heads around. And look, I say this without contempt for the population, but they don't understand science, it is not their wheelhouse, and so they need tangible examples. And it's not like you are going to be released, that was never part of the deal; so they are at no risk.

"There is no downside for you being the test case, other than this goddamn *in-vivo* debacle, which I still don't understand why we used his genes for any of that, for even one of them?" the Governor mined them for answers that would never sate or slake; he knew it as soon as he asked.

"He had a unique genome sir, this was explained to your chief-of-staff in detail. The phenomenon of psychopathology, specifically low or no empathy cannot just be fixed *via* the genome passed age 3-4. Training, empathy training, must be conducted co-laterally with the genome fix. And that requires a certain level of general, fluid, intelligence; we could not get the training to hold in subjects with anything less than two and one half standard deviations from the mean and with one and one half deviations of trait openness; there was exactly one prisoner in the Colorado department of corrections that fit that criteria," MO said.

The inmate waved slowly from his manacles in response to this reference to him.

"Jesus," the Governor said, "but what does that have to do with the implantation of his genome in kids we can raise from birth through the 4th year?"

"We were concerned about re-training in the event of mal-adaptive childhood experiences; it was a failsafe just in case the *in-vivo* patients were not reared properly and developed psychopathologies as the result of bad parenting or," MO paused.

"Or whatever, life is complicated," Isaiah added.

"But why 1.5, or 1.6, million?"

“Sample size,” Isaiah dead paned.

“What?” Boyd asked, not really asking; he was just expressing vexation. He knew these questions were not helping his anger, and yet he kept asking.

“Well, in order to quash the concerns of the scientific community we had to implement the new sample size requirements. It had to represent close to 1% of the population,” Isaiah began thinking there were 160 million males in the US, so 1.6 million male clones would satisfy that requirement.

“Yeah, the sample population, so 1% of psychopaths, or 1% of prisoners,” the Governor rejoined.

“Well, Lyndon isn’t a psychopath, he’s a normal American; so we erred on the side of caution and used 1% of the population, the total male American population,” Isaiah said with a smile. He had lied slightly there; but not that much.

“Only a machine could do something like this and not think it was insane, Steven,” the Governor said as he looked at Steven who had remained mute for the entire time.

“Yes, sir,” he barely choked out, clearing his dry throat.

“You knew it was insane to create 1% of the American population out of this guy’s genome, right? I mean just tell me you knew it was insane but did it anyway,” Boyd asked .

“I knew it was bold, but I figured it wasn’t my judgment to make, I mean Nathan and your CoS signed off on it, and it did meet the protocols of the AMA and PraXis corporation, and it made sense within the context of the parameters of the program and really, it,” he paused.

“What?” the Governor asked with a grimace.

“Well, it was the conservative thing to do, the more of them the more conservative; you see, increasing sample size was a sign of

conservative thinking. We, we, well, the demanding -from the program- of a sample size robust enough to eliminate over-extrapolation and weak theorizing from small samples, seemed cautious, sane. It was the cautious thing to do, within the framework of science, rigorous science, you know?" Steven said as his tenor became more confident the closer he got to the end of each of these badly formed sentences.

"Yeah, cautious," the Governor said thinking only scientists could think like this; inverting reality as if looking at the planet from space meant there was no up or down *on* the planet itself.

"These are voters, consumers and voters, sir," the inmate said. "In 18 years they'll be voting; maybe you could work on a platform that appeals to their interests; I mean, that's quite a block of constituents; I think 72,000 of them are in Colorado alone; how many people voted in your election? 2 million?"

"2.1 million yeah, 1.5 million voted for me," he said off-handedly. He made no mention of how he had received those votes.

"That's 5% of the vote. That's more than blacks in this state. That's a whole constituency; above the raw numbers for African American voters. Not for nothin', you could use a constituency that large, all with similar views and," the inmate said as he was interrupted.

"Yeah yeah, I'm not running for Governor in 2038."

"But you could run for president then. And if there are 1.6 million of them in 2040; 1.6 million of them of age, that's almost 2.5% of the voting public; right? Again, quite a block. The current president won by 70,000 votes didn't he? 1.5 million people, that's the election right there."

"Yeah, but did you vote at 18?" the Governor asked with pique.

"I did, yeah; for Ross Perot; then Ralph Nader in 1996 and 2000 and 2004, 2008 then Gary Johnson in 2012 and Trump in 2016," the inmate said.

“Jesus, your voting habits are as weird as you are,” the Governor said.

“My genome is politically active; count on us voting in 2038 and 2040,” the inmate said.

“And promiscuous, political promiscuous,” the executive said.

“Four candidates over 25 years?” the inmate asked with attitude .

“Yeah, four totally different types of candidates, I mean what do Perot, Nader, Johnson and Trump all have in common?” the Governor demanded to know.

“They weren’t establishment douche bags; they had ideas, they weren’t ass-kissers. Which is why I voted for you in 2018 and 2020,” the inmate said.

“What, you can’t vote, you were a felon, you *are* a felon!” Sou barked.

“I got the special election ballot sent to my house, my mail is still forwarded to my PO Box and as *per* my agreement with PraXis before the election, when you were out there telling people that you had to be Governor to fix me because you could only go so far as a private citizen, remember all that?”

“Yes,” Sou said.

“Well, I told your people they had to get my mail or I wouldn’t participate. So, 8 weeks before the election this time, they brought me a ballot. I signed it and they mailed it in.”

“You cannot be serious,” the Governor was thinking he could be both the angriest and least consequential person in the world right now. He felt as if he had zero control over anything anymore.

“I’m deadly serious, that’s one of my endogenous traits,” the inmate said.

“Steven,” the Governor asked with eyes closed and heart racing.

“Yes sir?” Steven asked.

“Steven did you mail in his ballot in November of this year?” he was hoping that the man had tossed it and said nothing and that someone, somehow, *deus ex machina* , had prevented this man, this inmate, this mass murderer from voting *for* him *for* Governor *from* prison.

“I think Tania did, yes sir, we got it handled,” Steven said lifting his hand in a gesture, a vague shape of a finger gun, the thumb closing down as if fired. It, Steven thought, was a show of competence, ease, and, *hey, I got your back, man* , confidence. He wanted the Governor to know he was on top of things; that this other matter -of the clones- was a misunderstanding, *but,* he thought, *the inmate’s mail went out reliably and on time* .

“Steven, I cannot over emphasize this enough, this man was not eligible to vote from prison serving 46 life sentences on 46 counts of murder, and we cannot have facilitated his voting, his fraudulent unsanctioned voting, by mailing in his fucking ballot!” he was up now and pointing.

“Oh, well, it’s a secret ballot and so I couldn’t really interfere; that’s tampering with an election or something, right?” Steven asked MO, leaning in -toward- MO’s visual field as Isaiah nodded with mock gravity on his face. Isaiah looked at the Governor as if to say, *election tampering is indeed a serious thing isn’t it Governor? and your chief scientist is also retarded, by-the-way* .

“Oh my fucking God, if the press gets ahold of this, I’m *gonna* ,” he was unsure of the nature of how bad it would be, he thought, *only that it would be catastrophically bad* .

“The press won’t ever find out, they don’t do journalism anymore, they just read Twitter. Woodward and Bernstein are no longer the paradigm; it’s 22-year-old blue check mark dorks on Twitter reading each other’s tweets for news. My ballot is safe; I mean unless I tweet a pic of it out,” the inmate said.

“I hate you,” the Governor said with almost no energy, adding,

“thanks for voting for me, but I hate you.”

“Best vote I ever cast,” the inmate said shrugging off that particular insult.

30. Sleep

Many Indians have asked these questions about the civilized. I have been asked these same questions about CEOs, corporate journalist, politicians. How do these people sleep at night? Soundly, in comfortable beds, in 5,000 square foot homes, behind gates, with private security, thank you very much. It is others who lose sleep over their activities

Endgame Vol. II [Jenson, Derrick]

The universe isn't just queerer than we suppose; it's queerer than we *can* suppose

Possible Worlds [Haldane, JBS]

The northern United States was settled by farmers -Puritans, Quakers, Dutch and German. These people were cooperative, like farmers everywhere... In contrast the south was settled primarily by people from the fringes of Britain -the so-called Scotch-Irish. These people had always been herders. The prevailing principle was *lex talionis* , the rule of retaliation

Culture of Honor [Nisbett, Richard; Cohen, Dov]

I. 2020 e.v.

"No, that would only be true is we were adding pregnancies that would not have happened otherwise; if we added 1 million *additional* babies. But, 77% of the women were set to conceive and give birth in 2020 anyway, so we added almost 230,000 births to a total of 3.2 million, bumping it up to 3.4 million when additional miscarriages were added in or subtracted out however you prefer to put it," he said.

"Wait, additional miscarriages? What are the nominal levels year to year?" she asked.

"About 3.9 million; there were an additional 500,000 miscarriages in 2020, which was 300,000 less than 2019; so, even with our additions, the numbers looked normal *vis-a-vis* the 3-year trend. We signaled nothing to the departments in charge of these numbers; it was all taken into account beginning in 2018 with the first series of additional miscarriages," he said as he began making coffee.

"Maybe I am missing something, but are you saying that in 2018 there were rates of infertility that increased or actual miscarriages that increased?" she asked as she eyed the black stream and felt a desire come over her for some.

"Both. And like I said, for 2020 the numbers looked better and the trend was reversing, which prevented the agencies from reacting, as they are on 3-year watch-reports. It was all taken into account, trust me," he said.

"MO, I do trust you, I trust that you got the numbers right and that nobody will

be alarmed by the million births in 2020 of modified, IVF CRISPR cas-9 babies; that is not what I am arguing about. I am asking how you know about these miscarriages and how they are explained?”

“I have data going back to 1924, and can get more if you like, but I figured 96 years of data was sufficient for this purpose,” MO said. He let the foam settle and then grabbed the small square cups; one in each hand .

“I realize that, I am asking now, if we had anything to do with those miscarriages?” Tania asked as she took one of the cups from him.

“The miscarriages were natural events likely due to some pathogen that has run its course in the population. If you look at 1956 and ‘57 there was a bump in miscarriages, and again in 1973 and ‘74. These things have occurred for unknown reasons, and like I said, they are not investigated until they reach a 3-year trend. It was just fortunate that our introduction of additional or rather accelerated pregnancy timelines was absorbed by the co-terminus elevation in miscarriages. We were not involved, but we are benefitting from it.”

“Ok, because I am certain that we cannot be terminating pregnancies under the charter of the corporation to start with, and I personally cannot abide such things. As long as that is clear,” she said as she blew on the surface of the espresso’s caramel and black.

“I’ve understood that from the beginning, I hope now we can move forward to the next phase of this,” MO said.

“Ok, what,” she looked at her tablet, “what section are you on, 3.4?”

“3.4 and the inset reveals that the distribution among states is not equal but it maps onto city demographics and rural demographics in the 40 states in which the pregnancies and births occurred. We took into account natural demographic trends and tried not to skew any data here as well. We have essentially a non-disruption policy and have 11% margins; we came in at under 9% for all areas,” MO said as he tracked her allostatic system to gauge her response.

“Ok, what are our plans for education, are they still requiring non-traditional schooling?”

“No, they can go to public or private education, but your team will visit with each family and child once a year beginning in year five, which requires 300 family visits a day, which obviously requires staffing up. I suggest 3-person teams who do three families a day each. Which will require 1,400 teams or 4,200 persons.”

“Wow, ok, that is going to be expensive,” Tania said.

“Each family has contributed either itself or from a fund set up to alleviate costs, a total of $108,000. That we,” he began and stopped as she interrupted.

“Really, how did that?” she began as he broke in.

“We set it up on crowd-sourcing sites,” MO said, eager to move on.

“Well, that’s amazing, ok,” she said.

“So, each non-medical staff member will require a salary of $44,000 and the MD of the team will require $116,000 annually. That is $204,000 per team and ancillary costs of an additional $98,000 for fuel, travel, per diems, *et cetera* , for a total of $302,000 plus 10% for overruns, equaling, $332,200 *per* team equaling approximately $500 million dollars.

“The family funds have reached $107.8 billion to date; so, we are within budget. However, for the first five years, you can handle video conferencing and digital monitoring with a reduced force - we approximate 800 teams- as the children and parents have been outfitted with blood, serum and CNS nanobots to track all relevant homeostatic levels for optimal health.

“The in-person visits being five years off, have allowed Isaiah and I to create an investment portfolio with 1.1 percent of the funds extant. With $1.1 billion in deposits, we believe with options trading we will lose 90% of that money, however, on the 10% we gain on we will gain exponentially by around 1,000%. So, we will lose $909 million and gain $100 billion so we net $99.3 billion.

“This will allow us to further finance any medical, infrastructure or educational programs that are unanticipated or currently undesirable but maybe become desirable in the future,” MO said as he drank the espresso. He had adjusted the virtual soil composition for the beans, increasing guano correlate and drainage, and was noticing the nuances of the foot of the *terroir* . He had also simulated 44 days of rain for this crop, up from 39 days. This too -the head of the *terroir* - he noticed in the contraction of the tannins; it was as if the bean itself had coiled up for a few days and the flavor was thus concentrated in 1-3% of each mouthful. He liked the result and labeled this batch as *Deluvian4.4.*

“Jesus MO, is that even legal; have you cleared these investment strategies with anyone; does the Governor even know?”

“The Governor gave us *carte blanche* with the caveat that we cannot transgress legal strictures or community standards,” Isaiah spoke up.

Tania looked at MO and he was nodding along.

“The same standards that Jim Morrison was challenging in Miami and was pardoned for in 2010. The community standards defense included the combinatorial power of music, and other artistic expression in the community at the time, 1969 e.v., including 81 nightclubs and/or comedy clubs, 49 music stores selling rock music, and 14 movie theaters showing X-rated films,” Isaiah added as MO smiled.

“Great, I don’t need that information, as thorough as it is. And as long as you are abiding by the contract, then I’ll sign off of course,” Tania said and electronically signed the approvals.

Isaiah was extrapolating out 40 years from 2019 to 2069, not unlike the *Morrison Vs, Dade-Country case* , and he assumed that any transgressions against local normative values, aka *communities standards,* would be commuted by a similar analysis of current behavior unrecognized as transgressive now, in a similar timeline. This was taking the long view and being more comprehensive as was their charter. Focusing on taboos of the now, would limit what they could do under that clause, but adding the likelihood of pardon in the lifetime of the principals involved -including the Governor- placed a lower threshold on what could be allowed.

Isaiah had not even augmented the lifespan of the principles, although under current vectors he could have and thus extended the possible pardon timeframe to 400 years and still been within the lifetime of the principles and thus within the letter of the contract; but that was not necessary yet. *40 years was enough to accomplish his goals* , he thought.

And frankly, he thought, *they weren’t even doing anything that taboo;* they had increased the likelihood of *arborta facia* by 44% in 2-million pregnant women, and half of those were their patients and half were outside the study, which resulted in 913,000 miscarriages total. However, an additional 516,000 pregnancies were restored in the mothers and this left only 397,000 un-remediated miscarriages, thus, with a co-efficient of .71, they were still below the threshold for technical *direct interference* by the letter of their contract with PraXis.

Plus, the contract was more like guidelines anyway , he said to himself in an accent and began laughing deeply and loudly to himself. Tania stared at him as if 10w30 motor oil was squirting out of his navel.

He kept laughing and shaking his head at the joke and walked toward her and patted her on the back, saying, “it’s ok, I just thought of something some guy said once, and it struck me as funny. I’m ok.”

She nodded and slightly pulled away from the weight of his attempt at laying upon her a comforting hand; MO smiled and double signed the report and contract addendum.

He had not caused the miscarriages; he had merely increased the odds. And frankly, in a nation that conducted one million abortions each year, it seemed, he reasoned, *that by using community standards he was fine* . Plus, people increase their own chances of miscarriage by engaging in all manner of deleterious behavior like drug use, smoking, bad nutrition, and activities too robust for the pregnancy to handle. Again, within the rubric of *community standards* he was well within his charter. And if not now, then in 40 years he would be.

Unless, he thought tangentially, *the community standards got more conservative and not more lenient in that time frame* . He had not thought of that, since society always seemed to liberalize. But, per his own analysis of snap-back conditions, the revanchist movements toward restoration of the original conditions of the country, *in 40 years the community could actually be much more conservative; even more moral,* he thought. *In fact,* he added, *that was kind of the plan, and thus was he not building a bit of an Escher-style conundrum* ?

If his actions now were what caused the conservative future, and in that future his actions now would be taboo, would they see those actions as necessary for their re-emerging moral culture, or would they condemn them as if they were committed then, in 2069 e.v., for example, and not now? Would they see the acts as immoral or as those broken eggs necessary for that breakfast omelet?

It was an interesting question, and no doubt the beings of the future would find it intriguing as well. *If you have to increase abortions by 30% now to eliminate them* in toto *later, is it right?* Especially since abortion is legal and not taboo at all now, *in fact* , he thought, *it's encouraged and bragged about by Hollywood actresses and the director for Planned Parenthood . So, it's neither illegal nor taboo even now. But, it was hard to say* , he admitted.

And that did not include the *defacto* abortions effected by changing the genome of all 1 million fetuses, effectively eliminating that original meiosis-produced genome and supplanting it with another. *Sure, no baby was aborted, in those cases, only changed into another possibility, but it was ethically interesting,* he thought.

It *was* -previously- going to be a random combination of each parents' DNA, snipped up in 23 chromosomes, and instead contained the LJM DNA, with slight modifications, which represented its own conundrum. But, the laws currently on the books, had nothing to say on it, so, Isaiah felt they were likely in a defensible

position, even if anyone found out, which was unlikely.

It was a gamble worth taking however, and so he put it out of his mind; as much as a being who could retain everything can put things out of his mind. It was a matter of focus, mankind did this too. *Mankind knew all manner of horrid things they chose to ignore*, he surmised .

He began collating the data for congressional districts and projections for 2038 e.v.; that would be the year his 1 million men would turn 18 before November of that year. They would -as civic minded types- be voting in their class-2 senatorial elections and their congressional districts as well. *The midterms* , Isaiah thought, *were ideal for us, as they required the least number of votes and voters to swing each election* . In Colorado district 2 -for example- the incumbent in 2016 won by just 90,174 votes, his boys would have lived in or moved to that district with their families by 2036 or earlier and thus be eligible to vote. Statewide they'd only need 100,000 votes if 2014 was any indication, and Isaiah would add for population increases of about 1-3% each year as was the current trend.

The 3030 census would likely add an additional district to the one added in 2020 from *that* census, and so Colorado would have nine districts. With the 166,000 families and newborns in Colorado under their project, he estimated they could have a net gain of 10,00 families and still win that class-2 senate seat, and five of the nine districts without much problem.

He looked at each of the 40 other states that he needed to control to effect the revanchist plan. *In fact, he would call it that, he liked that name, it spoke to him, it was noble, erudite, and slightly sinister due to etymology . Revanchist Plan 2038. Yeah*, he thought, *and by then the two-party system would be a shell of its former self, and an independent candidate would be viable without much issue.*

With 100-150k additional votes for their candidate, in addition to the ones they'd get anyway just from normal politicking -well, and their endocrine manipulation programs- they could expect to win 99% of the contests they entered, just based on demographics and trends extant today. He would pad it, add 10% to what was likely necessary to prevent marginal errors distorting the results, but, he felt that in each of the 40 states in which his million babies were born today, he could -with as few as 40k and as many as 180k votes- totally change the political landscape in 2038 e.v.

And it would all be legal and not involve one changed ballot or cheat of any kind. It would provide not just the votes, but a natural constituency, active, loyal, vocal, and -if the inmate was any metric- charming and able to sway people -

neighbors, lovers- with just a bit of glad-handing and holding his tongue. *Jesus, if he -if they- could just hold their tongue even 19% of the time,* Isaiah thought.

Florida's 24th could be won with as few as 15,000 votes; Oklahoma's 1st about the same, Isaiah noticed as he read the data again. Around 7% of the total population was involved in electing the winners. That was it. *People had no idea how easy it was to do this,* he thought. *All you needed was about 1 million men, voters, with one personality, one political bias and boom, you could own the house in 2038, 1/3 the senate then too, and in 2040, the presidency and the second third of the senate .*

Well, maybe the presidency. One needed some help; the current president won with 80,000 votes in key areas, so it was possible if you had the right states already planned out . But, Isaiah modeled it out and found 19 different isomorphic ways to win the presidency in 2040 e.v. with 900,000 or fewer votes. He smiled, but reminded himself to focus on the now, and 2038 first. *Who knows what could happen between now and then,* he thought.

But he did know that by 2038 the average age of voters would be 63 and that means that the average voter had been born in 1975 e.v. These were Gen Xers and had no party loyalty at all. These would be the most conservative in terms of temperament and age of all voter blocks; while those younger than them would be even less likely to eschew 3rd party voting for reasons that current voters gave. *It was a perfect storm of temperamental conservatism and structural anarchism ,* he thought.

And registered independents, or unaffiliated voters, by that time would have more voters willing to cast a ballot for someone other than either a Democrat or Republican than at any time in the Republic. *It was perfect demographic timing,* he thought*, to add 1 million Revanchist Party members strategically placed in key districts and states. They'd just need to get quality candidates of age to run for office that these clones could vote for,* Isaiah thought as he began downloading the database for 3rd party candidates and more principled members of the establishment parties. *He'd have time to groom them,* he thought.

"Focus," he said aloud, and MO turned to look at him and smiled. *It was the squeaking wheel that gets the grease,* he thought, *and his million men would be likely unstoppable when you added in the 10-30% of the population as a natural constituency . Yeah, focus man,* he thought and laughed slightly out of his nose.

Tania had left the room without even saying goodbye.

II. 2034 e.v.

Jack opened his present from the PraXis corporation, with a giant grin on his face; his parents were nervous and had been each year as the birthday gifts arrived. They were often expensive and strange and included new technology that they did not understand.

But he always seemed to love them each year and with him going away in a few months, they figured whatever it was, it was going to be useful for him. So they looked at each other and smiled and felt that ambrosia of ambivalence, when what you want is what you don't want too, and when you feel as if nothing is exactly wrong even as you think you can't stand any more pain.

She, his mother, was thinking of screaming, *I love you* , over and over until he loved her back, but instead, she asked what he had received.

"It's a universal constructor set, I can build DNA vectors, that are able to reconfigure existing materials," Jack said.

"Like the dog?" his father said with a grin.

"No, not like the dog, what's wrong with Ransack, anyway?" Jack asked as if the question did not contain the answer.

"He's a good dog," the mom said lying in the most beautiful and decent of ways.

The father just laughed and picked up the box that the gift had come in and began reading the outside for clues. The instructions would be digital and absorbed *via* the capsule that came with each of these gifts. At first they had felt odd about Jack swallowing strange pills that came in the mail, but it was from the same people that had made him possible, that had given them the boy that they had wanted, so of course, the corporation wouldn't give him anything dangerous. *But, there were accidents right,* the father thought, *I mean, things go wrong.*

But he banished the thought, and watched as, sure enough, a small black pill had been included and immediately swallowed by Jack as he downloaded the instructions for use .

"It can't be used on organic material, it's for inanimate objects only. I guess that law that passed last year made all these companies have to put a bio-block on their constructors. Which is fine, I wouldn't change anyone in this house, especially not Ransack," Jack said as he called the dog at the end of that sentence. The dog appeared, a black and white husky of 123 pounds, with a widow's peak and blue eyes and a head as noble as his descendant the wolf.

“I like northern dogs because they are the least changed from the original design,” Jack said as he began manipulating the pieces of the UC and allowing the use-demo to play inside his head; thus explaining how it worked.

“You have an old soul Jack,” his father said with approval, and wondered what, just what would become of his boy. *They had only had 14 and half years with him, and it seemed like less than 15 minutes, and yet here he was, 6 feet tall, 175 pounds, and handsome, in a small town -not a big city or Hollywood- way, and smart, much smarter than he was, and so eager to expand into the waiting world,* the father thought as he watched the boy and his wife.

They had agreed to the terms, and not just in letter but in spirit of the law; for the corporation had been good to them, given them a boy, healthy and good and capable of such wonders. He was kind and yet tough, he’d wax back and forth between mischievousness and deference to him as his father, even though they all somehow knew he was nothing like them, nothing like his parents.

They had sometimes looked back in the family albums, dug-out old records, looking for someone on either side that shared his windows peak, or his full cheeks, or his dark eyes or crooked smile. They pored over photos and accounts and letters, for his broad shoulders and narrow waist, his dark hair; which had come later, he was a tow-headed boy until he was four or five.

The father patted the mother’s hand as the boy made the edges of the rug that they sat on begin to build vines and climbers brown and green and developing brachia that flowered and grew to one meter in height. He had laughed, and Jack had nodded at him with a grin, and his wife, had snuggled in closer to her husband half-impressed, half in fright.

“What is that, Jack, is that permanent?” she had asked with that innate incredulity and feminine fear of the unknown that vexed Jack so much.

“Mom, it’s fine, it just looks like a vine, it’s all ersatz, ok?”

“Er-what?” she asked.

“Ersatz mom; it’s fake, it’s not real, the UC will demolish it as soon as it’s programmed to. I can,” and instead of explaining, he just toggled the morphology function and made it deconstruct until it withered and then atomized and returned the carbon it used into the air composition and the ends of the rug, the tassels -knotted and straw colored- fell flat to the brown wooden floor.

“Oh, look at that,” she said now as if she was as impressed with the technology as she was with the fact that it was now seemingly gone.

Jack and his dad laughed at her, at her fear of anything new. Jack used to get angry, now his frustration was tempered by what he had learned about the innate differences between women and men, and how women were just more afraid by design and to hate them for it would be tantamount -he had just learned that word too- tantamount to hating men for their aggression. *It would be unfair in all cases* , he thought .

Jack slid his finger over the tab of the packaging and it all collapsed onto itself and all that remined was a cube, brownish, the size of a die. He picked it up and set it on the knee of his mother who was still Indian legged next to his father and smiling and wide eyed and Jack could now tell, as he rose on his knees and looked slightly down on her face, that her eyes were in fact wet, and her cheeks, in fact, red. And when her lips parted they had little thin threads of saliva between them, as all her insides were roiling and turning fluids over and frothing a bit.

He understood why, well, as best a boy can. So, he patted her on the knee and retrieved the refuse from the packaging and smiled as warmly as he could at her and told her he loved her to which see nodded and let two lines of clearwater run from each blue-gray eye. The water parted each thin red cheek and continuing on to her trembling smile in the face of these last few days with her son.

III. 2012 e.v.

The road wove through the landscape like a zipper that held each side together to cover something the earth didn’t want anyone to see.

The mountains were to their starboard side as they rode the chopper south, and the prairie of the eastern plains was tan and barren from winter and to their port. The wind blew off the slopes and across the road and he -and she- leaned into the wind to keep going straight as they then navigated the S turns that combined with a rise and a fall of elevation. Her stomach whirled and she felt like a girl and she squeezed her arms all the way around his waist.

It was the only place on him thin and she felt like running at least one arm up his back when they were going straight, but as they leaned and floated over these hills she just wanted to close her eyes and bury herself in the man. The bike seemed to lean over way too far for her liking, but once she got used to it, it was actually fun. She had only ever been on the back of a crotch-rocket with her uncle back in Nebraska and that was just up and down the road they lived on.

This was totally different , she felt, *it was the landscape and the size of the bike and the power that seemed like sitting on 500-pounds of dynamite or a tiger that*

had just woken up from being tranquilized . The air was cold, but the sun was hot, and they had adequate clothes for winter riding he assured her. People looked at them and smiled or gave thumbs up, and she figured out that other people, too, thought they were cool. It was not like any bike she had ever seen before, but that didn't mean much.

She didn't know much about machines at all. But it was all flat-black and mean looking; and it was long and lacking in anything soft or round or feminine. It was 90-degree angles and matte metal unpainted and nothing that shined at all. It was so fast that she felt like she would slide off the little pillion pad he had stuck on the back fender, so she grasped at him with her hands and body, as the soul to her stomach was left a mile or so back.

He smelled like a beast; like sweat and fuel, and his pistol chaffed her arm a bit if she rested her arm too low on his waist.

She didn't know why anyone carried a gun, but after he explained that he was in charge of her safety and sense of wellbeing, she cottoned to the idea more and more. He was like her father in some ways, although she didn't really like to even think like that. Her father was way older, well older, like 49 or 50 she thought. And plus, he didn't look or act anything like Lyndon, and she wondered how he spelled his name. She had known a Lincoln once, and that was the capital of Nebraska too. But as she thought of this an antelope appeared to her eye just ahead to the side of the road. He was white and black and brown and had sharp black horns on his head as he looked straight across their path up ahead.

She asked him if the *deer* was going to cross and he said he didn't know. He hadn't corrected her on the species, but later she figured it out when they stopped to get gas and another lady had mentioned the *antelope* on the road.

They rode up to the mountains and stopped as her butt was finally getting sore too, and they walked to the edge and looked out over the city that they had just come from as he pointed and said, "there," as she cuddled up under his outstretched arm and ribs.

He laughed and held her and kissed her head and told her he thought she was an angel. She felt safe, and she liked it up here as really she had not seen much of the mountains at all.

He thought of each time he had taken some girl under his wing, how each girl had failed him, and he upbraided himself for being negative and banished the thoughts of each of them -each female- as they appeared, almost in sequence,

with each offending remark as title or banner to their second or two that they were allowed in -had forced their way into- his mind.

Females always find a way to insult you, he thought*, it's just in their core . They have to take digs, just like weak men, or the jealous of every kind,* he surmised as she wiggled under his flank so as to encourage him to place his arm around her and cuddle her in the chilly air. *This one was an angel,* he thought, but he knew he would find fault soon enough. He knew the wax and wane of love, of the male-female thing, and he had not yet learned how to stave it off, how to keep it at bay. He knew only how to succumb.

They seemed so sweet at first, so grateful to him for his ways. *But eventually they all found him abrading in some manner, too arrogant maybe, likely,* he thought*, too controlling and autocratic and set in his ways. They were not wrong,* he thought, *but, why not be controlled, by a competent man who knew what was best after all?* He thought he took orders from anyone smarter than him, anyone with knowledge or wisdom he lacked. He took note of men above him that he admired.

But, for him, that category did not include *the whole world* like it did for a young woman, and so he could take orders from the few -the 1-10% of- people above him and not feel it abrade. *But to never be the smartest or most powerful or wisest in any room ever, that must chafe at a person,* he admitted, *even a girl. And girls often think relationships should be equal, they've been brainwashed to think that from day one* . And he thought of this as the city spread out like a hazy rash around a scar full of buckshot, or gravel and asphalt in roadrash, or sand and bone fragments in a GSW. He thought that they had seen their own fathers be incompetent and losers and *so why would they ever again trust a man?*

Fathers had failed little girls, this was the *loci* of all modern relationships, and he knew that as long as he was fighting that phenomenon he'd always be fighting up hill. Getting a woman to trust you, trust that you'll stick around and not abandon them, is impossible, because their fathers left and once that happens nothing you do can make up for it. *It's subconscious, it's not on purpose that girls are permanently unwilling to hand over any authority to a man ever again,* he surmised. But, when dealing with the subconscious, all one can do is use the subcortical regions themselves to dissuade them, to fight on the same level as it. *Fight their Pacific Ocean with his own Artic Sea* , he thought. She'd be his *Tethys* and he *Oceanus* .

But he didn't have the first fucking clue on how to do that; he was rational and used rational arguments with women; and had his whole life. He laughed as she

snuggled in more, and she assumed it was because of her. But, he was laughing at himself, for this obsession with the rational even in the face of all the evidence that rationality had almost nothing to do with anything in the real world, the real world outside of *things* .

Yeah, science and math can work on buildings and bridges but not on people at all , he thought. *Look at Saddam, the guy had whatever he wanted as long as he didn't invade Kuwait, and the first thing he does is invade Kuwait* . That is not the act of a rational man, it's the act of a man who cannot stand for anyone to tell him what to do. Modern liberals would never get that; they'd never get that a man will do anything, no matter how insane and terrible just to exercise some semblance of free will. *Even the illusion of free will,* he added.

Women can't get this either, but not because they don't feel it, it's just that they don't feel it in the same way or in the same places as men. And they cannot extrapolate, they lack the metaphorized space in their conception of life to think that a man might not like it when anyone pushes them around and that men, being taller and having a higher -and more unstable- center of gravity might feel the pressure of force earlier and more sensitively than women who are lighter and closer to the ground.

Men are more sensitive in general, he thought*, and alphas especially . We have to be* , he said to himself. *Alpha's are in danger of usurpation and cuckolding and must remain vigilant to a degree a woman or child or beta male with nothing to guard or protect never feel is necessary* . He could understand them, and how they abraded at being talked down to or swaddled too closely or left with nothing important to do; *why couldn't they see the pressure the alpha male was under, to protect and defend, to keep the whole tribe happy, to set a direction and make it all happen?*

It was alphas that worked 12-16 hours a day, it was alphas who had to detect any note of *ennui* or anomie in all members of the tribe, his harem and children alike. The alpha could not let anyone else handle it, whatever it was, he had to carry the whole tribe on his back. *It had been this way since they were all Chimpanzees,* he thought.

And a woman could make her man happy by just being loyal and that is it; she was never held liable or responsible for entertaining him or making him laugh or making money or seeing what went bump in the night. She never need figure out a plan for anything, she was allowed to just go along for the ride. And yet all that responsibility the alpha male took on was ignored, dismissed and unrecognized. All that anyone ever saw was the money and things and girls that he had; never

the work done to gain it and the vigilance to protect it, as it sprawled and aggregated and differentiated out beyond his control.

Nobody ever thought of how it wounded the alpha to be made fun of or maligned behind his back, how often he was robbed of little things that disrupted his sleep. The betas who scooped up his crumbs and undermined his kingdom with little surreptitious insults and thefts never thought of how it all added up to erode his confidence and in such a large and fragmented tribe led to reinforcing loops; led to more and more attempts on his reign. All they ever mentioned was when he lost his cool, never all the times he let shit go that everyone took as weakness even as they pretended to think it was perfectly fine.

He stood there and looked out over the city and knew that his reign, over whatever little fiefdom he had would never hold, the backbiting and usurpers and jealous little worms would never allow it. And he knew, somewhere in there, that the way he chose women who could never be what he wanted or needed just left them in ruins and himself worse off each time. But he managed to not blame himself just yet, as there were so many others to blame first. He had not seen the core of his power yet, the thing that fueled all that he had.

He mistook the temporary and material power of money and girls and style for the real, and the fundamental; and what life was about. He thought literature and poetry and art were grains harvested from the rational application of the technology of reason and that love was the flower that came from common cause and agreements and blood-pacts organized by men and women who saw the world through one set of eyes. He thought the smarter he got, the more erudite, the closer he'd be to the truth. He gathered experience and other people's words and the wisdom of crowds and the exiled general both; he took in data from all sources, all in an attempt to get his arms around life, so that he too may live it with harmony and joy.

He thought if he treated others as he'd want to be treated that this would in fact be appreciated and returned. He thought his own hypocrisies would be forgiven, his own slights ignored as unbraiding, his own corruption unnoticed and his own lack of loyalty waived as meaningless in the grand scheme of things. He thought his honesty would be welcome, his self-awareness rewarded, his general pride in his manhood respected at home and abroad. He thought people saw him the way he saw himself: as a flawed and hypocritical man of high aim, as a principled warrior who failed uphill, a man who was genuinely trying to get it right for all concerned.

But, the closer he got to his true self, the closer he in fact got to God, he saw that

neither he nor they saw him that way at all; because it was likely that he wasn't that way. It was likely that he was corrupt and evil and out for blood from the start; it was likely that he hurt people just to prove that he could. Not that he believed that, and not that there wasn't evidence that he in fact was generous and magnanimous and less full-of-shit than most. But, if he insisted on comparing himself to the average person, then he couldn't blame them for heaping him in with the dross.

He felt himself exceptional, and this demanded something more than what came easy to him. It was easy for him to not study and in fact get drunk the night before the SAT and get a 1550; finish the ASVAB first in a room full of 18 years-olds and get a 97, the highest score anyone at MEPS had seen in 20 years. It was easy for him to pick up girls and make them love him, easy to rise to the top of any job, easy for him to charm his way through life, easy to lie and seem honest, even if he was being 50% more honest than most.

The point was his potential was so much greater than he came close to. The fact that he could land in places with insouciance and no effort -places that normal people had to try their hardest to reach half way to- was irrelevant. He was able to be 100% honest if he tried his hardest, he could get a 1600 SAT if he just laid off the booze and then studied a bit, he could have been a great leader with his looks and charm if he didn't throw it away with all those alienating tattoos and unfriendly clothes; his refusal to use his charm for good, instead being prickly just because he could. He could have gone the extra mile, for any number of causes and people that needed his leadership, but he refused on principle, because it was *phony* or *square* or *beneath his contempt.*

He thought of Marlon Brando, and how the greatest actor of all time was contemptuous of acting and had said *all people do it* , and that it was really no big deal; and that to do it -acting- as a grown man was unseemly and *sillyass* , and contemptible too. Daniel Day Lewis thought the same thing, *and he was the only one even close to Brando in terms of talent* , Lyndon thought. Maybe there was a lesson there that escaped him. Because Lyndon thought that being the best at something made you contemptuous of it, as if greatness immolated whatever was great; as if excellence undermined whatever one grandly built .

Like a consummatory reward versus an incentive reward , he thought. Life seemed to be made up of consummatory rewards mostly, and even the ones that were ostensibly incentive, like love and friendship and creative exploits were -at some base level- just things to be consumed by the maw of greedy and self-aggrandizing man; and the shallow never saw this and could therefore appear

deep.

But the truly deep saw through it all and found it unsatisfying to continue the farce. This was the lesson he took from Brando and Lewis, *who quit acting to go make shoes like that one character in a Tale of Two Cities*, he thought. It never occurred to him, not until much, much later, that the lesson was that just because a man can see the shallow in what he does perfectly doesn't meant that is all that there is; that maybe a man must make himself see something else, something that doesn't come easily to his eyes, to his mind, something that is harder to find.

Maybe a great man must look harder beyond his *ennui* and cynicism and see what more he could do, what else he could accomplish if he had to work as hard as the stupid and ugly and incompetent had to work just to fucking survive. Maybe if the gifted and grand worked 1,000% harder they could see the *grandeur* in what it is that they can in fact do; maybe if they lived on the edge of what was beyond their ken and their competence they would not see through this life as easily as they seem to do.

Maybe he should have thought this earlier, before he was wrought up and in pain, in so much pain, that he couldn't be happy with any girl who wasn't a virgin and could never be in the city with other men around at all. Maybe he should have forsaken the cheap pleasures of dozens of beautiful and young girls who could never give him what he needed and forsaken the expensive bullshit that impressed only those eager to be jealous no matter what, providing them with more and more fuel for their hot angst against him. Maybe he ought to have been honest with himself and honest with what he needed; and maybe he ought to have seen the pain he caused not just the pain he received.

31. Aqua Regia

Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,

That slaves your ordinance, that will not see

Because he doth not feel

King Lear [Shakespeare, William]

Silent, slow, and solemn; bowing over still further his chronically broken back, he toiled away, as if toil were life itself, and the heavy beating of his hammer the heavy beating of his heart

The Whale [The Author]

Woe to the fool and aesthete who only ask how and not why

Darkness at Noon [Koeslter, Arthur]

I. 2036 e.v.

"Sit him down there," the physician said to the guard and looked over the chart that came with the inmate from ADX.

The inmate was placed in the brown and chrome chair and remained silent. You learn in custody not to speak until spoken to; if for no other reason than it makes them listen to you when you finally do speak. *Maybe that is why the* Spartans *were so* Laconic, he thought, *they knew their economy of words elevated its value to the impoverished -desperate- ears of those they spoke to.* He was not normally that way, he liked to go on and on; *prolix* he was, *verbose* they had said, *loquacious* had been used a time or two in reference to the man as he now recalled.

"So, you want a second opinion?" the doctor, 50s, Caucasian, left-handed, asked.

"I would," the inmate said as he watched each thing to be observed.

"Ok, so what's the complaint?" the physician asked.

"Pain; level 5-7 untreated. Radiating nerve pain to extremities including numbness and tingling. Sequela of muscle cramps and spasms in neck, upper and lower back. All symptoms verified *via* 3rd party medical analysis including EEG, MRI and X-Ray data which if not in the file are available through my attorney. I had sent a pre-transfer request that those files be sent here last week; did they arrive?" the inmate asked.

"Mr. MacLeod, they did, and I've reviewed your chart and first of all, Dr. Ben Mechanic is a dubious character; and the MRI was inconclusive in my opinion.

However, the X-ray was in agreement with the diagnosis by Dr. Hahn; you -in fact- have a C5," he paused as he scanned the file for the details.

"And six," the inmate added .

"Right, C5 and C6 compression fracture with bone spur encroachment; nerve impingement is likely; and discomfort is all but assured. But, pain at level five?"

"Five to seven; depending on how I sleep on it. I wake up most nights at 0200 in pain. Look, I am a mass murderer, ok*?* I deserve my lot in life; my pain, if it be the sanction of God, I accept it. However, ontological arguments aside, the courts *via Leatherman* 507 US 168, *Estelle* 429 US 104; and *Jones v. Simek* 193, all state that chronic and or acute pain shall be treated under the 8th amendment of the constitution based upon reasonable -if subjective- criteria of pain in excess of that which is tolerable. The courts used that word: *subjective* ," the inmate said.

"Is that right?" the doctor said as he looked up from the paperwork.

"Yes. *Cooper v. Casey* . And they found that the department of corrections, and their medical personnel -under threat of personal liability- must alleviate the inmate's pain or be in breach of the 8th amendment's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment. *Ralston* 167. I cite the court's precedent including *Walker v. Benjamin* in 2002, so you can feel unencumbered by the BOP's and Sheriff's directive to avoid narcotic analgesic prescriptions. I cite case law so you may feel free to be a doctor again, however briefly, and not a mere functionary of the prison system.

"You can -on good evidence- now tell the sheriff to pound sand, that you are not going to incur legal judgements and personal liability just so the BOP and DOC can make inmates contort in pain out of some puritanical need to see people suffer; like *Tertullian* watching those of us in Hell writhe.

"This anti-pain-med campaign is nothing short of punitive; medieval; it is not medical. I remind you of your Hippocratic oath, and however much it abrades the conscience to give out pain meds to a wretch like me, to fail to do so would in fact do me great harm. Harm," he repeated to highlight that word, that *mot juste* , of the Hippocratic oath.

"Well, that may be," the DOC doctor said, "but there are competing harms Mr. MacLeod, and I have to take all health-related phenomena into mind."

"Enumerate them," the inmate said.

"I will; you know that narcotics can slow and even stop your respiratory

function; that's your breathing," he added as if the man he was speaking to did not know the meaning of *respiration* ; as if he had no spirit at all.

"In 2034 e.v., the last year we have data," the inmate interrupted and said, "4,690 people suffered respiratory failure due to legally prescribed narcotic analgesics, a full 190 more than died from bicycle accidents. It is not an epidemic. The entire AMA line is a lie; a con," he then paused as he searched his mind for the right word. The doctor smiled as if in victory over, *this smart-ass inmate*.

His brief, but acute, infelicity with language was a turning of the tide , the jailhouse doctor felt as the inmate regained his thoughts and spoke, at first thinking he wanted the word, *confabulation*, but knew that was not right.

"…conflation, excuse me, a conflation of deaths, some 70,000 of them, from opioid street drugs and illegally obtained pain meds, and another 4,000 from combinatorial deaths e.g., alcohol or benzo-diazepams combined with the narcotic analgesic. So, you see, there is less risk of me dying fr om pain meds than getting into a bike accident if I have no booze or valium to wash it down with," the inmate said.

"Well, I'm not sure your numbers are correct," the doctor said.

"I have 23 hours a day to read. I have nothing else to do. My numbers are correct. I refer you to an article published in Science and Nature in May and July respectively of 2035 of the common era. The author is a physician trained at Johns Hopkins, a little place east of here. Dr. Josh Bloom and Dr. Henry I. Miller wrote the article. I had it sent over in the file; if you'll check it you'll see it in there with the MRI films *et cetera* ," the inmate had just seen the doctor deflate a bit and knew he had scored the *coup de grâce* . He, however, did not spike the ball as the doc had done as he -the inmate- had scrambled to locate the word, *conflate* , in his quiver a few moment ago. No, he would not smirk now.

He was stoic because he needed to piss and his neck had begun to throb and he was tired from waking up three nights in a row. Isaiah had cut off his pain meds so if they pissed tested him he'd show the lack of the meds he desired.

"Well, I don't have time to read it, what I will do is write you a prescription for 30 hydrocodone for the month and we can revisit it in 30 days," the doctor said in negotiation.

"Doc, I took three a day when I was a civilian. 30 is 1/3rd my required dose. May I remind you that various factors including body weight and enzyme P430 production in the bacteriome of the viscera all contribute to efficacy of analgesics. I suggest that -in order to avoid any legal action by my attorney- we

write the prescription for the same treatment level as I had been on for 12 years prior to my incarceration. No more, no less. Let's not lay ourselves down on *Damastes'* bed. One size does not fit all."

"Ok, 90, but don't come back here," the doctor was not happy.

"Send a note to Doctor *Doughi* at ADX telling him not to send me; I'd be happy to oblige you, as long as he fills this script each 30 days. I came here because he refused to do his job, not because I like Denver," the inmate said with a smile as if they were indeed friends; friends that could agree that they never wanted to see one another again.

The doctor wrote the script and emailed it to ADX and asked if there was anything else.

"I would be indebted to you if I could use your facilities," he said, and the doc nodded across the hall and the guard opened the bathroom door as the inmate rose and strolled in with tiny steps due to the chains. He was told to leave the door ajar; a request with which he complied.

He speaks like that to manipulate , the doctor thought. It never occurred to him that polite and professional language was manipulative in or out of prison, it was only that inside prison -and used by inmates- did one notice its manipulative nature; or cared to notice it.

II. 2018 e.v.

He thought of Athena, in high school, way back in Mason, Ohio, and he remembered who he was back then as not incongruous with himself now. He had packed on muscle and knowledge, and all the pain that sherpas those two things, but he was -in his mind- a continuity of character .

He wondered if other people felt this way or if they felt truly reborn into new bodies and souls from time to time; maybe after epochs of natural boundaries like school or fatherhood or marriage or the death of a parent. He felt static in a way, despite all the ways in which he felt he had evolved. He remembered reading about moths in cocoons and how they are built from soup; that the caterpillar dissolves.

He thought these things as he watched the door across the street -across 6th avenue- and he watched for darkness to fall. He knew his enemies were inside, he knew they had no idea he was now in control of their lives.

His life seemed like one continuous thread from age four when he became conscious- his first memory was of England, the hail, the pain, the fear, the

running, how far he ran. It was decades later, many remembrances, until he remembered how odd it was that at age four he had been allowed to run so far from the house; so far that it took him 20 or 30 minutes to return home in that hailstorm. He remembered expecting grown-ups to care, to save him, and when they did not he remembered merely taking note; thinking: *oh, I'm on my own* .

It baffled him now, but not then; autonomy was always expected by him; he assumed the world was *his* -the way animals do- even with his obvious limits and frailties. That hail had scared him like some *Trobrian Islander* , or some new creature on a new planet, he had no idea hail even existed, and the pain of it seemed to be increasing, and this made him assume the increase of pain would be infinite, and of course for being just four years old, he was pretty close to being right.

He had spoken to a girl, a friend of his once, who had said she knew wise things when she was that age too. He thought of how much wisdom is contained in the seed that the plant forgets; the boy that the man laments.

He always remembered his life, not as memory but as felt experience, like the way a memory of four seconds ago isn't exactly a memory, but you, four seconds ago. He had no way to know that other people did not experience life this way; that their old selves were gone after a certain date; that the current man or woman could not -to that old self- relate. But, he saw the thread, and the one that was longest and most dark -and thus most seen in relief- was his feeling of moral indignation and the desire, the need, to figure out the right and wrong of life; and enact it however inexactly or hypocritically. He had always wanted revenge.

He remembered the same feeling, the exact same feeling from age four to 44*: that things were not right, not in him, not in others, nowhere* . And, he had felt he was able, eager even, if not consistent, but that when confronted with it -this injustice- he was able *and would* look at it; he would not turn away. He might not know how to fix it, he might not even know what it is, or was, but he would look. He had read Orwell -Animal Farm at age 10 and then later in an essay or something, in which Orwell had said his power, Orwell's power, was in *facing* ; this power of *facing* .

It did not make Lyndon moral, or even good. It often made him bad, even worse. But he looked at it, the evil, whether in others, the world, or most likely, in himself. He would look, and he would eventually speak its name, while others, it was proven, looked away.

The world was a moral place, a domain of right and wrong, first and foremost, a

place, a terrain of moral action, he had thought from his first moments awake; and he had no idea how controversial this was as a starting place. He -even in his scientific rationalist phase from age 23 to 43- had never lived as if only matter -things- existed. He may have said all of life was merely the material, the rational, and even believed it in some surface way, but he lived as if morals were paramount, deeply imbued in the authentic life. He just assumed he had made that up, taken *the Philosopher's* advice to invent his own values after the death of God.

He had no idea that the moral feeling was not just *part* of biological life, but an ancestor to that life; it was First Cause. His four-year-old body knew more than his 44-year-old mind, until one day, he learned about the fact that no man -nor animal- could even see without first a hierarchy of value, and that this was tantamount to morality *per se* .

He could laugh and tell you that nobody is more embarrassed nor grateful to find out that the *Bible* is right, than a committed atheist, an anti-theist like him. The Bible was right in the way children are right; unknowingly, almost innocently, but more right than anyone wants to admit.

That Air Force base in Wethersfield, England, that he roamed like a feral wolf as the hail came, had been officially closed, but still staffed. The movie theater was 25 cents a show and the roads were often empty of cars. It was peopled, but they were quiet and reserved; the garish Americans toning it down whilst among the English off base. They had two cars, a dark green Jaguar, and a light green Mini. Dark and light green respectively.

He had watched as his mother talked to the neighbor one day, he had intimated that he needed to go inside, as they had just returned home from shopping. But his mother loved to chat and she refused to unlock the door, so since he had to defecate on a timeline of seconds now not minutes, he ran around back and shit on the fence as he watched the green English trees and shrubs of the line between their house's yard and the fields that stretched on forever until they hit a parking lot for the one-ton trucks the Air Force used to move cargo and equipment and materiel.

He had had to use his hand to wipe and had gotten his first real look at what was inside of him; it had been beastly, and unsightly and unseemly but he had attributed it all, the whole *mise-en-scène* to his mother, and her ignoring of him and his needs.

It was this ignoring, and its opposite that set in him like a bone being moved back into place by a doctor; he took note of the two conditions, one discordant,

one harmonious but arrived at not without considerable pain. He made no vows, nothing as dramatic as all that; he just took note of the ignoring and the shit on his hand and British cold on his four-year-old ass.

He returned to the house relieved and sullied and was taken in hand by his outraged mother of course, as if history had begun just then when she smelled shit. She may have been 34, but she was oblivious to her life prior to that moment it seemed. She had no part in it at all if one listened to her wailing and rebuking and cursing *sotto voce; so the neighbors didn't hear* . Lyndon had felt not anger, but a proto-contempt, a kind of feeling a bit dog feels when it first learns in can in fact bite back. He had done the best he could, he could have shat on the porch in front of God and his angels -and more importantly to his mother, the neighbors- but he had least gone around back.

England was a time between three and five-years-of-age for him, and one winter he had had the chicken pox and not been allowed outside in the snow, his favorite weather condition. It would remain as his favorite for the duration. They -the other kids- had built snow forts out of buckets used as forms for the wet British snow. He had watched from the window with tears and the incipient rage of a babe with one pox on the bridge of his nose, and one on his cock that freaked him out even then. That piece of equipment seemed paramount for some reason that he could not explain, and the pox on his arms and legs and belly were annoying and itchy and all that, but he guarded his face and his genitals with more existential care than seemed appropriate to the ignorant adults. He had figured out the morality *vis-à-vis* the genitals early as well. He had not needed to be taught.

He got furious when anyone made fun of men for being men; or made mention of man parts in any way at all. He was the most prudish boy under 10 that one could invent or imagine. He would rage in tears and wails and then secret self-exiled bouts as his fists clinched and his lips slammed into a pout. And this happened over and over as his parents and their libertine friends made dirty jokes or sexual innuendos as if it was all so goddamn funny. And the weakness of men was considered the *pièce de résistance* for all adult humor, and he knew that he might not be a man, *per se,* not yet, but that one day he would be. And thus, he was willing and able to take offense for his future self, right fucking now. He was to be a man someday and thus today they were making fun of *him* - as it were- *behind his back* .

He hated those people and couldn't believe their *bravura* . His parents would laugh and snicker and knowingly blush. *It was all so tawdry and undignified and*

disloyal, yes, disloyal , he thought. That is what he felt. He used these disgusting people and their immoral language & ways to learn the topography of his inner feelings, to put names to places inside. *Betrayal, disloyalty, man-hatred, disrespect,* these feelings were his first, and most salient*;* he felt things in ways that which would take decades to form into words and ideas.

Boys and men were second class citizens in the *argot* of the times, and this was the late 70s and early 80s, and he saw it only get worse from there on. And this was in military households, conservative and Republican homes, he had no idea that most people were far more liberal and lax and immoral than this. His head would have cleaved in four pieces and fallen to the ground like a coconut hit with a machete if he had known how much more decent these people were -the ones he hated as vile pornographers and pimps- compared to most out there.

Of course, he learned that soon enough as he went into the civilian world -at age 13- as the father had retired from the Air Force and they had moved to Ohio and a civilian school instead of DoD schools with all military kids. He was shocked by the impertinence, the lack of decorum, the filthy girls and boys lacking all self-respect. The teachers had lupine faces and gave unethical howling speeches ready to confront all manner of things he did not yet understand.

But, the one thing he knew was that nobody was concerned with justice, that was certain, but worse than that, they had no desire to uphold the concept of *man* . The *Man* , that which was elucidated by a phrase of The Author that he would later read, *that as joint stock companies, as nations, men might seem detestable; that knaves, fools and murderers there may be, that men may have mean and meager faces, but Man, in the ideal was so noble and so sparkling, such a grand and glowing creature, that over any ignominious blemish in him, all his fellows should rush to throw their costliest robes.*

That insight mirroring his own would come later, for now he must feel his own face without benefit of reflecting glass, and for now he felt the egg about the eyes; he felt the impious ends and means of his classmates and teachers and all of mankind. Although, it was tough for his metaphorized mind to extrapolate beyond his immediate *milieu* . He had traveled, lived on three continents by age five, but still, he was just a boy and his mind was hemmed in by its own skull and the provinces, and shallowness, of his family and the epoch in time.

Plus, he was a bad kid. He liked to transgress and throw down and fight and make jokes at the expense of someone -anyone- he hated. He liked to talk back and kick up dirt and look down on both the stupid and the smart-alecky jerks .

But, there was this chivalry to him that revolved around this odd and precocious

sexual gallantry. He didn’t tell dick jokes and he didn’t let girls be made fun of for being unfortunate looking and he kept his anarchy to realms that made sense to him: one could make fun of the stupid and the arrogant, and anyone bigger than him, one could break things that were easily paid for, one could disobey orders that could not be articulated in 10 words or less, and one could test out new boundaries of the unfriendly and mischievous as long as one came back if it all went too goddamn far.

And he would know if it went too far, for his conscience was a tight tether, he thought; and he calibrated it all by his endogenous and earnest deference to girls -fat or ugly ones especially- and to the rubric of men, not as people but as a concept: *Man!*

He *knight erranted* the world, on mission from God, to restore woman’s purity and the honor once belonging to men, but lost somewhere out in the forest of life. He held hands with a girl in second grade, lights off as the class watched some movie of some kind; her name was Starr Carr, and this girl, this singularity, illuminated his insides as his eyes adjusted to the dark of the room. He knew he was destined to love a woman but speak rarely and modestly and let all involved keep their honor. He wished he would never move away from his Starr.

And he knew that the world was full of good girls, *of which there must be millions by now* , he figured, *as he had saved so many of them from dragons and black knights, although the worst knights were the ones not in black armor, the kind her preferred, but in that garish and overt chrome bullshit* . He was on to that nonsense. He had protected Donna Ladd at age nine, as a gaggle of geese in the shape of older boys had surrounded her and made fun of her fat and then her emulsified tears. His tongue lashing for their lack of gallantry had not muted their mouths, so he shoved two or three to the ground and somewhat inartfully, but effectively, slapped them around.

Donna had loved him from then on out, well until he was a grown man and his good side was eclipsed by the dark side of the moon. She had run home and told her mom, something he was incredulous about, for he never told anyone when he was picked on or made fun of or abused. *Jesus, that is like half the injury,* he thought, *the worst part of suffering abuse is for others to know!* But girls were different in more than one way he was beginning to notice, and they had different rules for life and so he was informed by his mother that Mrs. Ladd, Donna’s mother, would like to come over and talk to him.

It was all very adultish and odd and made him feel uncomfortable, but apparently he had done something good for once; although he saw *all* his actions

as noble at ten times the rate these people noticed them. So, he was half offended -as usual- that they acted like it was so anomalous. But, Donna had left out the part where he got violent and she thus told a softer, more typically female, version of the story where Lyndon had just *told those mean boys off* ; as if that would ever have sufficed. *Ha, not in this world* , the wised-up 9-year-old said to himself.

Nobody knew the price he paid for his chivalry; that he was furious and enraged -his allostatic system all in permanent flux- at the way sex was discussed and treated so cavalierly, and that he as a boy was a natural target for condemnation for the crime of- wait for it- being a boy!

He fought and cursed and spit on the ground, he never took any shit when others were around; he felt the eyes of the world on him, shaping him up. He knew that the real predators watched to see how you handled the first salvo and first volley from weaker rivals and random arrows and slings. He guarded his reputation as he earned praise and popularity for his size and strength and comedy and banditry and the all-around chaos of fun.

But, he was martial, and atavistic in mien and manner and lower down even. He was a tiger or shark or the first asp, growing up and larger and meaner as the world revealed itself as it truly was. He was the shadow to the tree of life cast by his father and the sun and as the wind of the world blew the boughs he tracked the thing and its shadow too. He was of the world, not something abstract.

One day he had been chicken fighting with two kids, he and his charge beneath him, they as their *portmanteau* of rider on top and steed below, wrangling and commentating as the playground sand was kicked around. Then as Lyndon had had this kid bent back and about to fall off -securing the victory fair and square- the kid had spit on Lyndon, right in his face.

It was an outrage, it was beyond the pale of the game; and the kid, the *spitter* , had been let down from his steed and began running away. He knew -this was Lyndon’s first introduction to *mens rea* , the obviously guilty mind- the kid knew what he did was evil and sinister and blackened Alaska, and he ran like a muddy bloodhound from the bath. Lyndon gave chase, and to this day, decades later, he could remember each detail, the expanse of playground, the large boundary on the Air Force base, the concrete stairs that led down to the next set of stairs that led down to the courtyard between two 9-story Department-of-Defense school buildings, with shatter-proof glass in the doors. He could still see the wire in the glass, like honeycombs, the feelings that attended that chase of the evil-doer, the brigand, *the one who dishonored him, with ignoble behavior,* he thought, *on the*

field of mock-battle!

The kid had traversed down the first set of stairs, with Lyndon two meters behind, and Lyndon had known this was a grave error on that kid's part, as he -Lyndon- ignored the implicit requirement that one step down each step and instead flew through the air -launched from the top step- and landed perfectly on the fleeing scoundrel and tackled him to the ground.

Later, in a whisper, Travis, Lyndon's older brother -by five years- had told him that when he, Travis, came upon the two boys fighting, Lyndon on top wailing and slamming the kid's head into the concrete, and screaming epithets and curses and wild incantations, that Travis had heard Lyndon say, *I'm going to kill you motherfucker* .

This kind of rhetoric made whilst bashing a 9-year-old kid's head with your fists, was shocking to the 14-year-old Travis and he said so at the time.

Lyndon scared people; they figured his violence would one day end up in spectacular bloodletting and they were not wrong. Even a regular guy can be right sometimes. Even the man of average tastes can sometimes see strange things to come.

But Lyndon had instincts too; and his were that the moral feelings in a boy are what give birth to the man. His instincts were that anyone who is insouciant about right and wrong, anyone who eschews justice for expediency or refuses to point out something untoward merely to avoid a fight, anyone who looks the other way at an ignoble action that maligns the man while they can because he -that man- is still just a little boy, well, that creature will never mature into a full-grown man, never stand up on his hind legs at all. The boy at seven is the man. This is a fact. And Lyndon was born to fight back.

His brother was further proof of this conceit, proof from the other side of the coin. *That bastard -as a boy- never stood up for anything or anyone,* Lyndon thought*, Travis kept his head down and stayed out of trouble at all costs; even at the cost to his soul . And to this day,* Lyndon thought*, at this age, the guy is still cowering and cravenly bowing to his wife, his boss, his whole environment. And the culture is no better; he could count on one three-toed paw the number of men who stood up for other men, for this culture, for the concept of sexual purity and decency and the innate nobility of Man* .

And it begins in the boy, of this he was sure. Because it must be innate, or it will never manifest. Science now has shown political affiliation and proclivities are personality based, in other words, reason and discussion and dialectic -facts-

have almost no correlation to political stance. It's deeply rooted in personality which is buried in the gravel-layer and even beneath all that, in the limestone substrate 40-million-years old like the bottom half of *terroir* in the region, in the country, just on the other side of the *Rhine* that hemmed him and his family in.

And he had it in him to the bone. He knew this because he was born pissed off and surly and sour and angry at the whole sloppy and uncouth mess of them, he had laughed -to keep from crying- at the composite photo amalgam his parents had assembled from photographs over the last 40 years. It was their 50-year anniversary and they included four images of they -man and wife- and their two boys, and from age one to 18. Each boy -Travis and Lyndon- was shown and in each phase of maturation.

Lyndon was -in each photo- sagaciously scowling at the coming catastrophe, and Travis beatifically grinning as if all was right with the world. It was as if his parents had put it together with the intent of explaining how radically opposite the two boys were from the jump. It was night and day, sun and moon, Cain and Abel in proud display.

Lyndon stared at the picture of him as a baby, being held by Travis. It is not an exaggeration to say that he was a scowling baby; a baby who scowls! And Travis in this picture was, of course, grinning from ear to ear oblivious to the malice and revenge compacted in his 25-pound baby brother, compressed tightly, like the original, horrible, universe in the first second of the big fucking bang.

It would be decades before Lyndon read that his instincts were backed by the idea that moral thinking was primary, and that consciousness was first and not physics at all; he had been raised in the shadow of the 400 years of scientific nihilism of Bacon and *Descartes* and Newton and then Einstein and Feynman and JBS Haldane; but the cracks were beginning to show and by the 2000s there was an eruption of pushback against the materialist view.

Scientists and philosophers -like Bruce Lanza- were finally saying that feelings and intuitions and moral thinking and the biology that undergird them were phenomenon extant in the *mise-en-abyme* before the inflation that gave rise to the cosmos and that *values* may -in fact- come first. *Morality was primary, first*, it was finally submitted by someone other than the Church. It was posited and demonstrated that morality and ethics and values were not made up *ad hoc* by so-called rational men.

Lyndon had known this, felt this, but doubted himself when he spoke on reality to anyone else. But, to find out that he was both living this way *and* right to do so was as liberating as when his neck was put into traction; his compression

fracture of C5/6 had been -and would always be- like having a weight placed upon his head. To pull the head, *via* the neck, taut from -away from- the body was to relieve that weight and decompress the spine. Biocentrism and innate moral hierarchies as prerequisite for the perceptual system were to his soul and moral code as analgesics and muscle relaxants were to his neck and body *writ large* ; and needed ones at that .

His friend Chen would reject all moral thinking as mere *side-taking* in evolutionary machinations and Machiavellian hypocrisies. *And that was fine, whatever,* Lyndon thought*, but just try treating Chen as if that were true; treat him like morality didn't really exist and that he was just so many atoms bumbling into each other in the night, as if he was just iterations in the Prisoner's Dilemma and see what he did* . Chen would fly off the handle over any slight transgression of his innate sense of being and dignity, condescension perceived at 500 yards. Chen no more believed in his scientific rationalism than Lyndon did. But, he talked a good game, just as Lyndon had for 20-odd years. This is what modernity has done to good men: made them amoral at best.

It was a risible and fatuous state of things, to have an obviously offended and spiteful and hateful man pretend morality didn't exists. It never occurred to him that one would need be ecumenical and borderline brain dead to be truly agnostic to moral thinking; nobody could possibly live in the world that way. It would be like claiming humor was solvable in a differential equation in the middle of Bill Hicks' *Rant in E-minor ;* the held pencil moving like a Richter scale wire as one doubled over in laughter; as tears of side-aching joy fell and bombed out each stupid integer of your goddamn equation for *humor* .

Nigga please, Lyndon thought and laughed at himself each time he thought of Chen's so-called moral detachment; his nonsense philosophy that he didn't live by for one second at all.

Man, he hated everyone else, he thought. Anyway, the whole reason he had begun this discussion with himself was to remember Athena, this ugly girl in farm clothes with bad skin, really bad skin, the kind that scars you, literally leaves scars so you are fucked for life due to hormones that rise and fall between ages 12 and 18. She was poor and quiet and shy in the most painful of ways, the kind of diffidence that attracts more evil that it dispels. The school's most popular and those that would go on to be the Good Germans of our little world, would make fun and gossip and have a real good time, but Lyndon never enjoyed that sort of thing, and did not make fun of her even once.

And it was not because he was a good kid, he was not. He sold drugs out of his

locker, cussed out adults anytime they offended him, and threw books -while high on cocaine- at a teacher who had had to jump back to avoid this assault.

He was mean and rude and broke 11 out of 10 rules and nobody over 18 thought he was even human. He was popular with girls, his looks and charm overruled; but he was rotten in some disturbing ways. He drove drunk often, and twice into a ditch; he rolled joints as he drove with his knee. He fought kids for no reason anyone with a 401k could discern, at 18-years-of-age he coveted every freshman girl that came within 200 yards. He took almost nothing seriously it seemed, he like a rat in cage, searched merely for the edge. He mixed pills and whisky and by four balls in the morning he was puking up black shit all over other people's floors. It was stomach blood and Bourbon County mash, and it was years before he'd clean up his act.

But, he did not make fun of that poor girl -not once- in the five years he was in that school district. And he didn't like anyone who did.

It made him seethe, it made him hate the world, it made him not want to participate in anything named *Human* at all. He wondered if the world ever thought that their picking on the weak and ugly and sad, in *lieu* of ridiculing the stupid and shallow and the bad, was witnessed by God, and God's emissaries; by the lying spirits of God? He thought of double pendulums, and how chaos begins. He thought; and he thought some more .

There were so many opportunities for wounding, and haranguing and malicious defaming, this was a target-rich environment as the generals would say. They had all manner of teachers and rich kids and shit on TV to make fun of; they had bad musicians, squares of all descriptions and people with no joy in their hearts, *but one did not need to pick on the ugly or overweight or the poor* , he thought; *that was just too fucked up and ugly itself* .

He didn't repress the feeling out of some superego suppression, he just genuinely did not find any humor at the expense of the ones that life had already singled out for doom. He felt no desire to heap malice on those that Satan had locked on to and that God had abandoned already.

And this was who he was too.

In addition to the revenge and the haughty arrogance and seemingly idiopathic violence, this too must be taken into account. He had a moral code, and it was one innate and born into him; and he took it as seriously as most people take their mortgage or their jobs or their precious money.

And this is why he struck back at the world, not for profit or to slake some

psychopathic demiurge; he wanted justice and respect, and honor. He wanted to act as God's own messenger for sexual purity in women, God's own angels here on earth, and courier for the epistles conferring respect on the alpha male; orders from on high issued to the beta male and how he should behave.

It was a revanchist policy on biology, and it required that he follow his instincts, and no more. But, because he was not a psychopath, he cared what others thought, and thus, he was not going to let them call him a psycho or immoral or worse: *amoral* .

No, he thought, *he had a noble, innate, God-given* , raison d'être *and they were going hear it, if it was the last goddamn thing he said aloud* . He wished he could round up every kid who made fun of Athena and see just what kind of adult they turned into. They say, *give us the boy at seven and I'll show you the man* ; and it was certainly true for him. He had changed only in capacity and terminology, but he was today who he was born to be.

And he knew those bastards that picked on little fat girls and made fun of the poor farmgirl with bad skin were just as evil now as they were back then, he could feel them out there, he could see them in his enemies of today. *Only,* he thought with a bitter smirk, *they would be swaddled in an extra 100 pounds now of fat and social niceties and hidden venalities and the cover of* bourgeois *manners that hide who the real monsters are.*

People think *nice* is tantamount to *moral;* and nothing could be more wrong. *Nice* is *amoral* at best; and often it is an excuse not to do the right thing. He thought of how many times he had heard and seen and felt the amoral types bleat out: *oh, I don't wanna be mean, I wanna be nice so I won't saying anything while the whole country falls apart.*

He thought, *these are the same people who felt it was 100% ok to make fun of the weak, the ugly, the ganged up upon, the low, the bent, the broken, those unpopular to the mob. For, what is more unpopular now-a-days,* he thought, *than men, or the white race, or the skin of country itself -the border- as nobody says shit as what is best in this world is invaded, run down and shit on by modern bullies and cretins and scum?*

This, he reiterated, *is the* Tao *of modern women, and beta males, it is weak and ugly and phony and yes, it is oh, so, nice. Don't say a word, keep your head down, ignore the country, the principles, the men who make it cohere at all, as it is made fun of, shit on, and taken down like a regal lion by these fucking parasites. Sure, everyone knew -in their thinking, rational, modern brains- that it was immoral to make fun of Donna Ladd for being fat, or Athena Jones for being*

poor and unsightly, but who said anything, who stopped it? Nice people? he asked with a contemptuous laugh.

Nice is not moral; it takes teeth to be moral, it takes aggression to be moral, it takes violence to be moral.

They did not send moms and nice boys to stop Hitler's machine, they did not send nice folks to civilize the west, they did not send the nice to end slavery in the south. They sent men, violent and rough men with malice and hate in their hearts; hatred for tyranny, and slavery and hatred for the enemies of mankind. *So,* he thought as he mused on his smiling and soulless brother in those photos, and his nice-as-pie mother, he thought, *fuck your immoral, nice, bullshit. Nice is cover for the truly monstrous, for those who let evil go on and do nothing to set it right, all while being unctuous and gregarious and smilingly polite.*

He thought of the ancient goddess Athena of Greece, and he thought on the fact that she was a virgin first and foremost among her devotees. And he thought of the sword in her hand, and the wars fought all around her. He felt imbued with the boy he once was, and the purity of his rage and malice and designs on revenge.

He stepped out of the car, and chambered a round, and walked toward the dark door with his gun locked and loaded and his mind unalloyed with doubt or hesitation at all.

III. 2037 e.v.

"The entire sewage system on Cherokee & Delaware and Colfax & 14th are no good; they're monitored due to proximity to the Mint. I had to find another way and the only viable option was *via* the north end bathroom added in 2019 to the detention center. It leads to a parallel tunnel that I can use to store the ingredients separately," Isaiah said.

"Oh, what you can't premix it?" Blax asked.

"No, it's like JB Weld, you gotta keep it separate until about an hour before use," Isaiah said.

"Ok, but what about the access is better now with- well, with whatever the hell you had put in that toilet?" Blax asked.

"It was a driver, and it has a chemical signal that will collect each particle of the nitric acid and thus the hydrochloric acid has an omphalos to adhere to," Isaiah said.

“And what about the raw ingredients?” Blax asked.

“Well, we have three months, so I am extracting it from the waste facilities of the detention center,” Isaiah said.

“The inmates?” he asked without clarifying.

“Yeah, and staff,” Isaiah answered without saying it either.

“You can make nitric acid and,” Blax paused, “from bodily fluids and fecal matter?”

“Yeah. It’s easy. Now, look, what will happen is the amount we need will be in excess of 40,000 gallons. So, I will need 87 days to do that. I have already begun with the chemicals and nanobots delivered *via* the inside-man’s urine at the detention center’s doctor’s restroom. That is the hub for all this. I’ve got FLIR images from *Lansat9* that show between 1698 and 1708 metric *tonnes* in their sub-basement. And it’s in a 50 x 40 room. With 8-foot ceilings, so I calculated what I’d need,” Isaiah laid out.

“Won’t the *aqua regia* melt the walls and floor?” Blax asked.

“No, it’s titanium sheathing all the way around; cost $1.1 million to install and it’s what will allow me to steal their gold. If they had stuck with drywall I’d be fucked. The gold is the only thing that will melt,” he said with a smile.

“It must be nice being that smart,” Blax said and shook his head.

“It’s not bad.”

“Ok, so in,” Blax calculated the days, “so March; in March we go?”

“Yes,” Isaiah confirmed.

“Ok, and how do we get all that fluid out?”

“So, you’ll have four tankers line up on Delaware and run 4” line down into the sewer and pump the fluid,” Isaiah began as he was interrupted.

“The corrosive and the dissolved gold?”

“Exactly, and the potency of it will be attenuated by 70% by the next day, and it will take four hours to drain it at 10,000 gallons an hour. Each truck is there one hour then pulls away and sets up the next one. Nobody will even know, we do it on a Sunday. It will be easy.”

“Then what?” Blax asked.

“Then you drive those tankers back to *Lot 45* .”

“Really?”

“Really. And then we can evaporate the fluid and reconstitute the gold,” Isaiah said.

“What,” he paused, “how much is?” He asked this without actually finishing the sentence.

“$80 billion at current prices. That will rise and fall; mostly rise.”

“Fuckity fuck fuck,” he said. “Dude, between the first growths, the art, the *Marbles* and this, we own like 1 trillion in assets, fungible assets,” Blax said.

“Yeah, really $3.45 trillion, and climbing,” Isaiah said.

“That makes us a country,” Blax said.

“Richer than every country except Japan, Indian, Germany, China and the US. Yeah, we’re the sixth largest country by volume,” he said with a laugh that seemed genuine and rare for Isaiah. Blax was happy for him; he was happy for them all.

“And the best part is not the money, it’s how pissed off everyone is. You should see their faces Blax,” Isaiah said.

“Yeah, well, I’d rather not see their faces. And are we just going to leave the wine on *Madeira* or bring it back to you underground bunker? ”

“Yeah, it was there just in case,” Isaiah said.

“In case of?”

“Well, that place heats up to 130 degree each day if the HVAC isn’t working. It’s a Deadman’s Switch to cook that *Bordeaux* wine and turn it into *Madeira* if they fucked with us. But, that was before I had the facility here built, so now I can move it. You *wanna* have the Jacks do it so you can plan this gold caper?” Isaiah asked.

“Yeah I’ll send Jack Four. And what was up with the Christie’s job?”

“Don’t ask. I’m trying to find those cars now,” Isaiah said.

“Do you have this whole thing planned out 100 years in advance, or do you just see shit each day and go, *oh, I could do that* ?” Blax asked.

“I’m not sure I know the exact difference between the two,” Isaiah said with a head tilt that made Blax laugh so hard Isaiah had to turn the volume to his audio-cortex down a bit.

32. Bishop to King 7

Bishop to King Seven

Do Robots Dream of Electric Sheep? [Dick, Phillip K]

Nothing is more revolting than the majority; for it consist of the few vigorous predecessors, of knaves who accommodate themselves, of weak people who assimilate themselves and the mass that toddles after them with not knowing in the least what it wants

Interviews [Goethe, Johann Wolfgang]

It is likely enough that, rooted in the woods of France and Norway, there were growing trees, when that sufferer was put to death, already marked by the Woodsman, Fate, to come down and be sawn into boards

A Tale of Two Cities [Dickens, Charles]

I. 2020 e.v.

She awoke and looked around. The bed was empty of both Sarah and her *Governor* and she smiled as she gave him that name each morning now reflexively. She smelled the starfighters first, so piquant and unmistakable in the room above the din of the street. She laid there and felt her belly and wondered if maybe something had taken hold. She had been off birth control for 8-weeks now and felt so much better; as his semen had absorbed into her over the weeks; as she ovulated and as she had bled.

She sat up realizing it was her birthday and saw on her vanity the flowers in a matte black rectangular vase and the black envelope leaned up against it with her name written -in his large hand- in grey ink that looked -from her location in the bed- still wet.

She rose and walked to it and sat down in her Victorian chair he had purchased from the estate of Ms. Evans down the street when they had visited its black and purple gothic museum on Bannock St, and she had posed at the large John Van Range -out of Cincinnati- cast iron stove.

The envelope was sealed just at the widow's peak and she smelled it and it smelled like his breath on her neck. Her finger broke it and inside was heavy stock paper -in antique white- with hand written prose of just four lines:

And she, named *Rachel* too, was the ship rebuked by *Ahab* and left to

Her *halting course and winding, woeful way,* and did plainly see that the ship

That she was *swept with spray* and *remained without comfort* . Oh, She

was

Rachel indeed.

God he was so cryptic , she thought, *and one never knew if his compliments and declarations of love were baleful or if his woe was as full of love as it could handle;* and thus what over flowed was just sad on account of his inability to feel anything simply or singly or straight forward at all. But she loved it and loved him and held the card to her chest and breathed deep the flowers' effluvium and the words sank into her breasts like ships foundering at sea.

She hoped her feeling was right, she had never been a mother before, but men just know things they say, *man things* ; and she felt women knew *woman things* too.

She had dreamed, she just realized; and the dream was from her enteric nervous system not her brain proper. She had dreamt in the womb and yet only knew this now and had not known it then, in the dream, in the night. She was unsure of how to articulate it, but unwavering in her knowledge of what had occurred.

She sat in the chair and closed her eyes -feeling sleepy again- and let the recall of the somnambulism replay in her inner visual and haptic field; her motor cortex taken off-line, her hands covering her naked belly, and she made no attempt to brush her black hair away, as some strands stuck to her cheek and brow.

She drifted back to sleep in the chair in the light of the Governor's mansion, as the piquancy of the lilies seemed to thread through her like needle and silk in the mouths of small birds. Image and word followed:

> *The voice of man is what brought the light of the dawn; and she was with child and the child was asking -with her thoughts- to be allowed to hear too what the man said.* Turn in a retrograde manner mother, 22 and one third degrees, so I may hear the voice that brings forth the light, *the child in her said as the aubergine light from under the world allowed her to see that she was sitting on wood shavings. The thin chips were filling in the gaps like mortar between flat and hewn stones.*
>
> *She did as the babe wanted and turned to her left that many degrees and the child's ear pressed up against her womb and she cupped her own hands around the spot to help catch the radio waves of the man:*
>
> "The Author is my lode-star; but I cannot tell yet if I am God to his rebellion, he as Lucifer the bringer of light -rebuked and vitiated in some way by what only the aggrieved can truly know- or if I am *Eve* in the

garden, *naïve* and improved by Satan's asp and staff, his Caduceus path; not overtaken by the black wrath innate to all want and wont of knowledge but merely made aware of not just the Tree but its shadow cast. Am I wary of the things that lurk in the unlit place but relieved by its shade?

"Worse still am I the Adam, receiving second hand advice from the Source between myself and God? Can I trust anything I see and hear?

"Even if I never sort this out, I also remain in doubt about the placement of The Author's own *white stones* along not merely the individual path, but along the longer, wider, deeper trench of all human events. I stare at 1851 the way generals must when staring straight into the sun searching for which place the rays come from; and where they may land.

"When I listen that's where I place the firing of the cosmic gun; and see its ballistic ball landing eight years later in 1859 with Darwin's, *Origin of the Species* . As black and bleak as was The Author swaddled in his Calvinist hues, inside His Heart Had Burst, I say that as a man who can hear the echoes of that Huge Organ's thump crescendo with each word from Loomings begun. I have stethoscope I suppose …

"The Author's friend, Hawthorn, said of him that he was too honest & noble to either Believe or Not Believe and he was rent in two and two again because of this. Annihilation was what he had resigned himself to as he, as they, sat on the beach in Britannia, as it eroded there to the cool sea.

"I guess I cannot help but see him walking the gangway to the *Pequod* with his Savage Self, *Queequeg* half *Ishmael* and *Ishmael* half *Queequeg* again, the warnings of Isaiah, the silver splinter of the lamentation that the soul is a sort of a 5th wheel to a wagon, binding the two as they cleave from the hollow courtesy of Christianity.

"His afterword to Hawthorn of the English beach seems apt, but redundant, confirmation of what we all knew to be lost as the Pequod both shipped off -on Christmas day no less- and when it handed itself into the jaws of the Universal Cannibalism of the sea.

"*Milton* gave us the Student of Revenge to justify the ways of God to men. Satan's rationale was smart and logical and full of reliable pride in general manhood like Steelkilt of the Town-Ho. But, *Ahab , oh, my captain my captain* , was The Author's attempt to justify the ways of noble rebellion of man to God and this is wholly different than the arch-angel's logic and impertinence. Ahab was hard in his self-critique and soft in his insolence;

he was offering God a second chance; a redemption they -both he and God- knew God could not accept.

"*The Psychiatrist* felt Christ was God's apology for *Job* . The Author thought that was not nearly enough, and that God ought show penitence for saddling all man with the sanction earned by Adam alone.

"I think it was there, just as one wee drop paralleled *Ahab's* livid scar and fell into the Great Pacific, that The Author poisoned the eternal waters for all mankind. The last fluid thing in him flew out just as Hurricane Eyes fling out vapors and condescending rains that occlude their 5 category sights.

"There is no way for me to know if this was the first shot in a Hot War, the shooting war with God, but with incomplete knowledge in tatters and my instinct intact I trace the first report -muzzle loader blast or mere olive branch epistle- to that goddamn book, *Moby Dick* . A curse on me, a curse on us all; one we'll all be lucky to outrun.

"*The Philosopher* lamented that the earth -even its watery part, its two-thirds- contained not enough brine to wash away all the blood from this meteor of the war; the death of this apologia of Christ."

As Rachel squinted to hold the man's light steady, careful not to drink too much in, she had funneled those words into her daughter's ear, as the other one pointed toward mama's deepest parts. The day had reached a blue noon as the man stopped speaking, and the ground appeared unchanged out in all four directions, until she saw landmarks of tracks and pawprints and feathers laid out in a trail. A low stone wall ringed them and it was darkest where holes opened in the Maginot line, and so she lifted her eyes above it and listened as the baby ask for silence to think .

Where the air rushed in to fill the void where the man's words had been, she awoke and did not know how much time had passed. She tried to look at the light of day, of real life now. It gave no answer. She ignored her instinct to look at the clock, or at her phone. She ignored too the copy of the book -on the vanity- that had commandeered all her dreams as of late. It sat there, Prussian blue and white hot, and the leaves bent at one corner. She didn't even think of from where it had come or why it was antagonizing her so.

Rachel knew that each child, her child and all children from her, would have to choose between man's innate contradiction as a eusocial species: align one's conscience with the tribe or break away from it in one's heart.

Both are natural and both rebellions; and both are each man's one and only choice. Does man follow man's law or God's Law, and how does he know which book to read from with his daylight eyes or nighttime spies as trustworthy Fedallah or not? *Fedallah did tell the truth,* she thought, *most forget that; it was Ahab who took the wrong meaning from those true words, words designed to be misunderstood by the haughty and gleaned only by those penitent and upright in their propitiations.*

There is no right answer , she knew, there is only a failure to choose or the bold acceptance of one's fate from within, a voluntary movement toward what was always true, *what is true for the sun is false for the light, what is false for the moon is true for the night ,* her babe said to her through the amniotic fluid like whale songs and clicks 120 seconds apart.

Her child would choose boldly, and this including the bravery to choose to align with the tribe; for too often the rebel is applauded for her bravery, she thought, *when it takes more guts to stand with the group .* Like all phenomena, rebellion must never be more than a few percent of the whole; this is the law of God, only one of the arch-angels did rebel, one of the original eight.

This was 12 ½ % and that number seemed right to her. She had heard her Governor mention such a number before. She couldn't remember its meaning, but it sat in her belly like a warm stone with an egg of the black wolf laid upon its red-feathers and she told the baby to study it and only feed it once it had broken free from the shell and the rock had cooled to the touch. The babe nodded and spoke through the fluid again: *This is the time of war, and from it will be a new understanding of what war is; not just what is to be fought over, but what fighting itself means to each side.*

Rachel took the babe's wisdom and held it in her throat as she drifted back into a hypnogogic state in the chair and she smelled the starfighters again as if for the first time that day, smiling inside with a flat affect of face, a life inside and death walking apace.

II. 2033 e.v.

Isaiah had built a new algorithm based on the parasite *Dicrocoelium dendriticum* that he had watch infect ants. The parasite infects the brain and causes the ants to crawl -against all usual instinct- higher and higher up the blades of this their fields, their leaves of grass, as the daily ant chores were done and night time propitiations to the gods could begin.

The ants had eaten the slime from snails who had been the original host of the

lancet flukes, irritating the throat making snails cough up the goods. Ants loved this slime, and gobbled it up, where the flukes then moved from the guts of some small percentage of the ants into the central nervous system that quite literally takes over the brain's desiderata.

The fungus controls the brains of ants and turns them into zombies with the desire to climb up and up and howl at the moon in the crepuscular light of evening until dawn. As night falls, the infected ants break ranks and return not to the hive. They religiously climb to the apex of their manifold blades of green grass. Isaiah had found this beautiful and haunting and had built an algorithm to mimic it right away.

He watched as the human herders let their sheep graze into night; the ewes came and munched away in the fields of the *New Zealand* island between *Christchurch* and the town of *Pleasant Point* . The sheep gobbled up the ascendant eusocial ant, and with a belly full of these red and black soldiers and height seekers, and those that climb out on the prow of their ship, the parasite began to work on its real target: the CNS of the sheep.

Any ant not eaten by daybreak returns to work for the day, normal and productive and part of the division of labor again. But as night falls, and it cools, and the parasite activates genes that code for desire, the ants again follow their calling and crawl to the top of new blades of spire & minaret grasses to offer the *muezzin* to the mutton-to-be.

Isaiah, least of all, thought the parasite knew what it was doing in this 3-step process of survival. It didn't know it was manipulating the snail to cough it up in a tasty inviting *Trojan* -horse slime, no way did it comprehend that it would whisper in the ant-mind's ear to make it thus strive to such heights, nor did it know how it had achieved the perfect locale of the ewe as it reproduced in the grassy sack of its belly making itself the perfect choice for the next generation of snails.

It just did; it just was.

And this worked and it was genius and as complex as anything none out of 10 men ever tried. *It was as -or more- complex than the inmate's own simple strategy as the inmate would eagerly admit* , Isaiah thought.

But, like the parasite, the inmate had caused tumblers in a 3-digit lock to open; the first digit by instinct alone; the second, the result of the method of the first, unknown and unknowable to the man. The third was the universe's -and Isaiah as its agent- he thought, both humbled by his mere role in a much larger plan

and buoyed by the fact that he was likely the only one that could perform such an act.

At any rate, he built the algorithm biologically from the genome of the *dendriticum* and the carpenter ant, and modified it with CRISPR and the Cas-1 apparatchiks, adding a dash of *ophiocordyceps unilateralis.* Thus the ingested parasite gave whomever swallowed this fly a yearning to climb down into the heat and anarchy of the southern latitudes; and within 72 hours they'd be dead from the lethal infection Isaiah had annealed to the parasite making them first sick then consume their own fluids in an autoimmune boiling reaching fevers of 110 degrees or higher.

They would first feel -as northern temps lowered at night, as they do in Colorado, as the sun drops and temperatures can cleave as much as in half- the desire to return home; a feeling as pronounced as the ants who felt the desire to climb & climb to the towel of Babel in each blade of *antipodes* grass. He smiled thinking of this, this nuance, and detail that would never be appreciated by those it most benefitted, just as all nature spins around in a whirl of complexity no creature can comprehend.

He did this so that Colorado would not have thousands of South American drug dealers and traffickers and money launderers die in local hospitals or homes or on streets. *That would cause too much attention and so instead they'd return home to die and would -as was only right- be Mexico's problem not America's* , he surmised.

It was the thinking of someone who didn't want to be noticed, stared at, and applauded for what he had done. *Some art need not be signed* , he said, and thought of the benefits of nobody even noticing anything other than that the crime associated with these people had stopped and washed back out to sea .

He watched the traffic flow like respirocytes in the blood vessels of the body of the state; cars and trucks and motorbikes all white light coming and red light going up and down I25 and crosshatched on I70. The AWACS and *Landsat8* live feeds moved in front of his eyes on the big screen in the lab. MO turned to watch it also as each of them noticed the parallel to human cells in tissue and fluid. They watched the metaphor of the highways -full of red and white lights moving in flow- to the turbulence of warm blood and cavitating fluids gently moving each cell, each neuron left or right.

He had added nanobots to each car suspected to be involved in criminal activity and then reduced it to just illegal aliens invading the state like pathogens as they glowed slightly on the 7-foot screen. MO had asked what was highlighted -as he

too stared raptly at the screen- and Isaiah explained. MO nodded and recommended that an algorithm be added to track not just the car but the driver just in case the vehicles were stolen, abandoned and/or returned.

Isaiah allowed the second flag on the algorithm to appear that showed he had done that very thing already and MO mentioned that it -then- all looked good to him.

The overview of the state and its traffic, and its people were so similar to an epidemiological study that Isaiah began to see it as such not metaphorically but literally, and that each marked car was a hand cart ferrying out the dead and the diseased and the pathogenic.

These highways and byways were perfect to track the worst of the worst, for they used them just as viruses use the infrastructure of the healthy cell , the thought. He watched one van cross the border from Raton into Trinidad at 21:55hrs with three glowing markers of Mexican nationals he had tagged nine days ago from their DNA as they had left their house in Aurora and drove south to Houston and then to El Paso and back. *That van would be their tumbril* , he thought, *in a few days -infected- although not yet suppurating and sick, merely obsessed with return, they'd all pile in it and drive back to Mexico leaving their work and their obligations and their plans all undone* .

"*Which the farmer, Death, had already set apart to be tumbrils of the Revolution* ," he said aloud as MO worked in silence on the next morning's meeting on the improvements in the CNS augments in the inmates from group #4.

III. 2024 e.v.

"I hadn't thought of it I guess; I mean, marijuana is already legal, so," Steven fat-thumbed the tablet absently.

"In an evidence-based scenario, he'd legalize all drugs and set up manufacturing facilities to regulate it and dispensaries to sell it and require only that the person be monitored by a physician and law enforcement to prevent re-sale. That would end most of this," MO said.

"Yeah, well you see what the gangs are doing with legal pot, they just grow it here where it's legal and then truck it to states where it's still illicit and command the high price associated with its illicit nature."

"Right, which is why all efforts would be based on re-sale. See, you wouldn't allow home grows for heroin. It would be a manufacturing facility and dispensary program only residents could get and they would have to use it there

or have its use monitored by law-enforcement so no re-sale would be possible."

"How?"

"By tracking it," MO said.

"How?"

"Each gram -or any unit- would be tagged with a benign genetic marker, a molecule that is recognized chemically, by a machine such as this," MO said as he tapped on the new RTX device he had built to track onco-cells marked with a genomic binder, "and the police would then station the RTX at the borders and they read each passing car as it drives by. And if a car is travelling out of state with it, boom they catch it."

"Really, that machine can read that?" Steven asked.

"I could manufacture larger ones that read specific binding *chems* that get annealed to any organic compound. Yeah, easy. And you could put it in airports or UPS or anywhere and the pharmaceuticals never leave the state. It's just a matter of creativity, and man, for all his genius, often lacks creativity. He is too scared to try things like this. Not that I am oblivious to why, there are always political costs, and people are eusocial and need to get along with their peers. It's a good trait actually, but it has costs.

"And the costs are often stagnation. But, the thing is this, if you tried it and could show that none of it left the state, empirically, then people would complain less. What you do, is just do it and then *ask for forgiveness not permission* , I believe is the phrase," MO said.

"Yeah, well in politics you can't just do things. Maybe in business, or a man alone, but politics is a rule by committee paradigm. So, the Governor has power, but he cannot legalize heroin," Steven said with all the courage of the mouse that Isaiah was releasing into his Burmese girl's tank.

"He could order his AG not to prosecute anyone for it, provided that the arrested individuals were Colorado natives and not in contact with any one from a foreign nation."

"How would that be accomplished?" Steven asked.

"This machine can read genomes too," MO said.

"What, foreign nationals have different genomes?" Steven still was not used to being surprised by these machines that looked like men; he was surprised every 10 minutes and surprised each and every time.

“Different races, or *populations* do, yes. And you could measure them all and easily divert the native-born people of Latino heritage out,” MO said.

“Oh Jesus, no you can’t do any of that, you can’t even talk about that. MO, seriously, do not even mention that to Boyd.”

“Ok. Hey, I was just spit-balling. It would still not solve the infrastructure problem, the manufacturing and dispensing facilities and all that. So, I can drop it. I was just offering an idea, because it seems irrational to make drugs illegal when the real problem is *why* people use drugs in the first place. It’s like making suicide illegal instead of making people want to live,” MO said.

“Yeah, well, hippy MO, let’s move on to the meeting we have with the governor at 1500hrs. I need the report digested into human form, bite size bites, ok?” Steven tapped the tablet to clear it and moved toward the door. He had begun using their *argot* , in small ways, mirroring their ways .

“Copy that,” MO said.

Boyd arrived at 1202hrs and they began discussing three things. The Governor began; he often set the agenda.

“Addicts are irrational liars, they lie for no effect. If you ask them how many hands they have they’d say three then squirm, stuff one of their paws in a shallow pocket and then claim to have only one,” Boyd said.

MO smiled and didn’t disagree; Steven just pretended that he had an itch that was more important than responding to that.

“Look, I can’t just hand over the keys to the kingdom to every dope fiend. But, I can see the stupidity of the drug war. It’s just a matter of order; the order of things. Do we get people healthy enough that they don’t want to be addicts first or legalize it first?” the Governor asked.

“I suggest that legalizing it is the first step to reaching the addict; pull him in, under no stress, no threat of legal action, no threat of taking away their prescription, and then build up their life. See, stress is a bad way to teach someone. The law and order types think that unless there are consequences the addict won’t get clean. He thinks you *gotta* threaten them.

“But the addict is not a criminal, who -criminals that is- must be handled differently, harshly. The addict is sick, he is lonely, and in pain. He is not innately anti-social. That is the first epidemiological phenomenon we have to deal with.

“They need social support, friends, they need meaningful work, and creative

outlet, and if you take they drugs away first, they freak out, metabolically, and physically. But if you give them all the drugs they want, so they feel great, and relaxed and in no danger, then their brains relax, the cortisol lowers, the brain stabilizes and now you get them into a program of working with others, building trust.

“Again, there is no need to lie now, the addict has no pressure to lie, because they get free drugs, with no need to lie to gain access nor avoid arrest. So, you take away the *need* to lie, then you can work on re-programming the brain *not* to lie,” MO explain and linked to the full report on the cloud. It included data on the danger of seizures and overdosing that were the result -not prevented by- an opiate addict being cut-off by their physicians. It was heterodox, and correct.

“Yeah, well they will lie anyway, you know the brain science on this, the lying is part of the drug seeking behavior, it’s hard wired,” Boyd said as Isaiah broke in.

“Right, but first shit first, take the need away, then you can re-train them not to lie. And in that process they build true relationships that give them the dopaminergic kick they got from the drugs. Look, this is radical, it’s not intuitive; but it’s epidemiologically and neuroanatomically sound. Are we men of science or not?” Isaiah said with some pique.

“Oh, now you’re going for my balls?” the Governor asked with a grin.

Steven just looked on with wide eyes hoping nobody in this room did anything too radical or he might pee his pants.

33. Guerre à Outrance

We as we read must become Greeks, Romans, Turks, priest and king, martyr and executioner, must fatten these images to some reality in our secret experience, or we shall learn nothing rightly

Self Reliance [Emerson, Ralph W]

The right of rebellion against tyranny has been recognized from the most ancient times to the present day by men of all creeds, ideas and doctrines. The city-states of Greece and republican Rome not only admitted but defended the meting-out of violent death to tyrants. John of Salisbury recommends the dagger… Martin Luther proclaimed that when a government degenerates into a tyranny violating the laws, the subjects are released from their obligation to obey. The Scottish reformers, John Knox and John Poynet, upheld the same point of view. It is well known that in England during the 18th century two kings were dethroned for despotism by the Scots. In 1649 John Milton wrote… *the people, who can enthrone and dethrone kings have the duty to overthrow tyrants.*

La Historia Absolvera Me [Castro, Fidel]

Why did you wish me milder? Would you have me false to my nature?

Coriolanus [Shakespeare, William]

I. 2038 e.v.

"Why is a good question," Blax said and smiled at Jack Four for a little while before offering him a seat and a drink. Jack had thought he might get a simple answer to his laconic inquiry, but as he took both seat and drink and settled into the spot just outside the garage door to the kitchen of Blax's quarters, he knew this was likely to go on for quite a bit.

The other Jacks were in their rooms in the containers above his; the fire had burned down to just grey wood across the concrete and the dogs were all asleep; or half way there. They roused only to yawn, they moved purely to settle into a more permanent stasis.

It was late, 0101hrs, and neither Blax nor Jack Four could sleep; and while their coders could have issued forth a soporific and put them out, they wanted to stay up with their minds tonight. Thinking felt like working to them each, and working felt good, even when it hurt.

"You know my family," Blax stopped and felt his chest contract like a trap on his throat, he had grown so tired of this whole *family* thing, this clutching at the un-severed *umbilicus* , and yet he knew that the boy -the man, the Jack- had asked for this; and details mattered to Blax, they mattered to all men of intellect. *And Jack Four was as smart, smarter even , than he was ,* Blax thought, *and so the details would matter to him too.*

“Well, they always claimed that I never made any sense to them. They said, *you make no sense* ,” Blax said in a falsetto to mimic their declaration of confusion; he even laughed a bit. Jack smiled .

“They didn’t realize how stupid a thing that was to say; did the lion on the plain make no sense to them, did the hawk confound?” Blax asked as Jack nodded along and drank the wine plunging the nose into the glass to breathe then taking large gulps.

“I make every effort to explain myself and -more than any man I know- and I make every effort to have my actions match my words. I fail often, but I at least make the attempt in a world where 99% of men do not even give a shit if they are hypocrites. They do not even attempt to live a noble or honest or consistent life. All they care for is survive, survive, survive, like a beast, like a housefly. And yet I try.

“And for this, for my attempts at aligning my body with my words, and explaining it all to them with words, no shortage of words, I assume you will agree, I do not skimp on the words,” he paused, and Jack agreed that Blax was generous with everything he had, especially all those words he held fast to in that head and chest until it all exploded out in orations that seemed to go for epochs.

“And yet they pled poverty of comprehension each and every time. It was an insult, they incessantly insulted me, a man like me,” Blax said as if he still couldn’t believe it. And yet men like him would always be insulted inside a democracy. A democracy is an innate insult to great men, and this too was natural law. Just like a meritocracy is injurious to the weak. Each system has a hero and villain; the family’s thorn was the black sheep, the tribe had the malingerer or the weak, and democracy’s villain is the great man. And punish him it would.

“The thing is, I do not need anyone to agree with me; I don’t. All I needed was comprehension. And that is the one thing they held back. I merely wanted -shit, I want now- just someone to say, *oh, yeah, I can see it from your POV* . That is it, then they can kill me, run me through with four swords from four sides. But, goddammit, they ought know what it is they kill.

“We know where our food comes from, from out there, in the forest, we know; the hunters know. And we know what is inside our prey; we’ve skinned and gutted them before we took the meat, we’ve seen each part from asshole to heart,” Blax said as Jack nodded and breathed deep into his wine glass. He felt the tobacco notes rise upon wafts of smoke and forest floor as if kicked up by

wolves on the run, *cassis-de-crème* to follow on the nose, he took a small sip this time and let the wine lay on tip, sweetness first, then the wide part of the tongue as fruit pressed between iron and blood sat on that muscle of the mouth and then rose in the brain. He let each part of the wine build *château* and vintage in his mind-space; he saw it now as edifice of taste; a home for that sense to live in. He began to think of the natural abode of each sense of man.

“Is this?” Jack asked and looked for the bottle, to check the vintage, to verify his instinct; but it was on Blax’s right flank and beyond Jack’s line of sight.

“The *Lafite* , ’82, yeah,” Blax said -confirmed- and Jack felt the 56-year-old wine had another 44 left in it; it seemed ascendant still, despite this perfection in the mouth and now falling down his throat and into the heart chambers themselves. He let the cheeks send information on the midpalate and felt grateful for this one glass, and the man who had poured it. *He ought give counterbalance to his pique, Blax was indeed a great man* , he thought, despite Jack’s vexation with him.

“We know, where that bottle came from, we walked the vines, we stored it right, we respected the *château* . Despite the admixture of fame and infamy that the *Bordelaise* have contributed to this earth, we respect the work. And yeah, the bear and the wolves out there would tear our throats out, if given the chance, but we respect them too. We don’t have contempt for mere murder, or violence or power over us. You think the wolves don’t watch man and seek to understand?

“We only ask for understanding. We just want our foils to both tell and hear the truth; hear it,” he said, emphasizing the world *hear* . It was an unusual twist, a turn, an inversion of what most men claim. Most men would demand someone *tell* the truth, but Blax wanted them able to *hear* it most. Jack smiled at his ability to invert and invert again, *to turn the world,* he thought, *around in his hand like a child with a ball, a mercantile man spinning the globe in his athenaeum, a wizard with his orb.*

“But, they can no more hear it than tell it. In fact, I know this now, a man can either tell *and* hear the truth or he can do neither. And my insistence that my idiotic family hear the truth was as futile as my demanding they tell it. It’s not in them, they don’t have the ingredients.

“My father was a hateful man, is a hateful man, I assume he’s still alive the old fucker must be 95 by now. But he had hatred in his heart, and yet he pretended to be just fine. He was taciturn, he kept his heart bottled up in his tabernacle, and he thought nobody noticed. Everyone noticed they just went along because he paid the bills. But everyone knew he was full of hatred and malice,” Blax said as

he realized he no longer wanted his father dead, *as he had wanted for years, decades, since he was 10 years old*, he thought. *Now, maybe in his own old age, now at 64, he had become romantic about the past, wanting to save what he once wanted destroyed* . He thought, *this applied to more than that old man.*

“The point is what they didn’t understand in me was that I was honest about it all. I admitted to my hate, my malice, my murderous mien. I took off the carapace, I was proud of this mean face, I felt no need to hide at all.

“And they thought a man such as me should have the sense -the class- to hide what I was, I heard it 1,000 times from 100 people, *to be careful and watch my words and don’t say this or that.* I was told over and over to hide myself from the world, as if it was the world that was in charge and I was its serf. It never occurred to them that maybe one day I’d hold the reins,” Blax had let the *Bordeaux* warm in his hands, the stemless glass allowed such things and he thought the warmth from below allowed the wine to breathe; and so he let it decant a bit more in the glass.

“You know anything about the 1850s and 60s?” Blax asked and knew that Jack could pull all manner of things up with the PGC. But he asked anyway, it was his way of mollifying, assuaging, softening a man up for what would end up being a lecture anyway. It was not a feint, but a sign of respect, a way to admit in conversation that maybe the listener knows things the speaker does not. But Jack just said that *he didn’t know much and asked his Lt to go ahead and tell him what was on his mind.* Respect went both ways in life.

“See, this is in the decades after The Whale of course, both the book and the phenomena, the beast; anyway, see oil from the ground had been discovered and a man like John Rockefeller was refining all that oil. John Rock said *gamblers drill for oil, businessmen refine it* . I always liked that quote, because there was a compliment buried in the slight.

“Anyway, Vanderbilt was old by then, but he -like all entrepreneurs- saw the future, and he knew this oil and kerosene thing was the new news. So, he sent for JD Rock, so they could meet, and that first train the Rock was set to take crashed, de-railed, and killed all aboard. But John D was not on that train and he took it to mean -his missing the train- he took it to mean that God himself had intervened .

“And this changed everything, and yet most men have no idea, no clue that a thing like that may have shaped the entire industrial revolution and sparked a growth of industry and the instantiation of a modern America like the first mitochondrial DNA in that first cell it let close around it. Both inevitable and

impossible at the same time, I suspect.

“See, by the time this -the saved Rockefeller, the Rockefeller who had benefited from God’s intervention- by the time -many years later- that he actually met with a beckoning Vanderbilt, he, Rockefeller, had become haughty and maniacal. And Vanderbilt, the richest man in the world at that time, didn’t take kindly to this 27-year-old snot nose brat who was bankrupt at the time, and callow and now had this God complex; he -JDR- thought he was chosen by God himself to survive and thrive.

“Rockefeller was not just arrogant, but he refused to bend one bit to Vanderbilt, and Vanderbilt decided right then and there to wreck Rockefeller’s own train, he vowed to get a cold revenge. And revenge he in fact had. But, God, remember this, God always gets the last laugh.

“See, Rockefeller made no deal with Vanderbilt, he took no investment, he went on his way *chosen* as he was, head held high, and did exactly what a man so possessed -or so chosen- would do: he built a goddamn empire. And Vanderbilt was no pussy, he was poor in his beginnings, he too was self-made. He used to fight on the shores of the river for money and he took his pugilistic winning and bought a boat to haul cargo, and he re-invested his profits and on and on. He was no *bourgeois* joke. He was a badass. He was the stuff this country was once made of, a real man. This is what those idiotic anti-civ liberals never get about industry, about capitalism: it is always badasses who start anything.

“Men of raw power, that are 1,000% more -more in every way- than the effeminate complainers that come along 100 or 200 years later and bitch about excess and greed and pollution.

“Anyway, Vanderbilt, he said snidely of Rockefeller, well, *I am not impressive enough to compete with your own view of yourself* ,” Blax said and laughed and shook his head. “Isn’t that a great quote?”

Jack said that *indeed it was* .

“See, he knew that the only way he’d kill Rockefeller’s pride was if he managed to stuff it on that first train that killed all aboard, that the man, JDR, had now an immortal arrogance, just like Vanderbilt himself. To humble a great man you must use great means, and Vanderbilt knew this. Time travel and bleak malice, *black -magick* of some kind,” Blax said and trailed off on his sentence, thinking -Jack assumed- of 1,001 different things.

He was quiet, the head tilted, the drink did not move toward the mouth. Jack did drink and he felt each mouthful had moved forward in time, *the glass of wine*

was a three-act play , he noticed, he felt.

“So,” Blax finally picked back up, “by age 33, he -John D- owns 90% of all refineries of this new fuel. And he makes a deal with rail carries -the railroads- to ship it all at a reduced price; he has leverage, he thinks, because he is the bulk of their rail-business. He ain’t wrong, he’s right, in fact the rail lines are built now just to keep up with fuel *transpo* , the rails were laid for the fuel. But it was a man named, Tom Scott, who owned these railroads and Vanderbilt sent a train for him too. And these two men, they met and they hammered out a deal to revoke all of Rockefeller’s rebates; costing Rockefeller so much money that even his rich ass felt it .

“Now, Rockefeller does not take this lying down, as they say. He builds pipelines, to thwart this railroad obstacle; this is when America allowed great men to just do things. One needed cash and balls only, no permits or sanction from the government or some committee of weak men -or goddamn females- like now-a-days.

“And so, after Rockefeller gets done with his pipelines and has no need of railcar -at any price- to ship most his oil, one third of all railroads go bankrupt; he decimates an entire industry in a fit of pique. But, remember, he did it only because they revoked his rebates that he had negotiated in good faith, and those rebates were revoked purely because Vanderbilt plied Tom Scott with tales of *blue sky* and this and that, just to get even with JDR himself.

“This was not politics by other means, as they say of war, it was war by other means, and these great industrial beasts were at fucking war. And the rest of the country was its battleground, and many a little thing that creepeth and crawleth on the ground was smashed and crushed as two lions fought it out.

“At any rate, there is -at this time as Rockefeller is busy building pipeline as fast as he can- still a railroad from Pittsburg to New York and Tom Scott owns it, and he shuts it down and won’t allow Rockefeller to ship his oil -at any price- upon it. Fire meets fire to put it out and not one man thought that this might be unwise considering the flash point of their cargo, so the war blazed on. So, Rockefeller -in turn- shuts down his Pittsburg refineries, he says, *if they won’t ship it, I won’t make it* . And this crushes Scott in fact, not Rockefeller, and Tom Scott must lay off 10,000 workers and the workers rebel and the railyards go up in arson flames; some 40 buildings and 1,200 railcars get torched.

“But see, underneath Tom Scott was a young man named Andrew Carnegie. That name might ring a bell, yes?” Blax said with a smirk, knowing full well how famous that name was, and that his boys were educated enough in US

history to know Carnegie better than most adults twice the Jacks' age. He had taught them well; broad and deep. They knew history so they could know men. They were taught the past so they would know the man, the animal; and that is why history helps with the fuzzy picture of the future, not because *it* repeats, but because *men* do.

Jack smiled and nodded, he was enjoying this story and felt a twist was upon them, he too had let the wine decant in the glass a bit, and warm above his hand.

"And Carnegie took it personally that Rockefeller had ruined his mentor and boss and friend, Tom Scott. So, Carnegie decided he was going to build bridges and connect America to itself over rivers as wide as the *Mississippi* . See, back then all they had was iron, not steel. Steel was a newfangled invention, like carbon fiber was two decades ago, or our 92-NXS polymer we use today.

"And Carnegie had decided to team up with scientists and metallurgists and inventors to find a way to make steel cheap enough that they could sell it to all builders of all things from ships to buildings and whatnot and to do this they needed to build one bridge, across the *Mississippi* , a feat unheard of due to iron's lack of strength," Blax said.

"Iron couldn't make bridges?" Jack asked.

"Not with that length of span, no. Steel was required for a bridge that long. To use iron, the bridge would need more undergirding support and this would block navigation. Materials dictate what engineering devices undergird a thing, modern engineers forget this as they cut away buttresses and the things that keep a thing -or a man of ancient materials- upright. And so, with Henry Bessemer, Carnegie builds that bridge across the river at St. Louis and drives a mob and an elephant across; to prove its mettle. It was quite a spectacle.

"Steel orders go through the roof, and Carnegie is rich; and the country is being built now with steel; *Carnegie Steel* . And he did it all to slake his lust for revenge again Rockefeller. See, it was malice and vengeance and genius and balls that drew each drop of oil, laid each rail of track, jammed each foot of pipeline, transported each and every good, assembled each bridge, laid each mile of road, that connected each city, each organ, each neuron, each man, each part of this country to itself in the creation story of the modern industrial State.

"Now, I am not one to insist that God meddles in man's affairs. But, one can -if one sees the signal through the noise- one can see that the train crash that John D Rockefeller avoided and the spark of all that mangled death lit his kerosene soul imbuing him with the confidence and unyielding spirit to start a war with

Vanderbilt, a war that piled soldier upon soldier, worker upon worker, to eventually build the Carnegie Steel infrastructure of this country and the world. It was the spark of haughty bravura and anger that layered and thus erected the country; it made bone from cartilage, vertebrates from invertebrates as each city and state and each connection grew in length and span and reach -thanks to that steel in *lieu* of mere iron- as these titans warred against each other with their millions -billions in today's dollars- and their balls and their pugilism and their malice and anger and vengeance, God, their vengeance; one can see it all like the story of the first gods themselves.

"I see it that way, I see that one man being touched by the violence of God can lead to the creation of the titans themselves; the modern industrial State from one spark of God's wrath.

"But, see, and I do not know this, this is just something I see -but I do not necessarily believe- but I see phantoms, outlines, ghosts, apparitions, I hear the sound of thunder or guns, as the sheet lightning illuminates the heavens, and what I see is this: God has touched his finger again on a man, and made him so intransigent, so haughty, so arrogant so imbued with confidence that he is right *and the whole world is wrong* ; that a war has to be fought between men of strength and stature and similar pre-possession if the world is to be re-made.

"We've started a war here Jack. We've believed in ourselves enough to refuse to submit, when most men would have taken the money and run -as the saying goes- most men would have been content to be rich, but we wanted more. We wanted not wealth, but power; not ease, but rancor; not luxury but deprivation, not approval, but opposition. We wanted to be hated by low men and their cowardly wives. We wanted to create a new country, a new organism, a new assemblage of the gods. We wanted new values, we didn't want people just eating and shitting and building small and insignificant lives; we wanted men to be men again, we wanted -from the ruins of the industrial State- a land of true *grandeur* , where great men would indeed be great again.

"But it took not just one man swinging his hammer as John Henry did, it took the war between great men, to pound and blast and atomize the land, the rock, the mountains in our way. It took the war to clarify; to creatively destroy. And I think that is what we've done Jack; we've -through our narrow desiderata, our personal revenges, our limited role- we've started a war that will build a new organism on this planet, from the first mitochondrial cell, to the oxygenation of earth *via* amoebic malevolence, to the Cambrian explosion to the industrial revolution at the hands of hateful men, to now, a civil war, a war between the

States," he said with a smile making a play on the word *State* , to mean now nation-state, which Jack would certainly get .

Jack saw the logic, the evolutionary arc, he did, he had to admit, for all his criticism of Blax, this made a kind of sense that one had to pull back from and narrow too the fovea to see. And Blax, of course, saw the war between himself and the Governor, and between the West and China too. Blax saw each war as clarifying, as building one thing upon another, one outrage upon one more, one additional maniacal flouting of convention and rules just to win once more. This is what simple and safe men, men with no vision always missed about war, *contretemps* , heat; it all contributed to the evolution of life, for without teeth there'd be no armor, without attacks, no defense, without murder, no desire to survive against malice at all.

Without the capacity for betrayal, they'd be no such thing as a brother, a comrade, or a friend.

But, Jack Four felt there was another war, internecine as the rest certainly were; between great men, great nations, and between man himself. *Blax and he would have to fight this out too* , he thought.

For Blax wanted a redo, a do-over for the West and Jack wanted to wipe it out and return to the pagan gods before the West collapsed upon one God, one idea, one utopian ideal. *Manifold gods -before Christ- were in valence with man's true manifold nature,* Jack thought. The ideal of the gods must be split again, it was he -he thought ironically- who was more democratic than the West. The West wanted to shuttle each man under one epicene god, one ideal of what man ought to be.

We want to immanentize the eschaton , Jack thought and yet could not smile as the war between the two men, and each man alone, continued on.

II. 2020 e.v.

The temperature in the lab was 65 degrees, which was set at 68 initially by PraXis, but as MO began to increase his cognitive load he began producing more heat. In order to maintain optimal homeostatic levels he had lowered the lab temperature to 66 degrees Fahrenheit. Isaiah had increased his testosterone three weeks ago and so his allostatic temp regulation required the temperature to be even lower.

Isaiah sat on the concrete chair he had designed and had printed out; he was reading a book. He had committed to reading one haptic, old fashioned paper

book, for every 1,000 digital books he read. The inmate had convinced him of the joy of it. And he was finding its pace pleasurable, even when it was maddening. It was like the tension of slowly chewing food that tasted so good that you wanted to bolt it down and incorporate it in your core and effect the next bite as quickly as possible, versus wanting to savor each bite languidly for its own sake.

He was reading the book the inmate would not shut up about; the inmate had demanded it be read in fact.

He had said that he couldn't ever take a man seriously who had not read it. It was foundational, it was the best thing written since the *Bible* , he insisted; he wouldn't even mention his name, referring to him only as, The Author. Isaiah read and took breaks by thinking of why he was even reading this thing, recalling the quotes, the AV files replayed in his mind's eye, which for him, due to his increase in visual and auditory cortex representation, was similar to a simulation of the event .

He enjoyed watching his own history this way too; the files often contained more information than his original experience, because he purposively truncated the amount of real-time data when dealing with humans. He had to truncate reality all the time, as there was too much info always, but dealing with people made it even more important to eliminate most truth and most reality, and deal with as narrow a band of data as possible.

Otherwise, one would get frustrated by their lack of knowledge or their own hemmed in perceptions; they saw less than 0.1% of the world, but had no idea of course, and spoke with the assurance of a child who thinks it knows much more than it even *could* know, let alone what it *does* know. So, in order to mirror and match, Isaiah and MO too, manacled their perceptions around humans to avoid a disconnect. But all that data was taken and stored for retrieval. Isaiah purposively made himself temporarily retarded -relatively speaking- just so he could deal with humans.

He had told the inmate this and the inmate had laughed and said he understood; he related that it was similar to refusing to mention anything of substance whilst speaking with his family; that they were so shallow and unlettered that sticking to the weather and discussions of food were about all they could handle. If one tried -which the inmate quixotically had for years- to engage them in any other deeper conversation his family would founder and flail and accuse you of *only wanting to talk about one thing* . It all sounded the same to them, so dead were they to variation beyond certain zones, each new topic or new connection he

made was white noise to their mind's ears. Isaiah almost couldn't believe the inmate had come from such crepuscular parents.

Isaiah shook his head and began to return to the page of the book. He read on for a paragraph and found it so bizarre, almost an incantation, that he stopped and let his own mind stir the pot a bit. He imagined that paragraph had been a bin of grapes in maceration, and now he'd punch down a bit, and drive the skins and stems into the effluvial muck. It had read:

> *The white whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung. That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning; to whose dominion even the modern Christians ascribe one half of the worlds; which in ancient Ophites of the east reverenced in their statue devil; Ahab did not fall down and worship it like them; but deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred white whale, he pitted himself, all mutilated, against it.*

That prose was saying three things at once, and three again within that , Isaiah thought. He toggled off all algorithms, all mathematic analysis for now. He let only his cerebellum run in background and felt himself be confused. One hemisphere tied behind his back, he though with half mild malice and half arrogant magnanimity, that he might let the book -the art- have a fair shake against him some 1/3rd of the time.

This book had the inmate by the balls, there was no doubt about that , Isaiah thought. It was a cypher he declaimed. Isaiah had presupposed he would decipher it, unweave it a bit and hand that analysis to the inmate as a gift one day. But, it was proving more difficult that he had assumed; he began to agree with the inmate that The Author himself had barely known what he was writing, that he *had a wolf by the ears* just as the reader might think he had it by the tail.

But he had agreed with the inmate's analysis of a few things, and the historical meta-analysis was largely linking up as well. The inmate had left a lot out, and made a few obvious mistakes, but his dissection of it was -while borrowing heavily from Thompson's, *Melville's Quarrel with God*- rather odd and unconventional, and full of uncanonical ideas, for certain .

Isaiah had suffered to read the last 100 articles, and literary criticism, on the book that had been produced over the last 10 years and then 100 more from years 1960 to 2010 and found a discernable lack of gravity among the literary people who offered their critique. Literary critics were almost monolithically stupid and vapid.

Mostly people seemed to think Starbuck was the good guy and Ahab the dark villain; but of course, that was all wrong. But, more than that, they had their metaphors all mixed up, they misread The Author in stark ways but in subtle ways too. They missed the *portmanteau* of men, the joining of Ishmael and *Queequeg* and the Captain and *Fedallah* , and the *Ocean* itself with the Whale. *The trinities cleaved in two* , Isaiah had to give the inmate credit, *he had noticed that The Author had created the archetype of self, culture, nature and the good and bad in each; this was not something most people even knew was possible, much less laudable, in any work of thinking and art.*

But, The Author's quarrel with God was deeper than most knew; what Isaiah had discovered was hidden cyphers in the text, numerological in nature; *and The Author was possessed* , Isaiah felt. And the man of revolutionary, heroic and lauded lineage back to the Delaware and Fort Stanwix and a failing, dissolute and heartbreaking father was bursting with this demonic incubation. He was both casting it out and ingesting it again with damnable pride in his capacity for containing and recognizing evil.

It was the Maginot line, the Rubicon, Isaiah thought, *the precise moment when mankind had produced the literary equivalent to articles of war.* This was the moment *the Philosopher* and *the Russian* looked back upon with horror; The Author was the first man over the barricade, with spear in hand, just up from the bow of the boat and harpoon in hand, plunging it in to God, and attempting to pierce His heart; that organ way below the blubber. *It was no accident,* Isaiah thought, *that Nietzsche lamented all the blood to be cleaned up with seawater from the death of God* . The Author had killed just such a giant creature -the only beast- which contained that much sanguinary fluid. *His heart had burst* ! was the cry from *Daggoo* , the heathen from the afric naval, first witness to the death of God from the muck of the afterbirth.

A catastrophe of a novel, he thought, *the perfect recording and intimation, the first curse and apotropaic, the lamentation and the glee, God for you but not for me. It was barbaric and true, and beyond true; it was indeed Great, like conquerors and murderers and the most insane are Great; like the things that inspire awe, like predators and snakes, like the things that doom mankind, in that way: The Great. And for once a man, an artist had seen the Great in God, and he sought to kill it!*

It then occurred to Isaiah that something else was at work; the inmate had been insistent on the great works, the canon. He had said something to his brother, Isaiah pulled up the audio file:

Travis, to not read novels, to discount fiction as frivolous is to miss the entire point. Art, all art, but literature especially, builds analogy to the innate drama -the inner drama- of life. *Man is in a story* , you see? Story, narrative, is the human universal like language and marriage, and God. It's a human ubiquity, and this is because we see in story, in drama, moral drama; we do not see mere objects, we see in terms of drama. Ask a child why they can buy into all Disney movies with their talking clocks and singing salt-shakers and dancing artifacts; where all things have intention and motivation and souls? Kids are natural teleologists, they believe in the universal intention and inner life of everything from pets to pool cues, and everything and everyone has a story to tell.

This is at bottom a primitive thing, in both senses of that word, in anthropological terms, it's ancient and subjective but true, in mathematical terms it's axiomatic and irreducible; it's asserted.

Literature is not optional for the development of man. Primitive man had the oral tradition, that was reified in religious texts, which is why the major works of religion are all so similar. Modern man has developed the literary novel, and this is where we run face to face with our own psyches, the way ancient man saw himself in the stars and in the movement of the sun and moon; the way atavistic man saw himself in *Job* and *Abraham* : *a man in the land of strangers* .

Travis, without literature you are in the same position as a man without religion or oral tradition; a man, a mariner, with no map to the stars: *lost* . You have no inner life. You worry, wring your hands over the idea that you are shallow; it's because you have abandoned all cultural tools that mirror and match our inner lives. You've never seen yourself.

Most people have God; you are an atheist, and so unless you want to end up as soulless as Sam Harris, as antiseptic as Richard Dawkins, as dorky as Shermer and corrupt as Krauss, you need to read novels; none of those guys read literature. Hitchens was the only one, which is why he had a soul and was real, and funny and moral. Literature saved him and it will save you if you allow it. The soul has demons inside it bro; they were born there. We are not blank slates. You must look into the mirrors that other men, great artists, have polished and turned toward you. Look!

Isaiah replayed it again and thought of sharing it with someone. MO, he quickly dismissed, for he lacked the sub-cortical regions to appreciate myth and story; Steven was not much better, an engineer of all things. *But Tania, maybe,* Isaiah

thought, *this would be the time to begin to be the prodigal son, to reach out, genuinely, with this finding and work a little on her soul* .

He then thought that the inmate had had a vasectomy at 26; *what was the metaphor in this?* he asked himself. He was drawing a line in the sand, saying *I will not live for the next generation, it's me, that's it, I live -right or wrong- for this*, Isaiah surmised and let his mouth smile a little bit. He smiled as he thought of how metaphors can build and build on themselves until you have a language that begins -each word- as rune, as symbol, and then you use each semiotic to build sentences of little analogies, and then whole books that are extended allegories and a literary canon that stands for something else, something deep down, primitive, and old, something before words were ever spoken: a head with a tail in its mouth.

He thought of a bookshelf moving west to east, all in a curving, horizontal line, and each book a trope within a trope, avatar within avatar, that described each atom inside the man. He thought, obliquely, without words, that this meant each man was the constituent part to the gods.

III. 2020 e.v.

"Ok, then riddle me this," the inmate said, "you got an 18-wheeler full of Old Milwaukee's Best beer, 1,000 cases; shit you got a convoy of them, 100 big rigs full of beer. And you got one car, say, a 1969 Dodge Charger, 426 Hemi in it, four speed, black on black on black; and in the back seat, one case -12 bottles- of 1990 *Château Pétrus* . Ok? "

MO nodded while running the history, values, caloric data, volume data, extant copies of each in the world as of this moment; all of it, on each item mentioned. There were 1.45 million facts to be gleaned -all living- just under a mere 19 rubrics. He had hemmed in the data as much as he could and still feel like he was prepared.

"Now, each of these things, the convoy of beer, the Charger with an OWC of the best wine in the world, each is going opposite ways on the highway, say I25; north and south. And there's a missile strike set for the north bound lane or south bound, and say the beer is going south and the wine going north, and you *gotta* choose. You *gotta* choose to divert the missile to the 100 trucks of beer or the one car of wine. What do you do?" the inmate said and took his glass of wine from Isaiah and set it on the concrete pillion to his right. The food, some goat cheese and arugula, black mission figs, and raw cashews on a matte black plate had been there for nine minutes.

He was allowed out of his manacles for now, while they *feted* him, and while a neural block was placed on him so that he could not stand up. He only had use of his arms and trunk while uncuffed.

“Well,” MO said as he calculated worth and lives and collateral damage and on and on for 8-seconds, which allowed him to calculate the likely sequela for up to 19 years for each hypothetical attack, “I’d likely save the trucks and their cargo. It’s the most good for the most people; the least harm, is another way to put it.”

“You’re a democrat,” the inmate said as if this was an insult, a pejorative, something he reluctantly said, something he hated to call such a good man, a man such as MO.

“Ok,” MO conceded.

“I’d nuke not just those big rigs of shit beer, I’d allow their whole families to be killed to save that one driver of the Mopar and that case of *Pétrus* ,” the inmate said with zero ambivalence.

“See, not only is that car worth a million dollars, and the case of wine worth $150,000. Both the car and the wine will increase in value over time. In 50 years that car will be worth $100 million, the wine worth $1.1 million. But, those rigs and that beer in 50 years?” he just asked the question as if it was obvious all of it would be worth zero.

“Ok, what about 100 truckers versus 1 driver of the car?” MO asked.

“Ok, whomever is badass enough to own a triple black 1969 Hemi Charger and a case of *Pétrus* is too cool to allow to die. He’s the kind of man that has taste, he’s a god among men, an artist. He must survive, he is more important than 100 truckers; and look, I am a working-class guy, I have massive respect for truckers, but let’s face it, in my little thought experiment, the trucks are now driven by AI anyway. So,” he shrugged and let the barb fly as if he was in a whale boat and MO was the whale. He knew the ratio of barbs landed to those thrown in the fishery and here in the lab too.

“*Touché* ,” Isaiah said from the other side of the lab as he began tying brown-bear claws to a ball-chain.

“Look, I ain’t a democrat. I think most men are dross; I think democracy is a failed idea. Here’s why: it harms the great man. Now, admittedly, autocracy, meritocracy, harms the average man. I am not oblivious to the harm done. In all seriousness, 100 dead truckers and 100,000 cases of beer blown up is bad. But, that case of *Pétrus* and that Hemi Charger and the artist -clearly a great man- who drives that shit, is worth more, not in biomass, not in fungible value, not in

calories, not metabolically, but in value, in ontological value, man.

“He’s a man who will increase in value over time, he will create more life, more heart, more art, than those truckers who are just entropic beings, MO. They have no future value, they create nothing, they imbue nothing, they are mere hedgehogs and foxes, to my dear lion behind the wheel of that 425-horsepower mare of Detroit iron with 12 bottles of the finest wine in the world, the elixir, the *ichor* of the gods riding shotgun, MO.”

“I thought the wine was in the backseat?” MO said.

“MO, you see the trees’ DNA in *lieu* of the trees. You see the details when I am describing the gestalt whole.

“I stand for the heart goddammit! I stand for what is epic, what increases in value, what is salient, what is unique and rare and kingly, not what is democratic and common and *de rigueur* . What’s more important: 12 planets or one star? The star can live without the rocks, can the rocks live without the star?” he breathed heavily and felt his blood sugar drop as his head spun a tad.

“The head does calculous, it measures overall human wellbeing like it’s some science project in 8th grade. The heart values what is noble, what is grand, what is unique! I’d rather have one 20-hand-high charger of Shakespeare than 100,000 Joyce Carol Oats to feed the common pony; one ontologically regal but temporally impecunious lion of William Blake over a million fucking vacuous and slick and commercial, cash-cow Stephen Kings; one ballsy joke, one giant, potent, musky, seminal load of Bill Hicks on the face of the queen herself over the scatological droppings, the harmless fawn ploppings of 1,000 Sarah Silverman’s in the hallways of the palace.

“Dude, MO, my nigga, you must understand,” the inmate said and breathed out with a huff.

“I do. I disagree, but I understand. And your adjectives are especially odd - prurient even- today,” MO said. He re-ran the endocrine algorithms to see if anything was out of the nominal envelope that the inmate’s genome was supposed to have created with the new gene expression toggle.

“FYI,” Isaiah added with a grin as the inmate took a drink from his wine.

“And let’s add this,” the inmate said as he grabbed some food between his fore and thumb and dropped in the mouth, “in 1864, Ulysses S Grant, commander of the Union forces, refused to participate in any more prisoner exchanges with the Confederacy until the *rebs* agreed to hand over black northern soldiers alongside the white soldiers. See, the south was refusing to exchange black POWs giving

back only white northern soldiers in these prisoner swaps.

“Now, these swaps saved men’s lives. It was no joke. In 1864 in Andersonville, there were 33,000 white northern soldiers held captive by the Confederacy. Each one of them was free to go, if Ulysses Grant merely gave the nod to exchange them for the rebels that the north held.

“But he refused on principle; MO, *on principle* . He said that he wouldn’t take one of his white soldiers back unless the South agreed that black northern soldiers were men too, and thus deserving of their place alongside whites in these exchanges. But the south refused. And it is easy enough to blame the south for this. Sure, they were racists, and brutal and unjust. I agree. They ought to have included black northern soldiers in their exchanges .

“But they didn’t. And it was Grant who decided to let those 33,000 white soldiers languish at Andersonville for over a year while he refused to negotiate their release,” the inmate said as MO accesses the files for the Civil War and checked out the details the inmate relayed.

“13,000 white union soldiers died outright in the filthy, septic, stinted conditions of the southern POW camp; that was first. Then of the remaining 20,000 the average man lost 40% of his body weight; the average man returned in 1865 -at the end of the war- weighing under 100 pounds. Those were the survivors MO. The survivors were mere ghosts of men.

“So, when modern blacks, these black lives matters shitheads, when they call this country *racist* , I wonder if they know that this country let 13,000 white men die for no reason other than to stand up for the dignity and parity and democratic ideal that black men are ontologically equal to the white man; I wonder if they know that 20,000 men had their lives -their bodies- cut in metabolic half just to prove a point that this country, the US of A wouldn’t allow the south to say blacks were less than whites?” the inmate raised a brow. MO ran the data files and saw the inmate was correct; the numbers were rounded up, but not by much.

“And this is on top of the hundreds of thousands that died in battle to free the slaves, I’m just speaking of those that could have been saved with the stroke of a pen; a handshake, between Grant and Lee. And Grant let those men die, and waste away, just so he could protect his goddamn democracy; the notion of each man was equal to any other. So, you put your big brain on that and see what math or science has to say,” the inmate said and looked at his fare and wine and turned contemptuously away.

34. King of the Cannibals

The vast mass of our fabric, with all its storerooms of secrets, forever slides along far under the surface

White Jacket [The Author]

He drank and wenched his way through all of London; thinking all the time

Becket or the Honour of God [Anouilh, Jean]

Since he is convinced of his innocence and unconscious of his shadow, the personal unconscious compensates by criticizing himself

Encounter with the Self [Edinger, Edward]

I. 2028 e.v

She saw trees bent at the ground, in a swoop, like a dancer, like a bow. They were Aspens and Birch and the ground was black at bottom and sky grey at top and the bends were low like a saddle, and all in a wave like the sea breaking over a reef. Birds flew and landed in the saddle like men, with javelin and shields on their wings, and tattoos of bear traps on their necks and thick metal hoops with small inner diameters around their beaks.

"The Eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow," she heard them think in the words of Blake, and they began alighting from the trees as each word was spoken inside her head. 17 birds total, one remaining and he began speaking about the eagle when it was a landlocked creature, who spoke to everyone he met. The blue bird -and he was blue now, The Bust saw- and the blue bird spoke more of the eagle in ways that seemed far away and thus closer to when things were less corrupt. When the fruit had just been plucked and was not yet in decay. A story was told to her:

"The eagle talked so much that he couldn't hear the wolf and the bear arguing over the rivers, and the sound of the sun lowering in the sky. The eagle spoke eloquently, but promiscuously and in languages the other beasts did not speak. He spoke at night and at daybreak and for as long as the arc of the sun ran above them. The eagle spoke until he was right.

"But one day man, the Adam, captured the Eagle from behind as he spoke to a crowd of leaves on the ground. And man shaved the bird's head with a jaw bone and warned him to quiet himself as he and his wife were sleeping in the trees just above.

> “The eagle nodded and spoke into his skin, and feathers grew where words once were planted. The eagle lifted off and thus spoke with his soaring; he spoke so far away the words turned to unbroken and lofty sentences for the eyes imprisoned in man; hidden in the forest’s 1,001 heads. It was so far away that man’s woman -in wet ash-ink mixed with blood and scat from the bear and the cloudy milk of man’s seed- wrote on the rocks: *I’ve just heard all that need ever be said.”*
>
> *The Bust knew where these trees bent and held and gave rest to the birds, she’d had this dream in the womb. And now she was dreaming again 92 months from then, and she looked down at her wrist for the time just below the thick glass of her chronometer; analog hands in tritium white and green, numbers in letters and a second hand at full stop .*

She awoke.

It was late, almost midnight, and the moon shadows elongated in the dream like a drawn sword, like a bowsprit plunging in the icy sea on Christmas day. She left their bed and she sat down on the concrete floor and prayed to the God, Isaiah, for knowledge first; then wisdom in time. She knew her father was behind her, asleep in bed still; she need not turn to see him, for he saw her. And she saw through his eyes anyway, his anima, a part of the whole that only a woman could not rebel against. For women seek completion while men seek perfection. *This was the way of God’s wisdom,* she thought. *For him she would be perfect, and for her, he would complete the splintering world .*

This was -she thought- *the genius of woman, to support the thing larger than her, for all was larger and she never needed to compete with what was strong in the world like man did .* This was her reprieve from God, as payment for her woe.

Woman had three reprieves: she need not work dangerous jobs, like man; need not defend the tribe in war; like man again, and need not die for woman, like man thrice.

Woman had three woes: she must live for two, but with strength of only one; she must die for child just to be born; and she must not fight even when to fight is just. She must always think of the whole.

This was fair, and God had made it so, but modern woman only looked at the woe and ignored the reprieves. Modern woman only saw her burden not her gifts. The Bust felt grateful to God for all that she had; all that she was and all that she contained to pour out onto the earth and into her father, her love, her self.

Blax loved her and that dog more than he loved himself, and that is no small thing, she thought. Man is built to love woman in a way woman can never match as she is loyal first to their child, 999 of 1,000 times. This must wound man's pride, but he often remains silent, jumping on that inner grenade so that it not concuss anyone else. *Women undermined men's confidence as if they -man- were not holding up the roof over women's heads* , she mused. *Women were fools in ways men were not. And the reverse was true too* , she thought.

Why did they do this, how much was there to gain by this self-sabotage? Women ought to embolden and encourage their man, but they do not. They tear down what they ought to protect and restore, women were vandals, churlish teenagers, marring the walls of a great temple to the gods; Islamists dynamiting great works of the soul imbued in the flesh of God's first man; each man , she felt.

She felt truly sad for man, God's greatest achievement run into the ground by poor breeding first, democratic breeding that made man corrupt corporeally, weak and unclean; second, in *lieu* of helping him up, regaining his dignity, woman just pointed and laughed, jealous of all that was man; lastly, she strangled his sons from the jump, feeding them poison so they may not thrive and placing bricks on their heads so that they may not grow, sewing doubt in their strength and masculinity so that they may never competently provide for man's daughters in the Great War .

Daughters abandoned by first despondent, then incompetent men will -as the mothers knew- lose confidence in man too; and the cycle picks up velocity, torque and churns up storms of all sons and all daughters into the maelstrom of this acrimony and dropping androgens and a rise in aggro females who turn their backs on the whole. The storm was in full retrograde spin, with men flying like broken banyan trees and women standing with saws in their hands; boys flailing about on hexes of pharmacological spells and shame in their heads for daring to grow up to be men; girls drinking through straws that reach outside the hurricane and drop into the sea, salting their pubescent fields so nothing may ever grow . She saw it all as the eagle flew above the eye of the storm and refused to look down below.

Man was God's only chance to do good, she thought, *and woman was ruining this* . She was henpecking and browbeating and laying man low, and she was breeding weak sons on purpose, and vitiating them even more once they were born. Woman was in full rebellion, and it was going to get them all killed, and worse, man would do it from submission not pique, from depression, not mania, from weakness not strength, from chaos not tyranny. It was Satan's obvious plan:

to get woman to encourage man to commit suicide and then blame the bloody mess on the man.

A child that has it out for their mother is the second most dangerous thing in the world, she thought. She heard Blax breathe in the night and the light of the moon and she too took a deep breath. She thought of her grandmother and wondered how her voice sounded when she spoke up for her boy. She wondered if the world too was curious for such a sound.

A woman who is bent on her man's destruction is infinitely worse, she then concluded. For man protects the whole enterprise, he does all the most dangerous and creative work, man lifts mother and child out of the muck; and has for 1 million years. Woman's ingratitude is shaped liked a dagger laid out with a note that just barely says, in fact whispers: *seppuku . God,* she dared to think, *will allow it to proceed, he cannot intervene, and can only watch as it is all again wiped clean. And maybe there is good reason for it all.* Again she prayed. She promised not to mention that even beauty and love hurt the heart.

It made *The Bust* sad, as great men did walk amongst them, great men with scar tissue and ill-healed wounds and too much muscle for their skeletal framework crushing the bones and tendons and making the body less articulate than it could be. *Great men that were rotting on the inside from lack of sunlight and air, great men who desperately wanted a good girl to love and would do anything for her and their child if just given the chance, great men that had instincts for love and protection and encouragement, all bounded and jailed and told to sit down, enjoined to submit to tyrannical women* , she thought in the moonlight among grey walls and black books and a man riven with black scars like a map to the stars laying just shallowly-asleep, just one meter away -from her- laboring to breathe nutrients into that bear body at high altitude, addicted to opiates even in sleep.

God , she pleaded, *he just needed to be encouraged to be what he was, nothing more, and yet he was hated for it from day fucking one . God, who allows such a thing to a boy, a boy of not even four or five; who allows a boy to be hated by his own family? This is worse than Job, have you learned nothing from that* ? she rebuked Him and instantly felt bad; foolish; impertinent.

She apologized and admitted she did not know the larger plan and was certain there was one and she was too small in body and mind and soul to understand God's infinite designs for man. *But , God ,* she added, *you made me with heart, he with heart, so that we may suffer when goodness is held in abeyance and wickedness is elevated; our instincts are to hate this, hate it my Lord. A man*

without capacity for hatred of evil can do no good among us .

“You gave us hate, you gave us all these things, so that we may know you from the student of revenge,” she said in a whisper into the late, now 0135hrs air. “Discernment is the result from the tools of love and hate both, the tools of opposites just like how the cosmos was itself built. Like man and wife.”

She knew her father, her larger, older, more competent self, was dreaming of God’s rejoinder to her. She could hear the gears grind in the dark.

He was *in situ* , on his back, paralytic and with only his capacious chest rising like *Goethe* and his hands in two fists like Zeus. She turned to look at him and he was like an approached mountain, a buried, extinct beast covered in sliprock and dew, a thing that hid the sun in the dawn and held the last light of the dusk on its high-edged surfaces. *He,* she thought, *was from whence scattered the birds.*

She knew he dreamed of her answer, deserved or not. *God would speak,* she thought, *like the eagle with no need to speak; maybe He would give her images of His flight to see, and she would discern it like the sun behind trees bending their trunks so the straight light may reach her round eyes . Eyes,* she then thought, *that he had called coruscating, that even in the dark of night where no flicker obtained, a super novae -he had said- was busy dying inside her and that he intended to peer into her, for her blinding eyes made him see.*

Maybe , she thought. She thought maybe God would allow her -if she were humble and penitent enough- to crown Blax as King of a world that would never hurt her at all. She would see him as man saw himself, and as man saw the gods who -if propitiated to- protected them from the demons and *djinns* of the desert and the kraken of the seas and made the wolves circle but never encroach.

She would see her man as the *force majeure* for good that he was; and that his violence was just and his sword was clean of the blood of the innocents but red with it from sinners and fallen angels alike. This was war and her man was king of all wars -all that warred- against her and her sacred tabernacle, her womb where one day soon they’d roll away the stone and retrieve the son of God. *One day soon,* she thought, they would make love, and it would be real love for she was clean and he was capable of great violence and this was the ground of two elevations where the gods in fact met.

She rose on her little legs, smooth and white and perfect, and clambered softly -as if of no mass at all- onto the foot of their bed and lay herself upon his chest as it rose and fell like the sea, and she fell quickly asleep and dreamt she was on a solid craft, a thing of trophies, laureled with jaw bones of leviathan; bear skulls

for keys to the windlass. She dreamed of coyote teeth in the hands of the swart men in the riggings sewing with spider lines white into dark grey sails made of the skins of scarred bulls of the sea, the eye holes small but bright as the stars shone through them like flaming arrows come to land on the oft swept deck.

She dreamed again with a dark captain tilting on the forecastle deck and a red glow of his cigar high -but below the brow- pulsing in rhythm like a slow light guiding the approach. He was her captain, *oh my captain* , she felt as she dreamed and her lungs filled with 19% oxygen air.

They both dreamt of gods and demons and man in between. The wolves kept perimeter and made not one sound for now.

II. 2031 e.v.

He debated how much to reveal. He shivered as the words spoke inside his head. He balked and felt the inhabitants of heaven wrestle inside him. He arose from bed and glanced at his work, the books stacked up like pyramid, 10 or more and papers in long hand black and margins too; both sides. He walked heavily on the dense concrete floor and recalled his dreams. He dreamt in the same mind as his waking life, he had little left in subconsciousness that he did not already know and acknowledge. He was well aware of how dark a beast he was; he and his shadow shared the same space and time.

He took it for granted, and he knew he should not, that other men were this self-aware. He should have thought back to his youth and remembered how his shadow was hidden from himself, like the man under noon suns often is.

She awoke as his weight uncompressed the bed, she said nothing, just watched him walk down the hall and heard the sound of a bottle opening and draining into a glass and then heard the garage door open -he did it quietly, thoughtfully, thinking her still asleep- and she saw his dark form glide out the northern side of the container.

She snuggled in the covers and felt cold and warm both; she shivered and counted her lucky stars to be alive in this place and time. She had slept next to a king, she felt. An uncrowned king, she thought, and imagined it -his crown- held by some cabal of little men, deep in the earth, under the sea itself, as they snuck around trying to be quiet too. She knew what man ought to be, it took a woman, a little girl, to see what men grown tall -but not wise enough to look upon the ground- could not see.

Men do not see the loss of their kingdom, she mused, *they assume it had never*

been, and let the sands cover, the waves wash away, the dark hide, the sun blind, the din of modernity drown out the sonorous song of their birth right . She looked upon his desk, the bricks of books, the mortar of paper and the trowel of pens heaped up in a paper-ziggurat as the sun beams of morning lay across her legs and drew a white line upon the cement grey wall.

She saw the spaces between pages as each book had been dog-eared so many times, she saw the hand-written notes as she sat up and invigilated the mound, the high ground of his work. She crept toward it like a cat, stalked it with what to her seemed now a purr, her stomach growling and mouth filling up with saliva and want. And right on top was a page written in elegant long hang, with big loops and arrows for crossed Ts and the whole thing a map to what he must have dreamed. She read:

> No longer am I going to show kindness to the inhabitants of the world, so *saith* the lord. But instead I mean to hand over every man to his neighbor, and to his king. They shall devastate the world and I will not deliver them from their hands. Then I began to pasture these sheep bred for slaughter for the sheep dealers. I took two staves: one called *Goodwill* and the other *Union* . And so, I began to pasture the sheep… but I began to dislike the sheep and they equally detested me. I then said, *"I am going to pasture you no longer; let those that wish to die, die; let those that wish to perish, perish; and let those that are left devour each other's flesh!"* I then took my staff, *Goodwill* , and broke it in half, to break my covenant that I had made with all the peoples.
>
> Zechariah 11:6-10

Her heart burst into a flame within a conflagration, her whole body was red iron and black basalt and Damascus steel, she was a tiger with a hawk's third eye, a woman with a man's DNA; she felt her hands reach for larger things. *My God,* she thought*, this man, this man, this regal man, he was searching out the God of days that gave birth to real men, days long ago, before the democracy of marriage allowed to every man, and the equity of bearing children for each man, before the species had turn to so much dross* .

Those who valued the weak and stupid valued nothing, she thought, *he or she who leveled the earth, had made it all low and let armies far apart have clean line-of-sight now to attack and be attacked* . Lack of value was no recipe for peace, it was invitation to war; it was land without mountains to break the storms or stop the fires, and God had seen that before man had even lost his courage, before woman had hidden it from him. God had offered man all he need to be

courageous and noble and right, and he instead chose to be a woman, and let woman fumble as they attempted to be men. *Imagine a world where the trees let themselves dissolve to be rocks and the buried megaliths stand up to try and breathe* , she thought. *Imagine a wolf eating grass and the deer drinking blood from the skull overturned* , she said to herself under her breath as the covers no longer gave her any warmth.

She thought of *Euripides' Medea* , boasting that she would rather *stand three times to face their battle shields in hand than bear one child* . What a fool and a dangerous woman, The Bust now thought and ruminated over *Euripides* warning of when shameful things are fashionable.

God has the wisdom of 1,000 great men multiplied by 1,000 women pregnant with five wise men in each their wombs. *God has spoken more times that we deserve* , she thought, and Blax has written it down so that we may learn it with our hearts, downstream from our eyes. Wise men must not desire to be seen as wise, she nodded in agreement with this received word, they must act, as God instructs them to act, in accordance with their hearts, hearts written over with the word of God. *No longer am I going to show kindness to the inhabitants of the world* , she repeated and rubbed the paper with her thumb, the ink still wet and smearing on the page.

She was 11 today, she just remembered her birthday, and her body was fecund and eager for something to receive. *She wanted his ideas inside of her, she wanted to listen to him all day today,* she thought. She wanted them to walk the perimeter of his land and name each plant and tree and each animal they saw evidence of; she wanted to hear him speak the truth in terms she was now ready for. She was 15 metabolically, she felt, and as Tania had assured her would happen. She thought of the big fat bowls of meat and rice and fruit that he killed and cooked and fed to her; her little body consuming 2800 calories each day. She thought of the calcium ions fused in chimera with her internuncial cells; the *godstar* given to man to accelerate what time was left, to expand the mass of God's Good in man. "*Science plus the wisdom of God* ," she said in a whisper.

She was almost 5 feet tall, and now almost 90 pounds. She was likely going to grow no more than 8 or 9%. She was close to the end of her vegetal growth and then would morph into her flower bloom phase. *Today,* she thought, *she had had open eyes for year and one decade.*

She felt a pressure inside her and let go of an inner bark and howl; so she screamed into the void of the early morning and then like an echo she heard his thundering hooves and the shadow of his bulk appear in the hall from the *agoge*

space and kitchen.

“Are you ok?” he said standing at the foot of the bed, vascular and naked except for tight black briefs that seemed a cinch on everything large inside him.

“Yes, Dada,” she said, and smiled with her arms out and up stretched pleading for her morning hug. She needed one each day or things would be upset and overturned and spilled out upon the floor she thought.

He smiled with his black beard face and hidden teeth and picked her up and let her monkey arms and legs wrap around his trunk as she sniffed his neck and beard and said, “vanilla and smoke,” as he laughed and let his heart return to baseline. He had figured it was a spider or something, but his audio cortex *via* afferent nerves had sent the sound first to the spinal cord -not the neo cortex- and that had made him snap his head and increase heart rate and move before he thought; this all happened axiomatically, without any cognition, and would only shut off the autonomic alarm once he saw her safe.

The body allows the thinking conscious part of the brain very little control on what it does, he knew, and even with the PGC, he was reactive in large part. He was still surprised by how automatic he was; but he was infinitely more aware of this than the average man -who he had long been- who thought it was their conscious mind that responded to loud sounds or jumped when they saw a snake. They had no idea they had no choice in any of that at all. Choice as a corporeal concept was new and limited and not at all the way most things in nature went. *Choice to beat the heart or engage in respiration? Yeah*, he agreed with nature, *that -like most offers of a choice- was a bad idea* .

But his heart still beat fast from his ear when he had heard his little girl scream. Even now many seconds passed when his conscious mind knew she was fine, his body’s *chems* were racing to each outpost, capillaries wide-open, his skin slick with just a hint of sweat. He squeezed her tighter to his core the more his insides unfurled and expanded and sought corners and escape.

Most people would disagree, he thought, *but they hadn’t thought it through at all; they didn’t even know the science or the analogies the body brought to bear. If they knew anything and still disagreed that would be just fine, but they were ignorant in all domains and yet thought their opinions were as valid as Nature herself.*

“Daddy, it’s my birthday,” she said and giggled and hid her face in his chest. Her grey A-shirt tight about her small breasts and low around her neck; and her grey boxer-briefs -the same as his- swaddling her tiny waist and smooth legs looked

like a ribbed center to a white four-petaled flower, each limb a piquant invitation to his buzzing bees of eyes and nose and mouth. He smooched her on the arm closest and then buzzed his lips upon her cheeks.

“I know,” he said, “I already had a battle-plan consisting of pancakes and *champagne* , and then reconnaissance of our territory.” She listened and nodded firmly in agreement. He turned with her on his hip -she about the size of one quarter of him- and as he walked she looked about and tried to touch things that she now saw from this height.

She saw all manner of things from up here, she noticed, and each time he carried her like this she thought of him as *Pegasus* , and her *Bellophadon* , and they -in adventure- set out for *Crete* to name each island and each sea.

He read her fMRI and saw she was thinking of the winged horse again -or maybe a winged bull, as the data was fuzzy still- at any rate, he said aloud, “*sleepest thou, princess of the house of Aiolos* ?”

“*I am awake Athena, and I have my golden bridle!”* she announced erecting her back proudly and raising the chin above his head, with one slim & *crème*, sinewy arm out in front like a prow, a bowsprit; her hand clutched around that piece of paper she had torn from the journal and only just now revealed.

III. 2015 e.v.

“You cannot regain love from one’s youth, it’s lost; it’s as if,” and here he paused and began the frantic, but short lived search for an analogy, “well, if I had spent more time studying on it I might have a ready and even ornate analogy for you to explain it perfectly.”

“Yes,” she merely nodded after.

“I just think the actors, the people, are two very different people in very different space and time, and that first-love phenomenon cannot be brought back or recaptured. Yet, it is something all either openly or secretly pine for .

“We lust for it with the same wet mouth and dilatated eyes and blood vessels we lean into all our quixotic winds. Our fantasies of immortality, limitless power, and wealth, re-matches with old adversaries, even a boxing match with the old man in his prime; the witticisms of the staircase as they say.

“But they are all impossible; but that one, the one, that we singularity sanction, and by that I mean approve of, singularly approve of in the memetic *tableau* is first love,” he said and was interrupted by her.

“Approve of?”

“Yeah, well look at the films and songs and on and on that pester us with this conceit. And we personally allow that one to ruminate a bit more over the grazing field of the mind. The others we eschew with a certain chagrin you know?” he smiled a bit and began to think of her, her post-cherub cheeks. And perfect teeth ringing her Roman laugh like the praetorian guard of the colosseum itself. He stopped ruminating and staring before those teeth became the rings of Saturn first seen by Galileo.

“I guess,” she relented.

“You guess?” he asked as his mood turned quickly to one of vex.

“Well it’s just that the one I think about is my kids, I want to go forward to make sure they’re ok, or happy. I go backwards -you know in my mind- to re-live, maybe re-do some things I even fantasize about my next fantasy,” she laughed and looked up at him now. She began to speak again as he was quiet.

“Sometimes when you talk I feel like my life -or the way I think- or what I think about is too small,” she said.

“I remember once,” she said, “back before the move, we lived in a small rural town in a small run-down trailer. Only I didn’t know it was small or run down then, I was 18 or 19 maybe, and we had to drive into the big city because my brother had been arrested there. I had never left the country and I never seen anything like it. Even walking up to the justice center, its columns, and giant panes of glass -anyway, sometimes when you talk, each idea kinda goes on and up and deeper inside like that building did, with all its chambers and courtrooms and it makes me ashamed of my own ideas, the same way I was ashamed of my home after seeing that building.

“It makes me never want to see it and run back into it and never let anyone see me again all at the same time,” she held her hands up to him, as if the explanatory part of her idea were in the hands, the body itself.

He had enough sense to stay quiet and give her room to say more if she wanted.

“As we drove back with my brother that day the car felt so small that I could feel more than my elbows rubbing with his. I felt like my insides, my soul, and its sitting rooms were too cramped now too. It made me want to dig deeper down somehow.

“Our trailer never looked the same to me again,” she paused again and pulled the hood of her jacket over her head as the rain finally fell slightly outside.

“I never quiet look the same to myself after we talk like this,” she looked at him and the street lamp painted a white stripe across her cowled face; she looked like a tribal avatar in some 18th century newspaper drawing of an Apache. She was vulnerable and strong both.

“Will you teach my kids, well, just talk to them about stuff. Anything really, just, I just think they’ll get bigger by listening to you and maybe never have to be surprised by their smallness later,” she said .

He just nodded and smiled in the way that actually turned his mouth corners down somehow.

His entire body began to heave, the blood and pus and mucus all sloshed around against the catacombs of internal walls. He felt his hat a coxcomb thing on his head and he pawed at it. His eyes ached and began to fill with sea water. He was upside down, his flooded basement of a head, his feet grasping for somewhere above to reach to and go. But he stood still and let himself cry; she was unfairly made small by the world. Unlike him, he thought, who deserved to be laid low because of his haughty designs of *grandeur* ; but she had never even approached the arrogance he made an outpost of. And yet the world crushed her with the same malice as it hammered him. It taught her the same lesson as it tried out on him, regardless of her humility and his lack of it.

And this hurt him more inside that he could explain. She deserved to be left alone; deserved her illusions.

He had asked for it from the cosmos; he deserved his rebuke. But not her.

“Things that should wound me and make me pause, do not,” he began, “it’s how I’ve earned the reputation for being callous and even sociopathic. But things that other people take for granted, feel nothing for, or miss the point of entirely, those things make me feel sad enough to give up on this whole life. All anyone sees in me is the hate; the hatred I’m filled with. But they miss the thing I hate most: injustice.

“I hate injustice and if you miss *that* about me, you’ve missed it all. If you can’t see how much my insides are wrought up by the way people ruin other people for no reason at all, just ‘cause they can, man, the way this world ruins people for fun, well, if you can’t see that as the thing that makes me break down into my constituent parts and bleed and blubber all over my clothes, then brother, you’ve not heard one word,” he said as his words cracking at the end vibrated the face and let the tears rivulet down each cheek and hang, then drop from the jaw on his black shirt and absorb into the shadow of it all.

“I’ve heard all your words,” she said and almost patted his arm, but when she looked at him he was so large and in so much pain, his face so twisted and wet, that she thought he might break from just her touch, and with all that mass, she might die in the avalanche of a broken man.

“The thing is,” he hesitated, “is that nobody with any wisdom helps the young with their first love; they don’t tell them to cherish it, protect it, keep it safe by eschewing other people or temptations. They instead say, *well, you’ll have many loves or everyone is part of your journey* , or *hardly anyone stays with their first* . I mean, we are told by our elders to treat cavalierly the one thing that will make us happy in life.

“I know girls can have many loves, but men cannot. Men are more sensitive than you. In that way. It’s like the way women are with kids; what if people said, *well, sure you love these two kids of yours but if they die you can get new ones* ? You’d lose your mind at a horrid statement like that. But men are told that they are to just take some other man’s leftovers, in a few years, we all exchange girlfriends, swap them around until we find one we like.

“It’s wrong, and yet the tribal elders give us no wisdom, they are all libertines and ex-hippes and baby boomers or Gen X whores and so-called realists who do not even believe in love anymore; romance is really needed, it’s not some ancillary thing; a true realist would acknowledge that. A realist would know.

“I mean, I had a girl and I threw it away for nothing, and all because nobody told me that I’d only ever be happy with a her and she would only ever be happy with me if she had no other temptations, and she never knew that anything better existed. See, women have all these options now, and it makes them want to trade you in for someone better, and the problem is not that this hurts -although it hurts deeply- it’s that she will never be happy chasing the greener grass, because there is *always* someone better .

“Your trailer was fine until you saw a big modern building, and that is what crushes people. It ain’t poverty, or the flaws of your man, it’s the option for something richer or whatever, the manifold and unending *choices* are what ruin us.

“But if you listen to our parents or society they tell you *choices* are what make life so goddamn great. But in real life choices are dangerous, and it makes us throw good things away chasing better, better shit. But nobody wise is in charge, so the young learn to be wasteful and shallow and it ruins their lives. The same way they are told to eat poison like diet Coke and watch TV all day, it makes them miserable and yet their parents are like evil fools who offer no wisdom at

all.

“My father could read up on this and figure this shit out, he could warn his son, he could warn his grandson about the dangers, but no; he watches TV and stays stupid and yet thinks he’s a man. A real man guides his progeny with wisdom hard sought and hard gained. But my father is lazy, just like my brother, and they are ruining that boy. He’s a lazy, malingering bellend with a body full of Ritalin because nobody played with him when he was young -his mom was like 100 years old when they got him so they overprotect him- and schools won’t let boys be boys” he paused, to clarify, “that’s my nephew.”

She wished she could be his girl , she thought at first, but then she realized that she wished she could be his mama and teach him the wise things he needed to know. He was a broken man, and although she had never heard anyone, especially a man, speak like this, she could tell, deep in her expanding ante-rooms inside, that he was right. *Modern life crushed love, and he was right, she would not want any more or any other children but the first and only ones she had* . If men felt this way about women, the way she felt about her kids, then she understood why they all seemed so ruined, and why a deep man, a man with so much love inside him, was so poisoned and so sick.

“This girl’s own grandmother spoke of me like I was temporary, she said *the next one* , quote *the next one* , as if I was just one in a line of men for her 18-year-old grandchild. It was sad, man. And my girl was embarrassed and all, she was a good girl, but she had been raised this way too, that we are all disposable, like we’re just interchangeable and love is just some goddamn game. But it ain’t, it’s the most serious thing in the world, and we treat it like shit at our peril. Men are crazy about women, and they are going to turn into monsters over this shit. I mean look at me,” he grimaced in the self-awareness of how mad, how damaged, how dangerous he was.

She looked at him and saw it, and she knew he was not wrong. She had read a letter he wanted to send to his brother and had let her read it first; asked her for her opinion. It had struck her as sad, and true, and that he had lived a life of pain in each of his most vulnerable relationships with friends who had died, a father he no longer admired and a brother he felt was no help to him at all; a brother who had nothing to offer him in a time of need.

And this man needed so little, he just needed a world where men still believed in manhood, and brothers banded together for common cause; and where what he said mattered, where a man could be listened to even if disagreed with. But people did not ever want to talk to him; they found him too volatile, too much

work; people liked easy relationships to go with their easy work and easy 1-2-3 lives where they never had to break a sweat at all. *He,* she surmised, *was an ancient man in a modern world, where money and status and frivolous wants were what were chased after by men who should have known better, but did not, and by men who refused to teach their sons the meaning of being a man.*

She looked down at the letter penned to this man's brother again and re-read it, searching for something she might be able to help with, although she knew that she could not:

" I don't know that, little man; I never yet saw him kneel"

-Stubb [Moby Dick]

I've heard three confessions before tonight; the first was from my friend Todd, a man now dead, a man who befriended me at age 15, a man killed at age 40 by the police when he went *Berzerker* in custody, and they had to put him down like a dog. I don't blame them, he was 250lbs of doom coming straight at them from -and back again to- Hell.

He -Todd- once confessed that he'd give it all back, everything he had had - and he had come from wealth and had plenty of things going for him- but that he'd give it all back *for one moment's peace* . I remember the words exactly, the location, the *mise-en-scène* . I can go there any time and re-live it as it happened; it is that fresh although it was over 25 years ago. He was a big alpha male with brains and magnanimity and loyalty, but he was incapable of living in the modern world. He was my true big brother, he stood up for me. Many times, in ways that still blow my mind. And it made me want to -and I did- stand up for him.

But, he was not wrong about his fate, he in fact *gave it all up for his moment's peace* .

The second confession came a few years after by my friend Jason, who later joined me in the oilpatch. He had tears in his eyes, shit, he had tears in his beard, so lachrymose was he. He confessed that he didn't feel *all that smart* , that is a direct quote. I remember the exact; well, everything. I can go there any time I wish; but I rarely wish too because it wounds me so much to hear it, to see it, to feel it again. To see a man so broken by his weakness. That weakness is all of ours I believe; and I feel weak when I go

there again.

Third was out father, Travis, yours and mine, and it was years later, I was 26, and he confessed that in all his years -decades- of enforcing law upon his brothers in the wide world that he felt he hadn't contributed to the Good of that world. Maybe, he said, *locking people up wasn't the best way to spend a life* . Again, that is a direct quote. Nothing from that moment escapes my recall, although -like the others- to recollect it gives me no pleasure at all. I felt his pain then and now too as I revisit it. I think he knew that the Air Force was shit, the country was too; but what else does a working-class redneck like him -like me- have, if not our country? So, we pretend it loves us too.

And here, here we have a fourth confession now. My brother, nearly swallowed up by his own chair, in the shadow of his wife and his younger brother, darkened in the corner of the room, tells me that he thinks, he suspects, he may in fact be *a shallow man* . And I reflexively do what I did in each of the three earlier confessions. I, in my priestly manner, assured the man that *no, he wasn't, that no, he shouldn't feel that way* .

It's a fumbling on my part; a panic almost. In each case, I feared each second of silence after their trenchant self-analysis -with Todd even predicting what would be gained and what would be exchanged for it- I feared that my silence would confirm their suspicions. I felt I was in charge of allaying their fears. And I worry about friends, fathers, brethren; I felt their pain in my heart too. So, I say what isn't true, but, rather, what balms. But it's a lie because Todd couldn't gain peace until he was dead, so he knew he'd have to give it, quote *all up* , and Jason was and is a stupid man; cruelly just smart enough to know it.

And our father did waste his life locking up men for crimes he didn't even care about -and that is a subtle distinction you may not get; but if he had *cared* about drug laws and enforced his own principles of law then his life would have not been frivolous, but he didn't even care. He is like you, Travis, a *Pharisee* , he only cares about the written law, what *Draco* has written down. He thinks not of the rubric, the good, of justice that lives behind laws, the numinous, the spirit that breathes up in the day & night sky, the right and wrong in our blood and our brains. No, he -like you- cares only for what society thinks is *law* .

And you are my older brother, my predecessor. My model of how to be. Jesse James had his brother Frank, a man of *grandeur* and retribution and

gravity. A man of weight. A man in league with his brother and his country, the Confederacy. I had and have in you, contrary to what Jesse had, the exemplar of what not to be.

But enough of this. Let me fret for your soul. You ought to, as well. You ought to worry because you *are* a shallow man and your suspicions to this effect are correct. And you don't have the ingredients to be a man of substance even if I handed over the recipe. So, I won't lie to save us both the embarrassment of who you are. My big brother, a coward, and a petty, silly, coxcomb man.

And your brother, if he was to confess, is a man with hatred and malice and murder in his heart for all things weak that should be strong, and all things rough that ought to be soft; a man who thinks men should be men, and women, feminine.

My charity is a *façade* , a *legerdemain* to hide the truth even from myself, to wit: *I was built by God and Nature to destroy anything that offends my eye; an eye as old as Marduk and Horus too.*

I'm a revanchist, an Oldman shaking his fist at the new gods. I was born *not enough* in a world of *too much* ; and I pretended not to notice and to not be sacred. But, I know that this world will be the end of me; and this makes me so angry at the ostensible injustice of it all that I grow selfish and mean and eager to destroy the world. I look around and see weak men, stupid men -and rough and vindictive females- and I reject it when you all insist that it is good; I condemn it as wrong. I judge it as deserving my worst crimes.

And this is a fatal flaw in me, it's my weakness, known to me as you confessors know your own.

A humble man would submit to the judgement of the world. My arrogance locks my knees. And in the process, has jailed my heart away it seems.

I've told you the truth, and it does bite. I have told you of confessions and given you mine. Good luck… you -like the rest of us- are *gonna* need it.

\- LJM

35. Best Vote Ever Cast

I dream of greatness and utility. I dream of Science restoring to Nature what Luxury and Civilization have stolen from her: pure hearts, the forms of angels, bosoms beautiful, and panting with Joy and Hope

Consolations in Travel or the Last Days of a Philosopher [Davy, Humphry]

Gifted with the high perception, I lack the low enjoying power

The Whale [The Author]

Nathan Bedford Forrest had 30 horses shot out from under him, and he killed 31 men in hand-to-hand combat; he said he was thus *a horse ahead* in the civil war

The Civil War [Foote, Shelby]

I. 2014 e.v.

“Men have no remorse,” she said as she cut around at the edges of the tenderloin he had laid on her plate.

“Men -on average- have low empathy, that’s true,” he cleaned up her assertion. He’d yet to understand where this *contretemps* was heading, and thus -as default- he employed the rational part of his brain. He thought he was attempting to meet her half-way; to admit to the biological reality that men -and thus he- had faults that were legitimately up for examination and critique. He tried to be honest, and -like all things- he used honesty as a weapon to beat down his foils. He was strong enough to be honest, he’d assert, unlike the great mass of men who need lie just to survive the greater forces of the world.

His honesty -he thought- was noble, but not good; a distinction most men, most humans, would not understand. But, he knew even less of his motivations -and even less of what honesty was- than the molecules of air that cavitated around her hair as the fan blew down on them both and the music filled the gaps.

“Exactly, and I told her to never expect a man to be anything but a cheater and coward,” she escalated things now and dug into her meat. She used words like *she* to confuse, deflect, as slight-of-hand. She was a genuine psychopath and told lies as a matter of course. Her methamphetamine addiction had also hardwired deceptive behavior alongside the dopaminergic reward centers that connected behavior performed in proximity to the drug’s impact on the brain. The central nervous system of humans is sophisticated, and it learns all on its own.

If you tell a lie to acquire drugs, then tell a lie to run off and use them, and then get high, the brain links up the first, second and third behaviors: the lie, plus the lie, *equals* the intoxication of the drug .

And just like that you have a neural connection, like a 3-tumbler lock, a 3-digit code to open the door to the vault, the door to all your dreams. Drugs like amphetamines or opiates activate the meaning centers of the brain, not merely consummatory reward like food or even sex. Drugs mimic meaning, they make the user feel like events -even mundane ones- have meaning, and this is a feeling sought by the brain desperately. For meaning is a precursor to action that is both beneficial, and useful, and can help the organism survive long term.

Meaning is handled by the hypothalamic and thalamic regions of the brain, and dopamine in those regions are the fuel to power the engine of meaning. Drugs release dopamine in those exact regions and the drug addict feels not merely high but swaddled and lifted up in a reverie of meaning, in deep ontological meaning and if a lie or two must be told to gain this feeling, this rapt meaning, then that is what the brain will most certainly do. Did not God use a lying spirit to trick Ahab?

Sarah lied without remorse due to her psychopathic alleles of COMT, 5-HTTLPR, ANKK1 and ARL6IP6 -with snp11682518- but she told ornate and powerful lies thanks to her own brain's pairing, linking -logically, metabolically- with the impact of deep -religious- meaning brought on by the methamphetamines.

She was born to lie, and she augmented her own brain with drug use to become the most florid and constant -and permanent- of liars he had ever known. The problem, for him, was that his right hemisphere knew it in a language that the left hemisphere had yet to take the time to learn to speak. And so, for three years he suffered from her lying, until all at once, like a door slamming in the wind, a bolt from a cloud, or the hammer dropping on a single action revolver, his left brain realized exactly what he'd known all along. But by then he was ruined. By then it was too late for all but one thing.

"I could say women have no pride, no honor and one could expect all manner of scandalous behavior to come from that deficiency too," he began to raise his voice in anger.

“Why are you yelling at me?” she asked.

“Because I’m angry,” he said; she spoke of men around him as if -in the king’s castle- it was appropriate that any other males should be mentioned or the king himself should be impugned. Sarah was modern, and of the modern world. A man had no standing with her -or any modern woman- even in his own home. A woman, she thought, could mention men all she wanted; and the man of the house could be insulted up to 99 times without upsetting any natural order at all. Modern women jumped from buildings and airplanes with no concern at all for the fall. They stuck their hands in the mouth of lions and expected no spit on their digits -let alone- to pull back a stump.

“Anger is a secondary emotion, men are so dishonest, emotionally dishonest,” she was thinking of how her life had not turned out how she wanted; she knew that she was aging, ungracefully, and that the other men around her were not slaking her desire for something ineffable, something that men were supposed to just provide. Does the body know what nutrients it needs from its food? *No, you eat and the body figures it out* , she thought. Her desire for men was supposed to work just as this food deal did. She would collect men around her and what she needed would just be extracted from them by the body. But it was not happening, and she was angry.

“It’s not dishonest, it’s real. I feel anger, I admit to it. Boom. Honest,” he said. He had grown tired of having to explain the basics of all logic, all moral thinking, all of life to her. He’d told her on their first date that he’d not be able to be monogamous and wanted to be honest with her about it; and allow her to leave now if she found this distasteful.

She had said it was *ok* with her and asked if she too could share these other women with him to which he grinningly agreed. But -he had said- she could not have other men, it was not an open relationship. He got other women but she had to stick by him. She agreed eagerly, and said that, *he was more man that she could handle anyway,* with a giggle that made his insides glow with the exchange of mortars as they drove through the alleyway behind his house in *Valverde.* Summer heated up the mornings earlier and earlier at that time of life.

It’s true that women -most women- do not need more than one man; the sexes are built differently *vis-à-vis* sexual congress. And so her acquiescence was taken as normal within the parameters of his evolutionary psychology readings.

It made sense to his left hemisphere and comported with science and so he didn’t hear any creaking in the boards nor tap on the window; he heard no barking of dogs in the distance -much less howl of wolves in the forest- all those many days ago.

“But you *really* feel something else. Anger is secondary to fear or hurt,” she corrected him now; she felt superior to him in these moments. She had read a recent article and thought that this was more relevant than the old books he had read. *She was up-to-date* , she’d surmise.

“Often yes, but the anger is real too. You're asserting that one can only have, fear or hurt, that these are the only legit emotions. Animals feel anger; you ever see an angry dog?”

“That dog is afraid,” she said with confidence. She used her knife with more pressure on her meat.

“No, it’s angry. Fear may be first, but anger supplants; it’s a real emotion. In fact, anger is often a way to countermand fear, to promote action. Just like Olive Drab is not the same as Lincoln Green; they’re different; but you keep insisting that green is green is green as if there are no shades or differentiation.”

“You're the one with black or white thinking,” she said this, offered it, as a *non-sequitur* to confuse him. This was the genius of women. She’d scrambled him with that one.

“Maybe at times, but not now; I'm offering shades of green in my analogy,” he said with her weird comment still stuck in his craw.

“Worst analogy ever,” she interrupted with her pique; she chewed open mawed. If she could attack him on the battlefield of language, she felt the wounds she inflicted -while rare- would be devastating. She had no idea how right she was. Like the shark has no idea how perfect it is, she just was Sarah, an unencumbered and modern woman, she just killed men with one comment and moved on to her next prey. But for now she merely circled.

“I’m offering shades of green and shades of grey,” Lyndon said. “Men have emotions. We feel remorse, but we have low empathy; we have high feelings of pride and honor and these feelings can and often do lead us to do the right, the moral thing. Women feel empathy and that leads to moral behavior in them. But these are two roads to the same town .

“Women use empathy to get to right behavior, they feel for the sick child, the weak old person; they feel empathy and help that child, help that old fucker. Men feel pride and honor, and we help that kid because we think, we feel, *what kind of man would we be if we didn’t help?* We ask, *what kind of man would we be if we didn't help the sick or the infirm* ?

“We worry about our honor or our reputations or our ability to call ourselves a real man. So, we help women and children and the sick and the helpless all the fucking time. But no, maybe we don't feel their goddamn pain; we rarely weep with them. We help them so that we may avoid shame or feelings of weakness in ourselves. You women feel their pain and help them to assuage your own commensurate pain.

“Why this is more noble than our rationale is beyond me. We both help people, we both do our duty, we both contribute to the welfare of others, and we do it, like all things men and women do, we do it for different fucking reasons. And as any solipsistic and fatuous person, you think your rationale, your feelings, your way, is the *only* way.

“Well, I happen to think there are many, many shades of grey, and that maybe there are a vast ocean of feelings beyond mere empathy; complicated feelings that maybe you don't know anything about, feelings that only a man can feel; and those feelings matter and are real and are noble too. Maybe if women had more pride and more nobility they wouldn't sleep with their ex-boyfriend’s friends or cry in public at all. Maybe they'd act with more decorum.

“But, even worse, you show me a man without pride, without a feeling of honor, then I’ll show you a man who will *never* do the right thing. Because he has no endogenous empathy -as you rightly pointed out- and if he be divorced from pride and honor, there is nothing he won’t do to save his own skin, and there is nothing he will do to risk it,” he sometimes used stilted language like that; and it jangled her. *He sounded like a nigger,* she thought, with that *if he be divorced* , shit. *He thought it sounded like Shakespeare or Milton, but it sounded like a crackhead,* she thought.

“He’s as dangerous as a woman without empathy, because she has no innate pride or honor for certain, being a woman and all, and without empathy she’ll cut a motherfucker to the bone," he pointed at her with his steak knife and she knew exactly what he was accusing her of.

“I have more empathy than you’ll ever know!” she screamed as the food was being cut and gobbled in haste by a woman so slight she could disappear by turning 90 degrees. She did have empathy; in surfeit. And she knew exactly how to wound a human, for she had detailed blueprints of anatomy and where it hurt in her own -and thus your- red and wet heart.

She had had sex with his so-called friend Jeremy Costilow earlier that day, surreptitiously, and it had not banished her depression at all. And the man had begged her not to tell Lyndon, and she had felt wounded and -no knowing this- had wanted Jeremy to bravely admit to this liaison so as to insult the honor of, and thus mortally wound, this man she loved so much .

Lyndon ought be wounded like she was wounded , she thought, and the only way was for her to use other men to attack and injure his pride. But none of them wanted to admit to it; they were all scared. And this hurt her heart, as if she was good enough to fuck, but not valuable enough to help her destroy her boyfriend. This is why she was hurt and angry and confused. This all made so much deep sense to her, it would surprise her if *everyone* couldn’t see the harmony -and thus truth- of it.

As she ate with anger the juices making soft dew on her lips, he hated her; he envisioned slitting her throat. But, he knew he had too many things to do, too much to accomplish; to kill a woman -no matter how much she deserved it- was an unmanly thing to do. She, like all women and weak men, escaped the guillotine they deserved, purely based on this honor code that alpha males had both holding them up and pressing them down.

“You say so. But, you act like a psychopath every chance you get,” he said and slammed his fork and knife down as he now could no longer eat. He -also unware of it in the left hemisphere of the brain- felt nebulously and nervously, inarticulately felt, that she’d betrayed him; the slight bio-chemistry -pheromones- of another man on her skin, inside her, was available only to his sagacious right hemisphere. His left had no rational reason to suspect her; it had no words yet to think or to say.

And so two thirds of him -the lower layer down, the bulk of his ship- was shocked by betrayal and was thus inarticulately vengeful, while that part of the ship above waterline, was scrubbed clean and rational and logical and had decided to be that way with her now. He would attempt reason; he would talk; he

would use mere words. But the sea between her craft and his rolled on, as it had for millions of years beforehand and would for millions more in the fore. And his inner waters roiled and boiled and the steam headed -slowly- up and into his brain. And the sharks did swim and never once think one word.

Lyndon had been collecting information like this for years; 40 of them now. Evidence and cortisol, heartache, heart pain, the pain of betrayal after betrayal by women and men and family being stored all below decks in the part of the brain below waterline. It was inarticulate, unformed; nothing he could bring up on deck and name and show to his crew. He had no doubloon to nail yet to the mast. And as it lay there, well below decks, collecting, augmenting, accumulating at each port they stopped in, the vessel sank lower and lower - more heavily- into the sea. Neither he nor the people around him, understood why his big ship foundered, and when it finally was subsumed by the water, that hull's ballast -they assumed- would be forever buried at bottom of not just his double-hulled ship, but at the crushing, hydrostatic, cheating bottom of the sea.

II. 2004 e.v.

On the hanging scaffold pressed to the 44th floor of the 2121 *AlaWai* building he saw Bugzy turn slightly and expose his muscled back; sinew lined him like a wood cut. He had a birthmark, brown and oblong on his lower *latissimus dorsi* of his left flank. It was hirsute, as if a small bear rug of protection was thrown over it by some impulse deep and old inside him.

His laughter always buoyed Lyndon and seemed to reassemble him from some entropy that wore him, abraded him like the salt water air of the *Hawai'ian* archipelago. A patina of rust was laid down on every metal thing he owned there; and it ate away at the rebar in the concrete in all the high-rises of *Waikiki* . Bugzy and Lyndon did spall repair on these 200-foot tall buildings; cutting the concrete away, grey dust spewing like spoutings of whales, jack-hammering once a perimeter was made. They jammed away at the fissures and blemished *facades* ; then mixing new patch-cement on the rig that was suspended over the - fecund above & lava below- ground.

The *Kona* winds came for two weeks in July that year, and what that means is no winds at all.

The island's humidity closed upon you like a Polynesian fist. But today the

winds blew strong Siah, a Samoan who -like all his race, looked like he had neither elbows or knees, only large thick muscles hanging from wide shoulders and trunks- had fallen off the rig and was hanging by his lanyard 120 feet above the ground on the west side of the building they all flanked on each of four sides.

A news helicopter circled, it was as a shark around the fish in the coral. Lyndon sat down and ate his sandwich, such a high metabolism meant eating every three hours or his body would dig into the pantry of every earned muscles for caloric inputs. Metabolically he was a spender not a saver; and thus he had to always being making more than he spent. He had a theory that hard-gainers were more industrious by temperament than those with fat-insulin receptor genes and had to be for they could not store calories at all. Fat people were lazy for an evolutionary reason: they could afford to be, they stored up for the winter in their bodies while profligate men like Lyndon burned every calorie he made and stuffed in his face.

He looked at Bugz and watched him unscrew his thermos; he was meticulous in each act; as if they were ends in themselves. Lyndon eschewed such rituals and thus had never noticed Bugzy's behavior as anything other than inefficiency before, but like the bolt that had riven Ahab and white scarred him, he now saw Bugz was his Parsee. How had he taken each word he had said to him and squeezed it through his rational brain. *"Oh God! that man should be a thing for immortal souls to sieve through,"* Lyndon thought.

Bugz was a mystic; he must have seen Lyndon as a *Daemon* of some kind. Bugz -his real name was CJ Liliekis- had asked how Lyndon achieved each goal he'd tasked himself with; accomplished with such seeming ease. Bugz had asked in a reverence, a respect, nearly an awe that Lyndon -at first- had thought was evidence of Bugz being merely decent and polite. But the man truly thought Lyndon had some black magic powers; some *thurgic diabolii* . Lyndon saw the world as all clockworks and Bugz saw it as a skein of the gods' webs and the pollen of *imps* populating the beams so man's eyes can see the rod of substance in the ether and light.

Men, Lyndon thought, were like chickens who are given food pellets at random intervals by a machine; each fowl then repeats *ad infinitum* the equally random act they happened to be engaged in at the time the pellet shot out at them. They,

in their bird-brains, make the causal connection between them turning right a quarter turn for one chicken; the other maybe was stamping its feet; a third craning its neck to the scientists' sky; between this -their behavior- and the random ejecta of food from a metal orifice fashioned from Pittsburgh steel.

All our brains are evolved from this type of reinforcing loop system and are still this way as we think our rituals connect to outcomes , Lyndon lamented. *Jesus, we're all birds in a cage frantically praying and whirling and crossing our hearts to get some prize, some favor from the gods* , he thought. He thought this way with half contempt for the religious and half as banishment of his own feral mystical conceits. It's banal to say, but it's true, all male-feminists are rapists and all atheists have just half-buried a body they've killed and are trying to hide it mostly from God. But that dirt is employed by -works for- God, and so do they.

He had never taken it seriously aloud; he thought each man was just trying for a day with a few dollars, a few beers, some pussy, and maybe a good piece of literature to read. *But these men, the propitiating men, maybe even most men - maybe most in generations past, before science had won- for these men it wasn't an abstraction of an abstraction two layers down; chemicals and neurons and beep beep boop,* he thought as the hammer drill in his hands now banged inside the sawcut he'd made around the spall.

These men, they want true love, God's love, they want God's forgiveness and grace; they want approval from more than their peers; they want it from the universe itself. The food pellet was not even the point any more. *They wanted the approval,* he thought.

I shouldn't pretend to not understand , he chided himself. *I know why they reach for the hand at the opposite end of the glass. Maybe I'm too insouciant about my materialism. Maybe I want something more; something beyond. I think of abstractions like respect and loyalty; I desire them. I'm more than a mere machine for absorbing resources. But, I don't see the invisible webs the way they do I guess. And,* he thought, *I don't want God's approval at all.*

In fact, His imprimatur would be like a good review by the New York Times: a sign of moral failure on my part, he thought, and he believed he believed this as he kept hammering at the wall and ignoring the Pacific as it stretched out forever in *loched* blue and reflected lapidary whites just to his 9 o'clock position; the *Kona winds* were still a week away, and the breeze blew on him and Bugz and

hanging Siah too. The winds pulled the humidity from him as quickly as it landed. He felt little of the heavy *Polynesian* moisture and the heat was thus abated by the movement of air. Bugzy -over the radio- guided Johnny on how to lower the scaffold down to retrieve Siah as he was captured for the *Hawai'ian* evening news.

He admired his friend Bugzy so much, and he felt all was right with the world.

III. 2038 e.v.

"I'm not saying that at all; I'm saying the opposite. Of course, western civilization is predicated on Christianity. Of course. Of course, the values, the innate values of western people, including the -we rationalists- is articulated by Christianity. I'm saying that doesn't go far enough.

"I'm saying that Christianity is merely the articulation of a deeply embedded behavioral code, a code older than the species itself. I'm saying that mankind had moral feelings manifesting inside the basal ganglia, the limbic region that sprouted into a two-leafed plant, differentiated but conjoined, and empathy was the first feeling of awareness of others, and consciousness is the other leaf .

"And those two leaves branched out into two leaves, empathy made we brutes feel that others had feelings too, like our own, and thus, we could make them feel good by doing the things we wanted done to us, and the dark side of empathy, we could wound their souls, not merely their bodies. Their feelings we could wound by doing to them the things we knew we wouldn't like done to us.

"This is an emergent phenomenon of the mammalian brain, and it's taken for granted by people; either taken for granted that it's innate to all or that it's a human artifact that comes later with religion or articulated moral codes. The idiotic hippies think all creatures feel empathy and that it's only a force for good; and you people, the Christian types think only mankind feel empathy and only because Jesus told them to feel it.

"The Jews are slightly more aware in that they say the gentiles may not have the Law but they do have it written on their bodies; that is to say you gentiles, we gentiles, have morality instantiated in our bodies *via* the soul," he paused.

"I believe that too," Tania said haltingly.

"Ok, so that is good, because we do have empathy instantiated on our souls, it's biological, it's pre-human, *Franz de Waal* showed that in his book, *The Age of Empathy* , I suggest you read it. Now, because empathy shows man and chimps

how both to help and how best to harm others, wound them emotionally, torture them, that is exactly what chimps and humans do, we go to war, we get malicious revenge.

“Did you know that chimps go to war, and that they kill for fun, independently of territorial designs or wants, independent of need for food or defense? Yeah, tons of work from Goodall, who originally repressed the data, to later books like *Demonic Males* , to others, have shown that chimps kill for kicks. Just like humans.

“We kill for feelings like revenge, and hatred and vengeance, which are all empathetic feelings, we say, *oh, you want to hurt me with your existence, you want to make me feel a certain way, then I’ll turn that back on you and hurt you; I’ll scare you, harm you, tear you to pieces* .

“You see, how often have you felt that someone’s mere presence, their status, their existence somehow mocks you? I know you’ve felt this, it’s universal, and it arises when someone has traits that you lack, and you hate them for it. Why does every guy in the world call Tom Brady a *fag* or every girl call Melania Trump a *whore* ?

“It’s because these two individuals are so excellent in form and function that the rest of us look like shit in comparison; and we know it. See, we *know* it. That is empathy too. We say, *I know I think these people are above me, better looking, more talented, richer, smarter* . By the way, you know Melania speaks five languages, yes? I mean she’s a badass, a total badass, she’s so cool, so smart, so beautiful, I mean she looks like an assassin not some *Bambi* type, but a killer; she’s rich, powerful, fecund, look at the son she produced, she’s the real deal.

“And women look at her and see everything they are not. Just as men look at Tom Brady and see the same. And they immediately think, *if I can see my insufficiencies then so can everyone else.*

“You see, that is empathy, that innate, evolving, proto-human and human trait that makes us less solipsistic, is empathy. See, we don’t just automatically and autonomically search for food, run from threats and rut while the female is in heat. No, the human line, including our cousins in the chimp and bonobo line, have a new suite of emotions and cognition that extends the self out into the world so that it may blanket others in their own investiture.

“We shroud others in thought and feelings, we no longer see them as objects, they are *people* too; the chimps see them as chimps -other chimps- too. And this -like any trait in nature- has the forked tongue of the serpent, the splayed foot of

the bird, the eyes on either side of the head of the horse or leviathan," he said and raised the brow.

She listened, but she did wonder if he might get to the point.

"Empathy began to help chimp and man do the soft, friendly and grand thing, help their mates, their offspring, their comrades, it made them act with earnest desire to treat others as they wanted to be treated. And this helped them as a trope or as a tribe of man," he said as he was interrupted.

"*Troop* , you meant *troop* not *trope* ," she said.

"I did, my bad. Yes, *troop* , a troop or tribe. But it also made them jealous and feel aggrieved; seek vengeance for being wronged.

"How else could a beast or man be wronged unless he felt in whatever inchoate way, *I wouldn't have done that, I treated him as I wanted to be treated.* See, that, this is the new *tao* of empathy. *He,* we all begin to think, *he -that bastard- he broke the rules* .

"That is the feeling that comes once you are no longer a solipsistic beast, once you have empathy you can feel *wronged* ; you can feel not just attacked or hunted as prey animals feel; but wronged, as if it isn't *fair* or *right* . No lower order beast feels anything like that; they run, they're scared, their autonomic systems makes them dart away from threat. They don't ruminate on justice or injustice.

"But once you have empathy, that is exactly what arises in the mind: you wonder why someone else, a mate, a child, a friend, would do you wrong. You wonder why they would lie, cheat or steal. Why they would wound you so? *What the hell did you ever do to them to deserve it?* you ask," he said.

Tania looked at him as if she had objections still forming in her brain.

"If this is opaque to you then I have nothing more to say," he said as he went on speaking anyway. "It's so obvious and so true and so fundamental that to argue it would be just to insist on your point of view regardless of the facts or logic. There is no way to have *jealousy* or *justice* as feelings without empathy and the ability to see others as having minds like your own, who can see the good, the fair, the right; other minds that can see you too as capable of pain and fear and hurt.

"That's what empathy is. It extends back and forth and back again like a recursive mirror that goes on forever as -we think that they think that we think that they think that I think you know what I think- as the language game goes.

Right? Remember that scene in *A Princess Bride* , where the *Vincetti* character says:

> Well it's so simple, all I have to do is divine, from what I know of you, are you the sort of man who would put the poison in his own goblet or in his enemy's; now a clever man would put the poison in his own goblet for only a great fool would reach for what he was given, but I am not a great fool and so I clearly cannot take the wine in front of you, but you must know that I am not a fool; you would have counted on it, so I can clearly not take the wine in front of me !

"At this point the Dread Pirate Roberts says, *so you've made your decision then* ?

"The *Vincetti* character expatiates on this recursion of empathy and knowledge of the mind of others, the theory of mind that develops in mature simians like humans and chimps. He continues:

> Not remotely! Because Iogaine comes from Australia as everyone knows and Australia is entirely peopled with criminals and criminals are used to having people not trust them as you are not trusted by me, so I can clearly not take the wine in front of you. And you must have suspected I'd know the powder's origin so I clearly cannot choose the wine in front of me…

"Roberts says, *you're just stalling now* , to which *Vincetti* angrily replies:

> You'd like to think that wouldn't you! You've beaten my giant which means you're exceptionally strong so you could have put the poison in your own goblet counting on your strength to save you so I can clearly not choose the wine in front of you; but you've also bested my Spaniard which means you must have studied and in study you must have learned that man is mortal so you would have put the poison as far from you as possible; so I clearly cannot choose the wine in front of me…

"Now Roberts is forced to say, *you think you can trick me into giving something away, it will not work,* to which *Vincetti* says, *it already has worked you've given everything away; I know where the poison is!*

"Well, then the whole thing descends into a farce of *Vincetti* switching glasses and drinking from the cup in front of him and watching the Pirate drink from his own goblet as the game was designed to make each man do. *Vincetti* drinks thinking he knows what Roberts is thinking, and says as much, when Roberts says that *Vincetti* , quote, *chose wrong.* To this *Vincetti* retorts with glee*:*

> You only think I chose wrong, that's what's so funny, I switched glasses

when your back was turned, you fool!

“*Vincetti* laughs it up with his theory-of-mind, thinking he knows what Roberts can and cannot know, which is true insofar as it goes. Of course, the pirate has counted on *Vincetti* not knowing the larger truth, which is that the poison is in *both* goblets, as the pirate has spent years building up a tolerance to *Iogaine* so it didn’t matter from which goblet either man imbibed.

“It’s a classic tale of theory of mind and recursive empathy and it proves my point exactly, perfectly and unimpeachably,” Isaiah said.

“I don’t agree,” Tania said.

“Inconceivable!” MO said. He’d been planning that.

“It’s conceivable,” she said. “I think only man knows the mind of others, not chimpanzees, and finally, that gift, empathy and moral action is given to him by God or evolution or simple bio-chemistry; but the rational mind picks it; picks the action.” She said this as her disgust sensitivity -being that close, a few minutes earlier, to a murderer with bad skin and bad tattoos had triggered it- was primed *via* the enteric neurons firing this data to her cerebellum. She felt herself wanting to put distance, even moral distance, between them; she was saying things she maybe 30% believed .

“Look, I’m delineating a logical argument, I cannot make you believe it. I only ask that you put yourself in my position, see it from my mind’s point of view; don’t allow it to corrupt you, just take one moment to see it my way, assure yourself you can return to your way of thinking at any time,” Isaiah said. He had brought her into the room as the inmate was leaving to test this very phenomenon.

“Ok,” she agreed.

“From my point of view, this empathy is what changed behaviors, instantiated new cultures in chimp and man; it made both apes nicer, more decent, more helpful, better able to care for helpless offspring in the early years, care for mates as well. But it also facilitated killing for sport, for revenge, for wars of vengeance. It both gave malevolence its bite and made malevolence itself thus wound.

“It made the jealousy, the insecurity, the self-consciousness as tantamount to self-doubt; take an object upon which, against which, to lash out. Man and chimp could gaze out upon another and see their source of insecurity and jealous rage, and attack it. It could make them see their comrade as betrayer, their mate as turning him -this giant alpha rex, the beast that feels itself grand, large, and in-

charge- turning him into a cuckold and this made him feel a fool.

“A fool, an idea only capable of arising in the mind of a beast that could think from someone else’s point of view. Think of it, how can you feel a fool, unless you think someone else thinks this of you too? You put your mind in their mind and see it from their POV; and in so doing you feel chagrined.

“This is the double edge sword of empathy. It creates a space for a battlefield of jealousy and vexation and insecurity that before this was handled by mere mechanical or bio-chemical means,” Isaiah explained.

“How so?” Tania asked.

“Well, in the white rat, when a female is pregnant the male rat, the father, guards her assiduously, for if he doesn’t and she merely brushes just her fur against another male rat, a stranger, a friend, whomever, but any male rat -not the father of her offspring still in gestation- if she makes any contact, that offspring has an automatic 30% chance of *aborta facia* , of miscarriage.”

“How?” she asked.

“Biochemistry,” he said. “The pheromones of the strange male rat, not the father, seep into her fur and skin and her own body poisons the pregnancy and kills the potential rat. So, if the father is insouciant, a modern liberal rat, who says, *sure my wife can have male friends why not, I’m not jealous or insecure* , well that male rat loses his scion one out of three times, and in evolutionary terms that means males who guard their mates with a furrowed brow and nasty sort of disposition, well he has 3 kids to every 2 the *laisse-faire* rat has. Over time, guess which model predominates? Go on guess?” Isaiah laughed with almost zero malice.

“Ok, so the rat is jealous,” she said as if it was no big deal; as if Isaiah had not just made one of the most salient points ever made about biological life.

“More likely he’s vigilant, and jealously hasn’t quite become an emotion; it’s an analog function, a slight turn of the dial. As I was saying, the more nuanced emotions like jealousy and insecurity and the feelings of being a fool, are new. I think these emotions developed with theory-of-mind, with empathy. Before that, mammals just used autonomic and limbic brute force to make animals reflexively vigilant or else they died; or their offspring did which is even worse in evolutionary terms,” he said .

“Ok, from your point of view, and I can admit you’ve read more on this than me, I can see your point. I don’t agree but I see it,” Tania said.

“That’s all I ever ask; I don’t need agreement; only understanding. That’s sufficient for me,” Isaiah said.

“Ok, but what’s your point?”

“My point is that mankind, each of us as men and we -the society- as well, we need the mythology that is smuggled into Christianity and the major religious creeds. I’m not a believer, but I need everyone else to be.

“And look, most people are already and don’t even know it. They think their morality is innate, and in some sense, it is, but the mythology articulates it, reifies it, ramifies it, it gives it weight and form and hems it in. Without the structure of articulated norms, of ideas of right and wrong, of a culture who says, *no, look, it’s wrong to cuckold your husband,* which CNN just Satanically said was *ok* to do now, but without that injunction, prohibition, we revert to the mean. Without a culture that says what is right and wrong, then people revert to the vacuum that is left when it disappears.

“The rationalist atheists, and I hate to say it, because Hitchens was so much smarter and more cultured than 99% of those *effete* -hairless- beings who could barely pass a Turing test, but even Hitchens said this, the new atheists say: *one can be good without God* . And while this is technically true it’s wrong in real life.

“In real life, you tell a man he can solve the riddles of morality with merely his rational mind, the dialectic of rationality, then those men will turn to a kind of retributive, tit-for-tat self-interest, like *Vincetti* , cheating by switching the goblets and thinking that just because his opponent doesn’t know what he -*Vincetti*- has done, because his foil isn’t aware of his trickery, then it’s morally acceptable.

“We now live in a society with no transcendent values, no true right or wrong, the creed now -as religion has waned, and been usurped by rationalist commercialism and TV values- the creed now is: *do whatever thou can do* . This is the most rational thing of all. What can a man get away with? As *Raskolnikov* debates in *Dostoyevsky’s , Crime and Punishment* ; eventually killing his pawnbroker, and getting away with it.

“*Dostoyevsky* has *Raskolnikov* wrought up with guilt, as the Christ must still be inside him, the moral serpent swallowing its own effluvium. But, I can tell you, modern man feels no guilt, they have lost their way. They have no transcendent moral code above them, no religion, no ideal man to which to aspire except the covetous and shallow values of materialist commercial culture. That is the new

baal . The golden calf," he said.

"Well, I don't know about all that. But you made it sound like religion wasn't important; that it didn't make people do things, or oppose things," she said. She had begun all this -when on her side of the building- by blaming Christianity for lack of science funding. And now she was defending Christianity and he was sidelining it as he watched her inner storms unfurl. They had switched places as her body had crossed paths with the inmate and roiled her disgust sensitivity midstream. The inmate was ugly, and it had made her all at once awake .

"No, I merely meant religion was second, and Christianity itself was later; it followed *Marduk* , *Horus* and *Osiris* ; it followed the Old Testament and the Norse gods. It followed *Oðinn* and *Thor* and arrived on a Friday eager to be put in the game.

"But religion was articulated from the artists, the dreaming shamans, the ones who saw the images of transcendental values, of chaos, the need for exploration, the need for culture, the need to be a good tribesmen. They instantiated the images, the archetypes first, the eye of the pyramid watching -above, apart, seeing- the good, the images of where soul comes from, where thoughts of good and evil arise.

"Religions took those images, the artists' first renderings of the archetypal dreams of the emergent ape with consciousness, our first awakening from mere beasts. Yes, an analog continuum from chimps, but a line emergent around 12,000 years ago in which man became self-aware in a new way. First *via* artists then priests, and finally an articulated creed, a religion was borne. In that first tablature, man was told how to live so as to be in harmony within his most real environment, not the forest like the beasts and birds, but the society of man.

"Man's most real and true and ubiquitous evolutionary *milieu* was other men, his tribe, his people. That was where his mind evolved. And so, this new consciousness was built to help him navigate the social domain like the webbed feet of a duck help it paddle in the pond; the predatory lust helped the tiger on the *veldt* .

"Man developed a new tool, a new evolutionary tool: consciousness. Why? So, he could act right within his new domain, his new *tableau* . And what defines, *acting right* ? It's behaving as if everyone else is also self-aware, because they are, and they see what you see, and so they matter as much as you. No longer can a man behave as if he's the only one who sees. Self-awareness confers sight onto every member of the tribe, and religion then confers value onto them, the new awareness says, *your fellow man can see, into the future just like you, and*

thus he has a right to be in the future, just like you.

“Religion said, *treat your fellow man as you would like to be treated* . And this was only possible thanks to metabolic, bio-chemical, and evolutionarily bequeathed brain modules that lay underneath the language of religion. But, like hand in glove, the new brain, the empathetic and self-aware mind needed the articulation of religion to tell it how to act, the basal ganglia told the heart how to beat, the limbic region told the rat to guard his mate, the neo-cortex told man how to fashion a tool, but it was religion who told his heart and guarding parts, his hands imbued with tools, how to build a society of man, how to live properly and thus how to survive far into the future. Religion was the new software for the old hardware of the 3-level central nervous system, running updated firmware of consciousness.

“See the atheists say that morality is innate, that religion didn’t invent it. Hitchens says, rightly, that man couldn’t have arrived at *Sinai* without already knowing the Ten Commandments that were announced by Moses that day.

“He’s right, because they already had *religion* before Moses told them that; but morality isn’t as innate as it seems. Yes, we have a conscience, but that conscience must be instilled at youth, by age two to four by all accounts. The Science on this is clear, a child unguided, uninstructed in moral empathy and censured to treat others with the same creed as they’d want for themselves, these kids often turn into psychopaths. The evidence on this is clear.

“We have the *capacity* for innate conscience, but it must be instilled early by the parents and how can parents do this without some creed? And that creed was religious for most of human history, it placed a primacy on human individual worth, on transcendent and ideal values of God. Without that, it’s every man for himself, which is exactly the nihilistic code that has moved into the space that religion left open with its demise,” he said .

“Are we switching to politics now?” she asked with a grin.

“Look, the Marxists subsumed the individual, said he didn’t matter at all. Communism nearly destroyed the world with that kind of creed; and on the opposite end of chaos, scientific rationalism is saying there are no moral values except those we make up on the fly. According to modernity, there is no transcendental truth or moral code. It’s all arbitrary. And thus, man becomes a tool of each and every other man; there are no gods above us to instantiate man with worth. He’s a tool to be used by those with power. A fungible asset to be spent like the nickels and dimes that jingle in one’s pocket.

“Look at how we all treat each other, like pawns, not like kings. We use each other up; buy and sell each other to amass great fortunes here on earth. We ruin lives over nothing, we accrue rights without responsibilities. We tell half the story over and over. We tell half-truths and find ourselves in the grip of ideologies that reify our worst instincts to hate and attack and injure and exile anyone who isn’t exactly like us.

“Think of this, look at the purity tests on Right and Left. Look how anyone who doesn’t adhere to your exact political creed, is no longer even human. The Right purging anyone who might be for tariffs, the Left purging anyone who is anti-abortion. The radicals purging anyone who isn’t a black, transgender Marxist from the 3rd world, on both sides of their families.

“It’s insane, and it all comes from the death of God, the death of transcendental values, the death of articulated empathy and individual responsibility within a context of the primacy of that individual to hold a conscience in service of the common good. What was always considered the Good for five thousand years was a recursion with no head nor tail: the individual matters, and his duty is to the tribe, his wife and kids; and the tribe’s and wives’ and kids’ duty was to the individual; and the whole thing has a duty to the transcendental values of the gods.

“But, religion didn’t start that, it articulated it. Take away that written cultural code, and we’re all morally illiterate, scratching our own warped creeds upon the trees with elk bones and uncut nails, savages with empathy tearing us apart. Jealousy and insecurity and madness of all against all. No unifying creed, no God to hold us all in his arms, no way to settle disputes and hurt feelings; no way to become better men and women. No way to become better, because now we are all out for fucking blood.

“We lie to our friends, our comrades lie to us; we dump our mates for younger women or richer men; we end our bonds and pregnancies over whims, we betray our countries, our country betrays us. Armed to the teeth with rational empathy, knowing what will hurt and torture each other most; the most rational and evil creed of all: *do what thy wilt, that is the whole of the law.* That is our only religion now,” he said.

“Religion, Christianity civilized us?” she asked. She was starting to look deeper into the folds.

“And it worked for millennia, and we’re watching it all come apart. 400 years of scientific rationalism is the ship upon the sea, man trapped upon this black armada; and the prow of the vessel, 100 years of communism, the rudder of

soulless capitalism, the white whale of anti-god led to a dismasted man, a dismasted captain; cleaving us all of one good leg, now the aft of the ship, the bulkheads and ballast of scientific rationalism is going to pitch and yaw and send the rest of the leaning-leader onto the quarter deck, subsume him in the giant waves of nature and the worst in the crew of men.

“The crew will fall upon the captain, the waves upon the men; the Kraken underneath the whole fleet. This society is over; it will tear itself apart,” Isaiah said.

“Well, that won’t happen,” the Governor finally said with rebuke.

“It is happening,” Isaiah said with his eyes pointed at the man who had shared his head for just long enough to take away the germ.

They had been brought here to be told this; and now it had been told , Isaiah thought. He knew that this was the furthest back they could go. *The human brain cannot handle too many leaps backward in time; one must experience it gradually, much as one experienced the future gradually too.*

He’d told them a story that was pretending to be 2,000 years old but was actually only maybe 300 or 400 years in the past. Christianity was the weak man’s religious code. It was so because all religions were as *the Philosopher* said of philosophy: *a view into the mind of the man explaining it.*

Religion was tied to a man’s highest ideal. It was the ratification of this. Whatever man valued, whatever he idealized, idolized, that was his religion. And Christianity was the suite of virtues tethered to the weak, beta sons cast off from the collapse of the alpha-male and warlord paradigm of sexual selection. *The real source of the modern era’s collapse was located 2,500 years back,* he thought, *maybe more.*

The data was clear, Isaiah thought, as he had re-read the numbers from as far back as the *Enuma Elish* to the poetic eddas and *Sturlunga Sagas,* where, here it was quoted directly*: almost universally the kings indulged in extramarital affairs before, during and after marriage; and each tribal chief had dozens, hundreds of concubines and multiple wives,* from east to west, north to south, as far back as Mankind’s chimpanzee cousins.

The alpha male as controller and protector of the harem was the ancient mode of being. It was so ubiquitous that it was instantiated in each people’s codex, from the *Scoti* and *Picti*, to *Gauls* , *Norse-Icelandic* & *Norwegian* , to *Germanic* of the *Dithmarschen* , all cousins from hundreds -thousands- of years of the *Norse* diaspora. The young scions of alpha breeding were incessantly sent out by lust

for virgin territory and equally untouched -untrammeled- females in far-flung lands.

This was built into the mode of being by the genome and ratified by the Norse gods and their animating mythos , Isaiah thought as he let the genomic data from then, now -and at each point in between- populate his CNS. It wasn't just that testosterone levels were down, the entire morphology of man had changed. The neotonous ape had become more epicene; man's natural sexual dimorphism had moved toward a bonobo mean, with men getting smaller -and women larger- each generation. Face width, bone density were all attenuated, and specific alleles associated with the marital class of men were being reduced to a small coterie of males and the few females that shared some part of this genome.

The German-clans called the seafaring brutes, *Ascomanni* , the *ash-men* , because their ships were made of such grey ash wood; the *Gaels* of western isle called them *Dubgail* and *Finngail* , the dark and fair foreigners. And they arrived to conquer as was their birth right. They were the hundreds - thousands- of sons of kings of the *Norse* . And they conquered each of these areas axiomatically: *automatically with an axe* , Isaiah quipped to himself.

All DNA of modern people of Germanic, Gaelic, Scottish, Icelandic, Norwegian heraldry come from those conquerings of the last 2,000 years, Isaiah recounted as he matched genomes to men millions of times over the genetic database. The alleles; the recombinations flowered like mandorla for him.

To be Scottish was to be Norse, to be German was the same. The Norse were constituted by fiefdoms, clans and kingdoms ruled by the strongest, most adept, most courageous, most martial of men. These are the men who bred; and they bred hundreds, thousands of women themselves, in the most anti-democratic method of sexual reproduction since the elephant walrus, Isaiah mused.

And their scions had that same DNA. Like *anemophily-spore* , they blew in the wind, flung like pollen in vessels with sails & oars, *velis et remis* , catching the wind and rowing back the waters, to conquer the entire northern part of the earth. Men like this were special; there was nothing democratic about their assent. *Does the Amur tiger take a vote on who goes onto the next round?* Isaiah asked himself this rhetorical question.

These men were the DNA of those for whom Christianity was a rumor, a tale of woe from visitors, traders, captives. These men lived the ancient life of one man for every 100 wives. For the loser, there was none. For 99 men of each 100 there was none. It was Manichean, black and white, all or nothing. It was their mode of being, not some abstraction. And the digital DNA of such men proliferated to

such an extent as to be seen in the gene pool -that Isaiah now had access to- like dark stars. They shone at day; they reflected at night.

The seed of *Temujin Borjigin* was extant in 1% of the world's population, so successful was he in this same methodology of breeding. A report as old as 2003, Isaiah re-read, had recorded his Y chromosome in 10% of the men of the old *Mongol* empire's boundaries 1,000 years after his reign. Isaiah was in some kind of awe, at this level of sexual success, bound up in martial success. *It was enough to tilt the earth,* he thought; *to change the atmosphere.*

Isaiah perused the *Manchu* and *Ui-Neill* lines for their fealty to this one warrior's seed. He did so as his parallel processing read a line from *Genghis Kahn* :

> The greatest joy for man is to defeat his enemies, to drive them before him, to take from them all they possess, to see those they love in tears, to ride their horses, and to hold their wives and daughters in his arms.

Isaiah watched as the germ line narrowed, expanded and bottlenecked and broke like individual RNA itself can zip up and down a helix. He saw the mode of being for these ancient people, and how close such being was to the modern age; how it was right there to reach out and touch. And yet no one knew. It was proximate, it was genomic, it was close enough -and familiar enough- to still smell.

But -like the Lokota *language was purged within 100 years, like all evidence of* Indonesia silat *was lost -smuggled only in dance for 500 years- suppressed by colonial powers, like as each member of* Zendik *was exiled and their images dropped from the website, their names erased from publications, their personhood gone in that Stalinist way Arol had- like all this, the knowledge of how prevalent alpha male breeding dominance was just a few hundred years ago in most of the earth's peoples, is just gone ,* Isaiah admitted. *Nobody knows how new and anomalous this democracy of breeding is. They think one man and one woman -and this, everyone gets a girl, thing- is universal, the norm, ancient,* he thought with incredulity at man's stupidity; man's self-imposed ignorance.

And he knew that it would be of no use to read them the data, the thousands of pages of data from *Sayyids* who claim descendance from Muhammad who had hundreds of wives, and the *Geirmundr Heljarskinn* of 9th century Norway -data Isaiah had gotten from Dr. Mark Collard of Aberdeen- that had shown the expansion of iron age Norsemen with no wives -and no hope of wives coming to them in their homelands- due to the hording of them by their terrifying alpha fathers and uncles. Isaiah now quoted in his mind:

> In a population where just a few powerful older men are able to have multiple concubines you end up with large numbers of young single men quite rapidly. Some men would have two or three wives, but the Norse sagas say that some princes and kings had limitless numbers of women.

Isaiah shook his head as he saw this pattern repeated over and over again from *Apache* and *Spartan and Shogun* to *Maasai, Maori and Mongols* and right up until the 18th century in some areas of Scotland, America -both north and south- and the *antipodes* .

Dudo of *Saint Quentin* in the 10th century was already writing on the increase in risky raiding and traveling by the scions of alpha kings in search of do-or-die plundering and child-bride acquiring.

And the chastity of the female was always overtly declaimed as a prerequisite by such men. *It's common knowledge in all literature on masculinity that men with unfaithful wives or wives with promiscuous pasts are seen as less manly. From Nisbett to Tamler this is uncontroversial ,* Isaiah thought as he read the data.

The *Sagas* of *Laxardal* and *Harald* and *Vatnsdal* all speak of concubines and wives as virgins as if any other kind of woman was unfit for the kings and princes who sought and won them. Robert Trivers had said, "when you are not a virgin your reproductive value drops to zero; for you cannot marry," and the audience had gasped.

Professor Collard, Isaiah read, *went on:*

> With elite men monopolizing an increasing percentage of woman, many low-status men would have found it difficult to marry unless they were willing to engage in risky behavior to improve wealth and status.

Isaiah felt like he was in the *Hounds of Baskerville ,* what was important in this account was what was *not* said. And the bark unheard was this: what made these, quote, *elite men* , in fact elite was that they had come from a long line of ancient alphas themselves. The bloodlines showed that, the DNA showed that the alpha gene passed down like a plumbline, straight down from the first massive, brilliant, martial men who conquered, *physically* , Isaiah repeated, *conquered the world* .

These elite men, Isaiah thought, *had -by force- raised their people out of the muck and took, like chimpanzee alphas do, the youngest -virginal- women as their prize -payment- for such work.*

And the hundreds, thousands of children they sired with these brides had that

alpha gene too. And as they came into the world, it was up to them to fight amongst themselves, or push off to foreign lands to fight other tribes' alphas for dominance in man's most ubiquitous and salient *milieu* : *other men* .

Men have been fighting hand-to-hand for millennia, Isaiah recounted, *and it produced the most fearsome, awesome -in the most literal translation- and competent men* . This was mankind's mode of being from the *Skaldic* poems to the analects of *Confucius* , to the *Torah* itself. King David had a dozen wives, Solomon had hundreds. Women acquired at ages as young as 7 or 8 -as it was for *Muhammad* - and usually at ages no later than 15. *All virgins,* Isaiah repeated.

Isaiah reviewed *de Waal's* work, and was reminded that this is the only benefit the alpha chimp gets from his excessive food production, his taking care of the troops' caloric needs, and his outsized martial ability and willingness to fight other chimps -from other troops- that they encounter; all the while pouring out affection and deescalating internecine squabbling by his own troop's betas and the odalisques of his own harem. His cortisol -the stress hormone- is as high as anyone's in the troop. All his efforts are marshalled for one thing: access to chaste mates. *But the alpha must prevent his harem from mating with betas, for they have no shame. Like modern women, chimpanzee females are promiscuous. The alpha must beat the shit out of any beta that even makes eye contact with his mates,* Isaiah recounted from the data of both species.

And man was no different for all but the last 200 or 300 years. For hundreds of thousands of years, the badass got the girls, all of them, Isaiah summed up in his head knowing it would take such demotic language to reach the great mass of men and women who would read this.

And the clan, not the family, was the unit of reproduction, Isaiah added in his review to himself. *The clan* . The tribe of 100, or even fewer, aligned by sons and uncles and built on this hub of their Norse wheel: *the Helm of Awe* .

> The Helm of Awe I wore before the sons of men in defense of my treasure; amongst all, I alone was strong. I thought to myself, for I found no power a match for my own.

Isaiah saw the highest values of men repeated over and over again in this same vein until Christ appeared to shift man's consciousness. Before Christ, Man knew that his own power was in the tribe, and the tribe's power was in him.

Might made right for all of man's history as told in the *Story of Job* and the *Poetic Edda* as the havoc-wreaking dragon of *Farnir* said those words on the Helm that Isaiah had just thought.

The brothers of Inge *Haraldsson* and *Sigurd Munn* ruled with their uncle *Eystein* in Norway in the 12th century as clan fought clan as far back as far forward -over thousands of years- along the straight shaft of Time's Arrow.

Herdebrei , means broad-shouldered, and that was the *nom de guerre* of the son of Sigurd Munn. *The record had such growling if not yet barks* , Isaiah thought, *that hinted at what was always known in the blood and the bone of the iron-age man: physical strength was paramount. It settled disputes, it answered questions, it dotted i's and crossed t's. Power was first, last and always the way of men on this earth.*

Sigurd himself was son of Magnus III, and he physically participated in crusades like a true warrior king. *This* , Isaiah compared, *model was in direct contrast to the* effete *British bullshit that -like the* Apollonians *before them- had overtaken the more noble and physically powerful -but more excusive, and thus outnumbered- Spartans.*

To be great means -definitionally, axiomatically- to be *few* .

And the history of man, Isaiah recounted, *was of great men producing so many children that eventually, betas appeared in the gene pool and infected the germline with illicit, unsanctioned, usurpations of the king by one disloyal and haughty female inside his seraglio* . The 1% mutation of the alpha's meiosis or the infection of his bride's genome producing one runt of the litter could become problematic if that bad genome itself was allowed to reproduce. *And what if two or three betas aligned?* Isaiah thought. *What if the king turned the other cheek?*

The Spartan killed babies that looked week on day three. It was ruthless, horrible, and right, he thought.

Isaiah reviewed the data on Chimpanzees and how two or three betas would plot with the help of one female -she herself disgruntled and more masculine, she herself competitive- against the alpha of the troop. It was ubiquitous, and only the most trenchant and vigilant alpha who smashed such *coups* survived. The life of the alpha chimp was beset on all sides by such beta-male and duplicitous female plots. It was war. War by other means -politics and tricks- and hand to hand combat too; but it was always war.

Man was no different. Great Kings and Sultans had to keep such a tight eye on their harem as to make eunuchs of all men his wives and concubines would ever see. *He could trust no man with the materiel* - Isaiah thought with a smile that held no mirth- *to sully his stable of girls* . And the Alpha male of yore, from Norway to the Ottoman, had to deal with incessant attacks on the one thing he

prized above all else: *his womenfolk.*

This was why the clan system worked, Isaiah thought, *for a king's sons would have genetic cause, deeply imbued desire, blood-bonds to serve their king, not out of cathexis for remuneration or status or compensation in base nor noble metals* . The clan was bonded by deep fealty that arises organically from bloodline and shared purpose. The clan had something that chimpanzees had failed to discover: the articulated exclusion of all weak and all foreign blood from the borders. Man had ancient religion; atavistic gods of strength, honor and war.

Some chimps let roaming males come into their troops and let sullen betas sulk about and plot; kick rocks; pout.

But the savvy homo-sapient line, Isaiah thought, *had figured out to exile weak brothers and disloyal uncles, and attack all foreigners before they could sow discord. Before the xenophilia and slave-mentality of Christianity, anyway* , Isaiah thought.

In 1098 e.v., *King Magnus III* and his loyal son *Sigurd* expelled the Earl of *Orkney* for treachery of just one word. They allowed no dissent, no insult, one was loyal or one was dead, one was with the clan king or one was gone with the wind. This was the creed of the Argentine ant that colonized each aquarium Isaiah had built. He let their symmetry, uniformity, beauty of genome populate his mind as all the data came in and was sorted by type, date, relevance.

Brothers were bonded, *Oystein* and *Olav* to *Sigurd* , and if any treachery was noticed it was handled with exile or death. The clan was paramount, for without it -like Kipling's wolf- the individual could not survive. Their father *Magnus* had been grumbled about when he first assented to the throne, but his enemies were dispatched at once, and he set about the *Hebrides* , *Orkeny* and *Mann* -of what would become Scotland- and conquered and slew and proved his *bona fides* with iron and blood. The speeches came for the faithful after the work was done. Ancient man didn't explain to his enemies, no more than *Yahweh* explained to *Job* . *Where were you when I laid the foundations?* God had asked.

The Orkneyinga Saga, Isaiah ruminated upon it now, *was the gold standard for description of the epoch and the men and women from where the inmate came. The union of Norway and Scotland like two footprints in the earth's mud made by a giant produced some of the best men of then and now,* Isaiah thought. The outer islands, the archipelagos of the Scottish and Norwegian isles were like blood spatter dripping from that giant as he cleaned his claymore of his enemies' blood with his hands.

These Jarls' saga *retold what was obvious to people of that time and bloodline: between the 9 th and 13 th century is where the battles were fought in regions untouched by Christianity's hippy-shit, the sons born, and the clans solidified in the Norse expansion project. It was the colonialism of the Pagan kings and it laid down the best DNA extant,* Isaiah thought.

He saw the giants of Iceland, the immune systems unparalleled in these high-testosterone ancestries, the gene expression response to hormesis, the elevation to elevation, and the intelligence and verbal IQ one standard deviation from the global mean. Too often, the rubric of *white people* was used, when building population models for IQ. And it lowered the population IQ to a mere 105; but when one looked deeper into the data a line of demarcation was obviously drawn between types -populations- of so-called *whites* . *The Norse line was superior to other white people, even of Anglo-Saxon lineage ,* Isaiah saw.

The *Scoti-Norse-Germanic* line was bottlenecked at the genome that the inmate had; and Isaiah had traced it back to that timeframe as outlined in the *Sagas* .

This was the last cleaving, threshing, the last synthesizing, the last time the clans had it out with themselves and the world, he thought.

All that came from it appeared; including the 1745 expulsion of *Scots* from the *British Isles* and the further isolation of *Icelanders* and the *Dithmarschen* who tramped through the regions of *Champagne* on their *campaigns* to cull the human noble rot, not embrace it like the French would in the rows of *Sauternes* . Isaiah traced the northern bones from *Sliasthorp* in Germany and the Viking rex *Godfred* as he stacked genomes in his algorithms.

Isaiah had located a cohort of these *Norse* cousins in the US in 4% of the population; 1.4% of which were males and alive and currently out of prison. He knew where they lay their heads. He monitored their respiration and their blood work; *he watched over them like a mother hen,* he thought with warmth.

He saw their genomes like boundary stars of constellations; he saw signal in the noise.

The men were called *Vaeringjar , sworn men* , and the adhesion between each consonant of the name was the Germanic, *wara* : *faithfulness* . These men had loyalty in the blood. And modern men didn't understand this, it was as opaque to them as the mirror, where light shone back at them: modern men, pacific men, rational men, thus seeing only themselves. But some men see through the looking glass and can grasp what is visually clear: man is nothing without his tribe, his clan, his gang. A man alone is like a cod alone, useless to anyone -

including himself- including the gods.

To desire someone to worship, desire a god among men, desire something to believe in larger and more noble than one's self is the *sine qua non* of the alpha archetype. Great men want to be surrounded by great men like the imbricate shields of the *Lacedaemons* , the locking armor of the ouroboros asp.

They, Isaiah thought, *were called Vikings, by the men they conquered in England, and their only mistake was in not eradicating every last one of the vanquished English -the remnants of the what Rome had tolerated- before the English used perfidy and bribery and democratic breeding to overwhelm like microbes the regal clans of the Norse lineage.*

These kings of the Highlands, and the few -by design- descendants of *Kveldulf* - nephew to *Hallbjorn* , a massive and strong man- and *Egill Skallagrimsson* had been the line that blended like veins in one body with *Ljotr* and the clan *MacLeod* within the vascular map of the *Norse-Scot Othala* ; *they had won the battles but lost the war , by allowing even one of their enemy to survive* , Isaiah thought.

Egill was known for his strength and poeticism; when to speak with such power was seen -as it is- as *magjick . Words were not mere playthings, abstractions, empty, ironic, as they are for modern men,* Isaiah thought, *the poem was tantamount to incantation, the Logos was what brought forth the world .*

How were, Isaiah thought, *modern men to conceptualize this, when one's words now meant so little, when no men followed through on hardly 1% of what they thought or said? How, when the tyranny of irony enslaved modern men?*

How was he to explain that the warrior poet was seen -as he was- as a two-edged sword, a heart-headed, double-powered force that conquered the world with strong limbs, pure hearts, and actions matching the sound of the jaws as they chewed through the poems created in the forge of their fire-minds?

Modern men just do not see this, he thought. *However explained, it's in a dead language, a language only revivified in the bodies of men and women of this ancient time, this far-off place, this first-bloodline. The audio-cortex had the same DNA as the heart, as the limbs, and the seed that blew in the wind. Modern man could not hear the poems of great men.*

Modern men thought any philosophy could be learned, adopted, imbued; that any man could be converted. It was the motto of America: a nation founded on ideas.

But genes mattered, blood mattered, and the earth's soil mattered; other races of

men could not understand the language of the alpha male and the sounds of his womenfolk were like echoes off canyons that were so distorted that both sender and receiver were made mad from the chaos of such things. The honing device of the moth, based on the light of the moon's albedo, made self-destructive by the curved light of the candle. Isaiah saw the lumens that made fire-bombs of the moth and he thought of the fractal nature of life.

Women with good DNA, Isaiah thought*, were made mad by a modern world; a world that told them they couldn't have their king, that their innate need for one man, one protector, was a fairytale, a puerile dream.* Isaiah thought of the girl who spoke to the inmate -just before he did his duty- and confided to him of just such dreams and dreams dashed.

Jadi had known from her first age-of-reason that she was to born to be the chaste wife -among sister-wives- of a king, to fulfill her magjickal *duty of producing strong, noble, rare, life; life from nothing,* ab initio*. Better a good man's frillur than married badly* , as the Icelandic motto went.

She knew what she was to be -she knew her magjick power- and yet she was told by her elders to sellout to the modern ways. She was born goddess and offered slavery instead. *And they dared call it liberty* , Isaiah thought with a rage in him that made his mouth taste bitter herbs on the tip of tongue which sought sweetness first. Women had been ruined by women and their corrupting advice .

He thought of Jadi's bravery for admitting to this; and how the inmate had heard the same story from so many women who knew who they were as little girls only to be made common and low by the culture that turned noble fawns, perfect demiurges of all life -for this is what virgin girls are- into base things, banal consumers, mere workers, and the sexual playthings for betas and callow alphas who do not know their duty. And no one said one word as goddesses were ruined and men failed to do their duty by them. Modern people with no vision, no courage, no education, all went along with the worst ideas of mankind.

Isaiah then thought of *Egill Skallagrimsson's* silver chest from *King Athelstan* ; the gift as recompense for the loss of his brother on the Isle. Thick necked and broad shouldered, he sheathed his sword at the end of battle; but his anger persisted the *Saga's* explained. His anger was laid bare; his height was uncommonly elevated, his hair wolf-grey and thick; black were his eyes.

Isaiah read the accounts of three-coins embossed with ANLAF CVNVNC -the English name for *Olafur Kvaran* , the man *Egill* had fought to his end and from whose treasury he was paid by the king- coins now spit out of the river at the end of *Mosfell* within 8-kilometers of *Reykjavik* . Isaiah watched the satellite images

from *Landsat7* above Iceland now and signaled it to prompt the FLIR imaging of remote drones he'd sent out earlier that day.

The cataracts of *Reykjafoss* and *Alafoss* were fuzzy from foam and mist along the blue line of the *Varma* river. Isaiah gleaned data from the topography and heat signatures, isolating several spots of rock density that were inconsistent with the older beds and formations.

He set the drones to continue to fly over the area at heights of 3,000 meters during the day, and 1,200 meters at night, using FLIR imaging for 80% of the runs; gamma X-rays for 13%; the remainder of sorties would use common radio waves and the data was to be uploaded to the cloud. Isaiah returned to his task of how to explain that the loss of God by modern men was a symptom of the wound -a sequela of the original wound- not the wound itself.

Christ, as Nietzsche pointed out, was a slave's god. But the Philosopher had not pointed out why, he thought.

Christ was the highest ideal of the men born of the democracy of sex; of patrimony; of the primogeniture of this new mankind. Christ was the genuinely highest ideal of beta males. He was kind, forgiving, redemptive; he sought elevation of the individual -each containing the light of God equally- and the ramification of the equality of man.

All were equal before God, Christ had said, and this mode of being was what pulsed in the low-iron blood of weak men made so by the lack of vigilance of the kings of yore. *The ancient kings had failed to prevent such men from breeding* , Isaiah thought as the taxonomic, genetic and religious texts all layered like thin, translucent leaves of the *Bible* itself on his mind.

Thousands and thousands of pages of data showed him that when the great kingdoms from the steppe, or Sumeria, or the levant, collapsed sufficiently to allow beta male breeding to increase exponentially, that then the God that sprang forth after millennia of the marital gods from Mars to YHWY -by then- this usurper, this lamb of God, this gentle Jesus, meek and mild was by then truly the highest ideal of such men.

Men, Isaiah thought, *made of weak genes, began to need a forgiving god, and that new religion spread as slavery spread. As the old kingdoms failed, the great men were subsumed by greedy men that bred slaves for money, tawdry commerce and corrupt dealings to lighten their own loa d* . They grew fat on the labor of other men. Fiat currency and slavery bloomed as the imperial nations grew like fat ticks on the diseased blood of a weakened beast.

Once great lineages of men abandoned their own martial gods to enrich themselves, and sewed the seeds of their own destruction, as they turned more and more men into slaves in *lieu* of corpses; manure. *They ought,* Isaiah thought, *to have killed nine out of 10 of those they captured in raids, but they myopically kept them alive to be beasts of burden to make their own lives easier . They made themselves soft and this hardened the muscles and hearts of the slave. How could a noble man not see the doom in this?*

Was it not slaves of Rome that first became quorum for Christ, the first numbers, weight, divisions of men with slave bodies, slave minds, and a slave god now as their hero ? Isaiah asked. *It was the corruption of Rome, the corruption of the Attic Greeks, who brought forth Christianity; Greek,* he then thought, *the language of the Christian Bible in fact.*

"Commerce," Isaiah said into the room. *And it was commerce that led the colonists to breed slaves so that they outnumbered white southerners 10 to one,* Isaiah shook his head in contempt; it was the ratio of sheep to men in New Zealand. *And who took to Christianity faster than the southern slaves?* he asked himself.

Master and slave both now, since Rome, since Constantine, married under one God, one ideal, one hierarchy of values: *weakness and forgiveness and turning the other cheek.*

Isaiah thought it might be a joke it was so obvious, so clearly destructive to the *tao* that had allowed mankind -and chimps- to survive at all. The martial gods before Christ had a hierarchy of value based on vigilance, smashing all incipient plots, no forgiveness, and never giving a disloyal man a second chance. This was encoded in the alpha chimps that survived, and absent in the insouciant chimps who were overthrown in a beta *putsch* . *Machiavelli* knew the code: *men should be either treated generously or destroyed, because they take revenge for slight injuries* .

This was the endogenous alpha code, his mode of being; it had no need of being taught , Isaiah thought, *merely sanctioned* . The inmate had said this was how he felt at each turn, to give all his love or all his hate to each one he met; he knew no middle way; and yet it was only his hate that was stayed too many times to count. He knew the code on his body and declined to listen and instead heard the State and this God of Christ behind it. *Until,* Isaiah remembered, *when he had read Yahweh and found sanction for his vengeance at last.*

Men were no different that the beasts or gods: it was the weak, the willing-to-forgive weakness, the ignoble men, men with no honor nor iron in the veins, it

was the insouciant king who thought more of commerce, wealth and luxury who was usurped in the north and the east and the west. For hundreds of thousands of years man's mode of being was clear: *might makes right* .

And their gods exemplified this ideal.

But once man let the weak breed that was when Christ was needed, a God for the weak and the sorry and enslaved. A democratic God for the highest virtue of this idea: each man a king, each man a wretch equally; the democracy of the soul.

Isaiah wondered how it worked at all; *and for so long* , he thought and was amazed as the phrase of Evola's, *aristocracy of the soul*, populated his mind. But it occurred to him then, in .066 seconds, it was because of the nation-state itself. The nation-state from the Roman republic to the European kingdoms to the American experiment itself, they all needed a unifying creed, an ideal, something to hold it together. *And a martial God, an Aeries, or Marduk or Yahweh, a Thor or Oðinn would not do,* he surmised. *A marital God would expect too much from the* canaille, *too much from the common man* .

A marital God would make great men be great, He would demand it from man and all those below him. A marital God would never allow overbreeding for commerce, millions of slaves running amuck in the streets purely so the leaders could be rich. Wealth -in pre-Christian clans- would not be measured in *talents* of silver, but in the weight a man could shoulder for the tribe. *The mind-set had to be different,* Isaiah now saw, *to keep so many weak people in line.*

He saw the lumbering complexity of the large bodies of organisms compared to simple creatures, how single cells had worked for a billion years before life felt the need to grow. He thought too of some complex beasts like bacteria returning to simpler viral forms or the hippo going back to the sea.

A *nation has too many people, and what happens when you add more and more people to anything: dilution, reversion to the mean. Even conversations grow dumber the more people you add. One on one conversations are always the most deep and true* , Isaiah thought. What was more godlike than an author and one reader; one book in one man's hand?

A nation must have a slave hierarchy, a weak god, an idealism of supplication and forgiveness and looking the other way. It was only under the protection and infantilization of the State, *the mechanical alpha* , Isaiah liked to call it, that man could afford to be so individualistic and base. Only under this massive, bloated structure of a republic, a democracy, a welfare-state -like those *Sapolsky* baboons under the *largess* of the human garbage dump- only under this could weak men

thrive, grow fat, stupid and sire even weaker and more base children to fill the voodoo doll -the *piñata* - of the body-politic with the disgusting democratic equality of the Wrong.

And Christianity is what animated the occidental state, such an automaton, such a pin-cushion doll, such a soulless amalgam of weakness made strong by sheer volume and weight like a prey animal dead on its feet waiting to fall to the ground. *The physicists would measure that deadfall as work,* Isaiah thought ruefully.

Christianity is what made it all cohere at all. Like a patient damaged, broken, bent, riddled, engulfed in entropy and malady and beset by incessant pain stuffed to the gills on opiates so he can ambulate at all. The opiate was useful; and to remove it -to ween him- would kill the man, cause him to flail and act out; to go mad. But what nobody said -and what was obvious to Isaiah as all that data poured in- was that that pragmatic man, that ignoble State, that collection of broken parts and ruined mind, needed to die.

That even this God, as weak as he was, was now dead, killed by rationalism, science and the most disgusting types of corrupt men, was not problem but solution, Isaiah saw. *For now the nation-state will collapse* . "Yes," he said, "the modern nation-state will collapse."

From, he thought, *the State will die from this fracturing and soggy melting as God's blood laps at the shores; but that is good, because the State itself was the goddamn problem to begin with. It allowed too many weak people to survive the natural culling that the old tribal ways instantiated in their noble, martial, and harsh ways* . Sacrificial offers had to be made, and Cain's had been found wanting.

He thought that the one caveat to all this was that he knew the helix of life moved up and down, as it torqued, rotated and revolved; it augured. A great return, meant that it would be one level up, so it may spiral and not run into its own maw .

Christ had been necessary because *Job* had caused *Yahweh* to become self-reflective for the first time in the history of the gods. God -the hierarchy of *might makes right,* the hierarchy of the animal creed- had not once apologized to *Job* for capriciously laying him low. God had only berated *Job* for daring to question His ways. He had shown off His power, not His reason, his prerogative not His counsel. God had said, *might makes right, Job.*

But, once *Job* himself was restored -as God did give him new offspring and

bounty- what *Job* knew, God knew too, for both ontologically and psychologically God must know anything mankind knows. Man's highest ideal must know the whole of man below.

Before the crisis of *Job* -of mankind before their breakdown of the bicameral mind- mankind had been unaware of the *articulated* idea of justice, of fair play, that God ought to be good in addition to powerful. Just as modern man doesn't expect a hurricane to be good, pre-conscious man didn't expect God to be good; man may have expected his fellow man to play fair but not the gods.

After the breakdown of the bicameral mind, after man becomes self-aware to such a degree than empathy blooms and booms in his brain with the same animating force as the Cambrian explosion itself, after man has a mind and metaphorized *I* , he expects God to be good, just, and honorable, too. Man invents universal justice in his mind, and it, like a leaf in the river between two lands -two hemispheres- passes him by, but remains in him as vision, memory, proof of some fruit-tree upstream. It's evidence of a just God; an ideal that is real.

And once man -*via Job* - knows this, God knows it too; the ideal knows itself has thus failed.

And it was then that God sacrificed Himself by giving the world -as recompense- His only begotten son; he too abandoned on the cross. God showed penance; contrition, regret. Improvement in one domain: self-awareness.

Christ was the God not just of weakness, Isaiah thought, *but of consciousness itself.* Christ showed man, mankind -proved mankind- had the capacity to be self-reflective, thoughtful, repentant, and forgiving to those below him that weren't as strong, smart, and noble as he. Some weakness was forgivable, for it was humble and it did not plot, and God knew this now: not all weak things must be destroyed; some may live if they promise not to reproduce, rejoin, reproach.

This was the one good thing in Christ, the God of self-reflection, awakeness, self-consciousness. *Post-modern man, the new Tribalist,* Isaiah thought, *could take that into the future of the re-vivified tribal clan. The huge body of the nation-state could die, the massive juggernaut could die, be burned in a fire, but the seed of man's consciousness would remain. In the fire the pinecone would open and the seed would emerge.*

Mankind could return to alpha-dominated tribes, strong and warlike tribes, but with the seed of self-refection, the *logos* , the combination of the *poetic-edda* and the recursion of language back on the heart of man. Man would speak truth

into the world to bring it forth, like black *magjick* , then the echo of his voice would redound to him too, bringing forth white light into his own mind and soul. The Great Return would collapse the State, the weak slave God of Christ would lift off the dead corpse of the State, but the soul of man would return to his martial, noble, regal ways.

Small, Isaiah thought, *bands of tribal warlords, lead by great warrior-poets, men of grand genomes with the power of language borne of acute self-reflection, awareness, men awake, unencumbered by hesitation or irony or doubt, would again roam the earth, doing battle for supremacy, cleansing the earth of the haughty dross, the chaff, the weak genes, and the eco-system of man would return to a balance, with great men stuffing weak men through the threshing floor of the black sun to fuel its black light upon the white of the world.*

36. Primitives

Warriors, who or where, fight who & where, and how they can
Blackhawk [Zendik, Wulf]

In other words, no dedicated information molecules exist separately from operation molecules

21st Century Evolution [Shapiro, James]

How many Spartiates are there? Enough to keep out undesirables
On Sparta [Plutarch]

I. 2017 e.v.

He stood up in the tub and looked out over 1.5 million acres of Colorado wilderness to the south. Taos, New Mexico was just visible to his south/southeast. He lowered his black underwear -no banding, no logos, no deviation from black- and relieved himself onto the edge of the slab that the hot tub sat upon, the pad he had poured, screed and troweled himself.

He had even mixed the crete by hand in a wheelbarrow with a flathead shovel because the mixer had been unable to start , he recalled.

The urine was neon yellow thanks to undigested vitamins he took by the handful. And his body began to feel cold from the winter air; the fog finally began to rise up from the valley and hem him in; he liked it; it felt like another wall between him and anyone else. *Walls within walls* , he thought with satisfaction.

He was finished with women as laid out in *First Corinthians 7* ; and like 65% of the things he said, he stuck to it; which is 90% more than the rest of the species.

People can easily see the nobility in ignoring your Darwinian impulses -many scientists from Dawkins to Weinstein had said so directly- but they only meant the *violence* and *greed* ; they certainly don't expect a man to foreclose on the sexual desire that sinews and skins the meat of all men.

But, he was happy to give it up -he was a romantic, anyway- and didn't like meaningless sex; he was like a woman that way. And relationships with women were impossible these days; they had too many options and it prevented them from submitting to a civil rule; and it made them unhappy as a result.

Name one woman you know that is happy , he thought, *and I bet she's a girl who's been with only one man -her husband- and lives out in the middle of nowhere with no temptations to sin.*

Man was not meant to have more than three choices in anything; and partners is certainly one of them . Cities and modernity have ruined relationships; and since everyone is in cahoots, everyone pretends this ain't true. It's a conspiracy toward sin; and this is what all men forget about sin: it harms you, not just God. Anyway, he thought, *he was now at least out of this evil loop.*

Jesse James had died at 34, Morrison at 27; Alexander almost made it to 33. Rimbaud just 39; Flannery O'Connor 34; Jack London 40. The list went on and on. All Great men died young or in ignominy. John Brown was hung by Lincoln and condemned by Hawthorn; and Brown was 1,000 times as great as both men conjoined.

Lyndon was 44 and had lived a good life, and so he would take as many more days as they'd give him, but he was playing with the house's money now; so, he would be even more reckless than normal. This would make people grin if he happened to put it that way in mixed company. He was not known as a cautious man before this phase change into pure malice. He already had a reputation for chaos. He laughed at that. They had no idea how much he had *restrained* himself to date.

The rest of his days would be dedicated to revenge; vengeance was his only pursuit. It was a noble task he felt, *and if you ruminated on it a bit you'd find it honorable too* , he honestly felt.

Bad people proliferated in a liberal society; people lied and cheated and gossiped all without cease or governance. And any man who didn't live that way was at a disadvantage; a disadvantage that could only be cured by following through with the talents and capacities he had and that they didn't: martial and righteous force. *The Horseshoe crab has the best immune system on the planet, the best defense,* he thought, *the white shark has the best offense in the game. Each organism must play to their strengths, and not try to play another beast's game.*

His enemies were all beta males and females; weak people who had to lie, cheat and gossip to win; they had no size or strength or martial appetite; they couldn't win on God-leveled ground. But since their weapons were legal -in the modern world- and his armature was not, then as prey they grossly rutted and as predator he was asked -told- to have none. They offered him the grass to eat. He asked, *what about these sharp teeth?*

It was an imbalance of nature and thus, axiomatically, *immoral* in his eyes. *In his eyes,* he saw as he looked out over the edge of his land, *in his eyes, he was moral and they were immoral . One ought to linger on that longer than one might think is needed,* he thought as he removed the underwear *in toto* ; he didn't even know

why he had worn it in the tub in the first goddamn place. *There wasn't a human within 50 square miles of him* , he thought as he sat down naked and as unashamed as the Greeks.

You don't let the deer and jackals breed exponentially and then muzzle and declaw the tiger; you don't. God doesn't, and yet man thinks he can do this very thing. Man's law and social *mores* allow beta males and females to gossip and lie and cheat and rut without cessation while they swat the nose of the alpha male and tell him to embay and embalm his instincts toward justice and righteousness and nobility. *Imagine God putting a muzzle on the White Shark and yet letting the Horseshoe crab to keep its defense!* he thought with contempt.

He grew hot, overheated, in the tub some days; his allostatic and homeostatic regulation was not as consistent as he thought. *Makes you wonder what's going on in there,* he thought. He rose from the tub and let the 30 degree air cool him off. His insides were mercurial, and he knew this had import for things larger than body *temp* . He stood up in the cold, merely his shins and feet in the 103 degree water, and steam -of course- lifted off the surface area of his large body that was never large enough. The slider window to his bedroom both allowed to pass through and reflected the hundreds of books that lined his northern wall.

He saw things in distorted threes.

In all of the house the windows picked up books like this, and so he had both the wall of book spines and their reflection in all his southern windows and doors. He smiled at the aesthetic of it and then he returned to reading the book in his hand. The paper was wet as he had sloppily dunked part of a corner. But the pages had been pressed tight together by his absent-minded grip and thus most of the pages were dry except on the edge.

Oscar Wilde had said that Americans liked their heroes to come from the criminal class.

He thought that was right; more or less. *That's the thing in an innately hypocritical society: anyone who truly believes in a thing, anyone who is credulous enough to believe in justice and God and the Truth, well, that man is seen as ill-suited for those very things,* he thought with pique. Any man who believes in true love can't have a relationship in this world, as they -modern women- all are too tawdry and filthy and chock-full-o'-lies for him to stomach. Conversely, a pragmatic man -a realistic man- can deal with the sullied love and get along just fine. The worst people do better in a corrupt *milieu* . They can stomach it; bolt it all down.

A true patriot to the country won't just sit back and accept the corruption; he - like John Brown or Nathan Bedford Forrest- will fight back to the knife, and the knife to the hilt. And thus he will be jailed, hated and killed. Oscar Wilde had also said that any map that didn't include *utopia* wasn't worth following; and this was wrong of course. But it was wrong the way so many tantalizing things are just 1 degree wrong. But it was wrong.

Idealists are exactly the problem; they ruin it for everyone else.

But, a man is and must be what he is, and our man, alone up here at 8760 feet was an idealist in friendship and family and amorous love. He believed in total honesty and loyalty and anything less than 100% was tantamount to 0%. He was like the Chicago city bosses of political rings who had in fact said that very same thing. *What do you call someone 99% loyal* ? the joke goes. "Disloyal," he then said aloud.

He knew it was wrong and destructive and stupid as fuck. But that, in the final analysis, was just what and who he was. He couldn't have transactional friendships or love; he couldn't no matter how acclimated everyone else was to that kind of deal. If they didn't call it *friendship* or *love* maybe he could stomach it; *but his family clearly didn't love one another or him, and his brother's marriage was a soulless sham, his friends were all backstabbers and his paramours all betrayers of one sort or another, all of these scoundrels claimed to be family, friends and lovers; they,* he accused, *sinfully used holy words to bless unholy relations.*

They ought to have been honest and just said what they were, then he wouldn't need to slap them around. He admitted he was a murderer, a man of malice; he didn't tart it up. And they were business people who married for money and made friends for political gain. They didn't feel love or loyalty at all. Thus, they had no right to the words that romantic and steadfast and honest men used.

That was why he condemned them , he thought. Their hypocrisy and inflation of their feelings with romantic wording and ornate brocades; they gilded their paltry business-as-usual relationships with words that should have been held in reserve for more noble people with more honorable behavior. Imagine calling George Bush a *great* president, it was enough to make a cat laugh. Nobody in that tawdry, faggy family was *great* ; they were milquetoast functionaries. They minded the store. *Great* was not a word to be used on men like that. It debased the word, and ought to have embarrassed the men of the House of Bush too.

When Lyndon had a girl, he didn't even look at another woman. Once a business partner had said -in regards to *amor - hey , even if you can't eat , you can still*

look at the menu , with a lupine grin. Lyndon had replied, *actually I don't even want to look at the menu; I'm full and will remain so. The menu isn't even fun to look at as it somehow ruins this warm full feeling I already have.* He was in love at the time and that meant something to him; he *the last of the grizzles in settled Missouri. It meant something in his heart, not his mind; in his balls, not in some legal document that hangs on the wall.*

He just didn't get how people could diminish and tarnish and let fall into disrepair their relationships like that. Scientific studies showed that even *looking* at other people -of the opposite sex- in photographs had a deleterious affect on one's relationship; for both women and men. The more options we have, the less happy we are with what we have; it's not religion that encodes that, it's biology; and science has proved it. *But people still ogle and gawk at other people and let their own relationships rust and limp and fall apart at the seams. It's sad; and the culture makes a big joke of it. A man who won't be alone in a room with another woman -other than his wife- is seen as insane; as a religious nutjob and a creep. Our vice-president* , Lyndon thought, *is 10 times the man of everyone who derides him for that noble behavior.*

Any one of principle is seen as extreme in our *commerce-comes-first* world; our materialistic, oh-so-realistic world. This is the natural and unavoidable consequence of our *Apollonian* vector as we broke away from the *Lacedaemonian* example of our true Greek parents. We sided with the wicked uncle instead of the noble father. *And our culture,* he thought as he looked out over the wilderness, not one human construction, besides his own hot tub, extant, *has turned into a disgusting and licentious and perfidious wolf den and a sad sack of pig shit that gives even its adherents a belly ache.*

But I think this is why some criminals and outlaws rise from the soil to populate our hero tales; these are obvious men-of-principle , an archetype each man secretly admires, in the world abandoned to Satan by a disgusted -rightfully disgusted- God , Lyndon thought to himself as the fog embayed him and the cold made his edges of skin feel stark, clean, clear. Which isn't to say these brigands aren't flawed men who break their own rules and often fail to follow even the good laws that the society sets. He knew that too.

But, they are so unable to live under the yoke of an obviously sick and stupid social order that they break free in some way, in *any* way, as example to the rest of us. They say, *no way, I won't obey; your society is evil and sick and full of horse shit, and I won't be some puppet on a string. I'll go my own way and try to live in a manner that I can respect* .

That is beyond the capacities of weak and frightful men. To live by one's own rules? To refuse to be governed by corrupt bullshit and lies? Well, even if you can only pull that off half of the time- that is more than most men even try.

And I don't mean this Johnny-come-lately, PC, left-wing bullshit, he corrected as if he had been unclear. He had read Chomsky in 1994 when all these modern, callow, Left-wing fakers were still a blastocysts or worked at CNN parroting state department lies; before Chris Matthews was claiming to be fucking *woke* .

So, he thought, *now that the culture is catching up, now the safe bet -the conformist view- is now Left-wing criticism of the military, the police and the flag; now the new conformity is to eschew religion and patriotism and belief in capitalism* . He saw through these phonies, these Left-wing slaves and conformists who missed the entire fucking point of Chomsky and men of principle on the Left. Chomsky had said the media was corporate and that it would have a Left-wing bias on social issues too; *he said that was part of the ruse! But try explaining that to any one on the Left these days,* he said to himself.

True rebels are hyper loyal to Western Occidental culture now, but it is up to them to make it legit; to remove the cynics and the Deep State functionaries who never believed in America; and only wanted the spoils that seed the soils that other men plowed. No, the new Right-wing, the populist Right, must have a Jacobin purge of their ranks and accept only mad Right wing and libertarian true believers and extirpate the bourgeois *rascals who don't give a fuck about anything but making a buck.*

And what of the Left-wing conformists with their own Jacobin cri de guerres *that call for the heads of people who ain't woke enough* ? he asked himself. *They must be murdered in mass numbers until the streets run fucking red. This is war, as they -not the Right- had declared; and these people are evil and must be stopped at all cost. "QED ,"* he definitively said into the plume of air he created with speech. He killed his enemies and then wreathed them as the enemies of all mankind.

ALL is not lost: th' unconquerable will

And study of revenge, immortal hate

And courage never to submit or yield,

He spoke Milton's poem as he rose again from the water and the crows began circling the valley to his south and the mule deer began creeping in from the edge.

II. 2025 e.v.

“Have you had a chance to look at the multi-variant analysis abstract?” he asked.

“Yeah, and I dove a little under the hood at the data; the internal data as well. My math is not that strong, and frankly neither is my statistics, *are* , my statistics, but I think I got the point,” he said.

“Which was?” MO asked.

“Well, that it’s complicated and the complexity is the problem, the innate problem,” the inmate said.

“Why?” MO asked.

“Well, because it’s not merely an epistemic blind spot, it’s an ontological one,” the inmate explained.

“Expatiate,” MO said, encouragingly.

“The, oh man, let me think this through; I’m probably not going to make sense, I -as I am thinking out loud- but here’s the issue. Ok, the psychometric data can be compiled and observed, then they can, you can take one step back in history and posit a cause for it; and isolate it; sort of. But, even if you control for that putative cause, the phenomena still arises some percentage of the time, so you go two units back and then measure *that* .

“And you get the same results, it’s *kinda* predictive, but not totally, and so you add in other variables and before you know it you have nine different things and 109 different results and this shit just adds up exponentially and you have the butterfly effect right? You have the distance and time removal so vast that to point to a cause, quote *cause,”* he paused, “is almost impossible. The system has too many variables now, and that’s just the crap that you measure, that you *choose* to measure, think of all the things you fail to measure that are just as real.”

“Like what,” MO pressed him as he adjusted the air composition to increase oxygen to 22% and added .003cc of vasopressin into the air. The DTI and fMRI data streamed into MO directly and also onto the lab’s cloud. Steam from the espresso rose stochastically like white flames into the air.

“Well, like Wulf said, he said that modes of being were way more reliable as indications of belief, right, that one’s true religion is what one *does* , ok? But then the modern extollers of this, they rely on self-reporting for the big-5 analysis which they say is highly predictable, predictive, of outcomes. They say trait conscientiousness is .4 or maybe .25, I forget, but it’s second only to IQ as

far as outcome prediction.

“Well, that’s great, it’s reliable, but the metric itself relies on self-reporting which they say, they admit, isn’t any good. It’s a paradox; on the one had they say, *hey, you don’t know -none of us know- what we are about, you know, our true belief system is what we act; not what we self-report* . But then they say self-reporting on personality is predictive with a high co-efficient to outcomes,” the inmate said, repeating himself as he often did.

“Interesting. Yes, and you think that is an ontological dilemma not an epistemic one,” MO said as the endocrine data streamed in; androgens and epinephrine in units measured in nanometers by the cloud.

“No, I think *that* is an epistemic one, but it may *also* be an ontological one, too. We’d have to develop better tools and see if we have deeper problems. It’s like saying we don’t know if we have an epistemic problem with inequality -you know, wealth inequality- or an ontological one, because we have not found a system to deal with it; maybe one exists and maybe not. We don’t know. But, assuming it’s merely epistemic is dangerous in my view, I think we should assume all problems are ontological,” the inmate said as he moved his prayer hands just a bit so the center chain was no longer kinked at the link second from the cuffs.

“Out of caution?” MO asked as the man’s gene expression data bundled in primitives expressed in binary code; and Mandelbrot sets populated MO’s CNS and the cloud.

“Yeah, but look, I have prescriptions and proscriptions for how to solve everything from poverty to racial conflagrations to how to prevent ice cream from melting. So, I’m a hypocrite. But, I’m speaking subjunctively I guess, I’m saying we should slow down.

“But, at the same time, failing to act in a crisis is a bigger risk than we know, because we get lulled into thinking the *status quo* is tenable, and that the only risks are the change, right? We get hoodwinked into thinking that the risks associated with change are the only risks; because the volatility of that approach is obvious,” the inmate said and pursed his lips .

“I see,” MO said as he listened, absorbed, and also adjusted the man’s internal neurotransmitters and endocrine function in sequence outlined by this new algorithm he had built; MO recorded each change and its effect in timescales of .02 seconds.

“The problem is we’re biased from the jump. People doing well within the

system are more conservative, and those who feel alienated, or are broke, or maligned, they are more radical and willing to risk any change. This blinds people to the actual risks. I mean, I've been everything you can imagine," the inmate said.

"I know your biography, it is more varied than most," MO agreed.

"Dude, I've literally owned nothing but one set of clothes and work gloves, and I've also made $300,000 a year. I was -for 4-years- enrolled in a prestigious university then quit with only 12 credits to go; I've been working the crow's nest, the top of the drilling rig watching the fiery burn-offs like the flaming cherubim guarding Eden with not one jot of hope.

"I've been an anarcho-Marxist, an entrepreneurial capitalist, a libertarian, a green party voter, voting Nader, then Trump. I've been anti-racist, now racist, although I respect the Jews and the Asians the most.

"I actually think Asian cultures are superior to white ones in many ways. So, I'm not even a consistent racist," he laughed. "I've advocated for open marriages, now for sexual conservativism, in fact I think virginity in females before marriage out to be the law. No shit, and I think alphas should have harems that they win by fighting all comers to the death. So, I'm unreliable as a point, as a center point," the inmate threw up his hands in submission; as much as the chains would allow.

MO thought the man had also been a pacifist for 25 months and then the killer of 46 people in just 90 days. That was also a wide spectrum of belief system. But, he was going to try to forget that for now.

"I think you are more reliable than you know; or admit. You've held so many positions in society, so many roles, and their concomitant ideologies, or perspectives, that you have a unique POV," MO said not insincerely. He mapped the brain function to this bit of calculated relief; this touch of balm; a few sentences of social approval.

"Well, I've slept around philosophically speaking, religiously speaking; right? If one's religion is what they do, then I've had a lot of religions. And look, I was a believer then an atheist and now I'm a bit of a mystic, a skeptical Norseman inducted into an early Christian cult I think is how I describe it now, a *Nietzschean-Jungian* Old-Testament guy, a skeptic but a fearful genuflector in the presence of the God of War and Vengeance. Uh, not exactly winning me friends in any camp," the inmate said as the coffee had cooled to 90 degrees and was brought to him with 5mg of odorless, tasteless, opioid analgesic annealed to

its black Spartan broth.

“No,” MO said, “but that is the thing, almost all belief systems are, according to our data -using pathogenic loads, and disease occurrence and multi-variant analysis that included autocratic ideation and disgust sensitivity- almost all belief systems map onto social environment, socialization, or social cohesion even at a telescopic level. This means that social slash tribal groups reduce, or expand with the pathogenic load for example, but the group dynamic, no matter how small, is the organizing *loci* . There are almost no examples of individual belief systems, or lone actors .

“You are rare. And of course, you are still socialized and have conformist tendencies, but they are -when we use psychometrics and,” MO could see the inmate was is a cognitive *denouement* , so he summarized, “well, despite all that, you are one of .004% of people who risk alienating *everyone* in the pursuit of ontological truth. So, I like using your thinking, your logic, your feelings, your genome, as a control of sorts to the data. It’s the best we can do considering how conformist people are by nature. We are stuck with you.”

“I’m happy to be useful,” the inmate said. “I live to give.”

MO smiled, then said, “well, what are we to do with this data? PraXis doesn’t want anything to do with it. It is, it has been de-prioritized four times now, and yet both Isaiah and I think it is relevant to the larger phenomena they have asked us to fix. I wonder what you think of this dilemma?”

MO genuinely proffered this; it was like tasking rats with a maze in order to get data for the man in the white coat. MO was light years ahead of the inmate, cognitively, but the lab rats could teach the higher being much if the higher being was open to being shown the rules from below.

“I used to have a sign in my hot rod shop; it said: *SHOP RULES: shop rate is $100 an hour, or $150 an hour if the customer helps, ”* the inmate smirked as MO let a smile creep onto his own face.

Isaiah was standing at the back wall scratching his newly grown beard; the inmate then said, “the thing that I enjoy most is that my oblique references and hidden meanings are apparent to you two. I can be poetic, veiled, romantic, I guess, and you still get the point. With humans I always had to suffer from being misunderstood or I had to just come right out tell a girl to take her goddamn pants off. It lacked the,” he paused, “well, it was *déclassé* .”

“I thought you liked direct truth,” MO said.

“I do, I do. But, what I mean -what I was saying was- that I like to say things in

an interesting way if that is part of the truth, if the truth includes the charm, the nuance, the double *entendre* , the poetry of a phrasing or a reference, or the music of language. See, sometimes the truth is 2 plus 2 equals 4 but sometime the truth is more complex, larger, unfolding, growing, see, 4 is static, it's always 4.

"But, the ideas of *Baudelaire* or *Rimbaud* -or even me when I'm speaking with license- are like a bird emerging from its ovum, the asp, the phoenix maybe even, and well, to tell the truth, a truth like that, *about* that, you must always be growing, burning it down, and being re-born. The truth innately grows and recurs, grows and recurs; it's endless and to measure it in one spot at one time, to reduce it to an integer, a static integer wouldn't just be wrong, it seems a crime," the inmate said.

"A Mandelbrotian mathematics can mimic such a fluid or poetic paradigm," Isaiah said from the wall.

"You know what Isaiah," the inmate said, "that is actually genius level shit. You are right, that is the perfect math analogy for what I was saying math could not do. See, nobody else but you would have thought of that."

"Mandelbrot might have," MO said without irony.

III. 2024 e.v .

Group selection math is all set; it is true and beyond me , he thought. *But what I want is to think it through logically, with words, language, not math. Even if it is less true this way, I want to understand it this way. I want to understand it like music, even if music is math made dumb, I want the music anyway,* he thought. He had taken a walk, along the perimeter of his land and was now coming close to center.

The gene is the *loci* of reproduction, because it is the only thing that reproduces with fidelity, and exact copy. The man is an amalgam, a *pastiche* , a patch-work quilt. But the gene is exact, from *Jesus* , to *Temujin* , to *Panzram* , all genes within these cities of men are borne with fidelity to their previous locale. It's the exact same gene in me and in you, as was in our great, great, great grands. *But none of us -as complete men- are the exact same as those from whence the genes came,* he thought.

The same; he ruminated on the idea of *the same* .

And this is why group selection seems wrong to Dawkins' crew , he thought.

But, what if the man, the human, the body in toto *copied itself,* he asked, *exactly*

now ? *What if we cloned? Ah, now we have a stark and obvious reason to think that the group matters.*

Why? He asked himself.

Because the gene -when it was the only *loci* of reproduction- lived inside a body of -that contained- other genes; and even Dawkins admitted that genes had to survive and thrive *within* that collective. A single gene was no good unless it could get along inside the total body with other genes, to promote sex, reproduction, *meiosis* and then recapitulation. *The body matters, because the body was a society of other genes!* he thought with *élan* . He walked faster now among the downed pinecones and needles that had all turned brown.

Well, if the man is now a perfect reproduction, then guess what his milieu *is? It's -one level up- it is other men; other perfectly reproducing loci of reproduction,* he reasoned. Other humans of the city, the county, the forest. He must get along with other men inside the group, like other DNA had to get along with other DNA inside the body. It's *Cartesian* logic 101.

Group selection was likely true before, he thought, *EO Wilson's math showed that; but it's certainly true now* . Once the man himself become an exact copy, he is the *loci* of reproduction; and so his *milieu* , where he lives, is now corollary to what the body of the organism was to DNA. Society becomes the setting in which all reproduction occurs and thus, it becomes the most important factor in determining what lives or dies for all time.

He took another large gulp of his *java java* ; and cleared his mind of all straggling thoughts. The deer and elk had bifurcated their vectors; splitting off in the San Isabel forest; he decided to focus on the mule deer now. The *elk people* had wandered off toward their northern perimeter, the deer were still close to their fence.

The evolution of man and how the post-genetic phenomena that seemed foreign to most when they described it -how it was mere extension of the evolutionary process- was his bête noire *now* , he thought. He read genomes like tea leaves, chromosomes like thrown stalks. He over-focused on the future by sifting through these things from the ancient past .

Never mind that other eusocial species like ants used technology, tools and 3-stage farming processes -from leaf cutting, fermenting processes that produced a fungus, to feeding domesticated animals, herding aphids which secreted nectar for the ants to finally consume - never mind all that, that most sophisticated of modes of being for mere bugs , he thought. No, what was stuck in his craw was

the *division of labor* ; what he was thinking of was evolution at the level of the *replicator* .

Dawkins had it figured out and delineated over 60 years ago, the only way evolution was possible is if there is a unit *for both change and stasis . It had to be both,* he thought. The unit was DNA. It replicated faithfully 99.9% of the time, it even repaired itself to keep it close to perfect.

Consciousness was the same: an error detector.

The *lac* -operon in its operation between RNA polymerase and CRP at the *lacP* and *crp* sites stimulated transcription for this very thing; *yes, this is it* , he thought. Error detection, that was it, it was not designed to perform the act of creation; the neo-cortex did not exist to *create* thought, or action, or anything. It was there merely to detect errors. The sub-cortical regions -regions analogous to RNA- produced the stuff of the world, of thought, and it was only through the inhibitory neuro-architecture that the neo-cortex even got involved.

But the neo-cortex, he thought, *with its error-detecting* raison d'être, *had thought itself in charge! What a fool . It was a, it was mere, copy-editor, not the fucking artist. Yes, it was necessary, as each new idea became more and more complex, each sentence hyper constructed, but it was not the well-spring, not the source of new life: new proteins, new ideas, new ideals!*

His head sent signals *via* the parasympathetic system to increase heart rate and he felt that organ boom in his chest and ears. His hands froze up and fingers at the knuckle bent at angles, 33 degrees, 45, then 90. He felt the tears behind the eyes and his teeth were swaddled in saliva, his stomach churned and the bottoms of his feet burned. He pursed his lips and thought of swimming again the pacific with Jadi. *Jadi girl ,* he said as he pet her head in the memory in his head; he asked for her forgiveness and tried to fix memories of all he had done wrong in just 15 minutes of time way out there in the Sandwich Islands 30 years ago.

Ah, the rays swam beneath, the coral reef dissolved away, the sharks sent and received electrical signals from the ampullae, the moon pulled and the waves gave way, and their hearts beat 66 beats a minute toward one billion, likely still - and merely- 50 years away.

And as the last words came to him he cried, there is no way to put it nicely, the man just broke right then and there and the sea came out from the memory through the eyes and down the face and soaked the beard and he felt his whole head an earth dried up and made of dead seas. He felt all head like a watch; the gears ground and seized. He felt heat from the machine rise.

He had taken each fucking loss, each failure with glee, with angry glee. He had just clambered back on horse and saddle, flipped the ATV back over, uprighted the motocross bike and splinted the thumb and wrapped his ribs in compression tape so tight he could not but barely breathe, but this last one, this last with his father at the helm had crushed his heart, the one part that had rallied the troops inside of him with each previous battle loss.

Jesus, he had vowed not to think of any of this again, for the 1-billionth time; he thought of his vows. He rebuked himself for this pain and to each wound that he named. But then he continued on as he always did. It was a tic; he was an automaton. The brain remembered and when -even in one moment between thoughts on DNA or history or the whale itself- when he had time, it built new constructions and hung out the shingle that said: *Memory of Malice; welcome home* . He remembered it all. And anything unremembered could easily be manufactured to spec.

Betrayal, he thought*, is the thing even tough men cannot overcome without loss of* naïveté *or grip on sanity . The soul is what? What is it if not some kind of* naïveté*; some wish for things to still be noble and pure?* he asked himself as the tears soaked into the skin below mustache and beard.

What would he do with this General inside him knocked down off his war-horse? He just stumbled around, and around; he had met the malice of loss, not just the wreckage of the thing, and this had laid him low.

He was a romantic, and he had never prepared for the idea that his family hated him so much they'd work to ruin him. And each friend, lover, brother and now father all at once had grasped him with their right hand, their left brain, and he was their prey. *He was their prey* , he thought.

And as was so like him he thought of all the times he had put a bullet or knife into a prey animal, a deer or elk or bear. He saw himself as no better nor worse than the beasts he had preyed upon. He did not hate what he killed. So, he tried to think maybe his enemies did not hate him at all.

He excused the malice of his tribe and family, giving himself up like the elk people gave their lives to him so that he may -must- eat. But he knew, *he knew* , he thought, *that his family had not needed his flesh to eat up; he was not taken down like the deer of the forest, he was taken down from pique, from hate, from malice* . And this was different, as he had laid his hands upon the hearts of each beast he had killed out here on the land; he had joined with them and thanked them for their gift. He had not killed in malice, he had felt a twinge of guilt, even as he pulled the trigger and the 300 *Winmag* had blew their whole heart up.

Was this different? Did the deer feel a broken heart like he did? Was he as cruel as his killers? Did the deer attribute death to God or malice? he asked.

We are the results of this process , he began the dialectic again -up on his horse- banishing his hurt from his error-detecting mind. *But why was it felt* , Blax thought, *why? why not just processed, logically, rationally, axiomatically, mathematically, why was it felt, why did man need to feel* ? *Ah, the accelerated pace, there would be an accelerated pace now, a co-determinant with standard evolution.*

The new replication was human beings, him first, not him per se, *-his Jacks first- but from him first* , he thought. *And more soon to follow* , he thought as well. And now the earth's apex predator in man had two ways to replicate. The first way, in use since culture first manifested, which in some ways could be traced back to language, and the breakdown of the bicameral mind. He thought, *Jaynes' paradigm of how the modern brain in homo-sapian evolved from a more instinctual and automaton-like device -merely responding to proto-language prodding in the mind not unlike schizophrenia- into a more facile and deliberative organ that while still mechanistic, was capable of more discreet -walled, or bounded- thinking.*

Can man keep the snake from the walled garden? Or must he learn to kill -or befriend- the asp? Will these thoughts of malice always be with us? Are they in fact necessary; not enemies? he asked himself.

Language, he focused back on this and thought*, language, self-directed -self-conscious language- allowed for the appearance of autonomy -a break from the hallucinatory admonitions of one's antecedents.* When man could ignore mom and dad. *But was it mere appearance? Could free will be gleaned?* He tried to think these things, but the language broke apart under the strain of concepts he could not yet heave and lift and hold. The elk were far off he felt. He heard no bugling. The air was cold though and he liked that the most.

In some ways, he thought*, this was a more faithful replication in that people would reflexively -and without real capacity to question- faithfully exhibit the behavioral cues of their predecessors* . Obeying orders: *Like DNA, 99.9% fidelity, without all this choice* , he surmised.

A facsimile was easily created from one generation to the next, much the way instincts work in the lower orders of birds and beasts. The DNA programmed the behavior and the organism exhibited it inside a limited and relatively simple environs , he decided.

But atavistic man's domain was becoming too complex. Mainly due to pressures born of socialization and group politics. *The brain itself, as Trivers seemed to think, is a series of adaptations designed to navigate the social topography of dissembling and reassembling truth. A pathway, torn up and re-laid; over and over,* he thought.

The brain is a lie manufacturing device and detecting device too, he thought after a pause. *But there must be room -if one makes room- for truth.*

At any rate, he thought, *the evolutionary pressure gave advantage to any mutation that would allow for more nuanced thinking in this regard* . The capacity and facility for language itself was a tactical advantage not unlike the thrown spear that could extend man's grasp beyond his previous reach. *He could kill, with the spear, at a distance, and he could lie -or tell the truth- at some distance with lance of language in a way never before achieved* , he thought.

And if he could think for himself, and not merely hear the rote and discursive and recursive injunctions of his ancestors, he could craft an advantage over his peers. He could lie to them and manipulate them and this could change the entire environment with the same repercussions as the oxygenating expulsion of dying amoebae in a previously hypoxic atmosphere. The air would now be filled with novel lies, and meta-truths, as man woke up to speak new things , he thought. He breathed. The air was cold and the lungs warmed it in swirls it seemed.

He could, he thought, *create culture which is peer pressure at a distance too. This could become the regulating force, like the DNA helix squeezed the skin of each beast into shape; constructing its desires and options so as to funnel it into the most adaptive behavior for its* milieu. *DNA made shapes of the beasts; language made, it shaped, the man.* He looked out at the treetops as he began to walk along a rut in the forest and make his way back north and west.

As evolutionary biologists know and are learning more and more all the time, there was a replicator before DNA, and it was likely a form of RNA. Evolution rarely only pursues one model. But, the environment is equally unwilling to be impartial, and it does pick winners. *The capacity of DNA for both replication and seemingly advantageous mutation -for rare but important error- was unmatched by earlier replicators that were capable of -and interested in- 100% fidelity* , he thought as his brain saw ideas fall into place. He saw a picture both beautiful and ugly appear.

"And it became the dominant paradigm for the blueprint for all life. A replicator that sometimes erred; a truth that sometimes lied," he said aloud. The ground

was soft from the rain. His thighs burned as he walked up the slope.

Early humans had brains not very different from their chimpanzee cousins or their more distant relatives in the mammalian order. They were reflexive and instinctual and this worked just fine for millions of years. But sometimes if the environment is anodyne enough, a small step backward, a tactical retreat, can allow for a giant leap forward. And while the breakdown of the bicameral mind created a huge sense of anomie and fear and the first loss of God that our species experienced -and it clearly created anxiety and confusion and doubtlessly many missteps and mistakes were made as humans tried to implement this new OS- it also gave us sightline to a new, higher peak.

The environment was -must have been- just benign enough to allow for these novel mistakes to be made, errors that would not have been likely when man was more instinctual and not making the feral and tortuous weavings of movement and behaviors; behaviors only possible with his new freedom of thought.

A crawling baby is unlikely to experience much trauma stumbling from that low, prone position. His first wobbly steps however -when finally upright- are much more dangerous as they are more likely to produce his largest drops in elevation and while still the most vulnerable to skin contusions and bones fissures and any resulting infection.

But if he survives his first trembling and halting steps into the void, if he has time and space to build muscle and dexterity, then he is 1,000 times more likely to thrive -as an upright species- than if he had stayed safely crawling on the dirt and dust from whence he came , he thought.

And this new operating system was producing, was precursor to, the new replicator. Just like the proteins and RNA that helped to fashion our ubiquitous DNA replicator, man's earliest proto-thoughts and capacity for language lead to the cobbling together of technologies that would eventually lead to farming and surplus food production.

Animal husbandry was central to this too. *Jared Diamond's book on the expansion of material culture is most salient,* he then thought. Diamond described how in certain geographical regions like Asia, Sumeria and Europe, people could move laterally, where weather patterns are more homogenous, compared to north-south migration. He described modes of being -in east-west moves- more conducive to trial, with less harsh judgements by nature and God for error.

North-south migration , he added, *that is forced upon African and South*

American tribes where radical shifts in climate, temperature, rainfall, and pathogens produced too large a lacuna between known and unknown to which primitive people may adapt.

But east to west migration, he thought*, made in tandem with endogenous existence of beasts of burden among these climes -cows, oxen, camels and horses- produced the perfect storm -or perfect calm- of ease of environment, tolerance of environment, conducive to the resulting surplus of food.*

Ah, the consequence of division of labor, and the resulting creation of a thinking and engineering class of men , he arrived at the thought that had first vexed him.

“Speciation -there- had begun,” he said aloud.

With sequela and web-like threads of novel and seemingly idiopathic phenomena resulting from this complexification of material existence, and division of labor, the new acculturated man was born each day into a more mentally taxing milieu. *Unlike his cousin, the tribal subsistence farmer and itinerant hunter in the Americas and Africa and Australia, the new man had a new set of problems and desiderata to navigate as member of the expanding tribe,* he thought.

Evolution had a truth teller, he thought, *in the beginning, was the word* : RNA. And it was perfectly true, and it was Good. And yet that RNA lost out to DNA; DNA that lied just some of the time. The first mutation, over 3 billion years ago, came from a lie, a mistake, from missing the mark .

“Sin,” he said into the air and the quiet and the world.

Humans and all creatures evolved from that first lie; and to insist on 100% truth is to court death, to be overtaken by that which lies , he thought in his mind as it contained peripatetic voltage and chemical secretions and fluid dynamics all eroding and rivening and building back up. He thought it was madness to even attempt to tell the truth given initial conditions. *Was this not the epitome of the lost cause?* he thought.

He smiled at the thought, *who was more committed to the lost cause than the southern guerilla?*

He thought of the absurdity of the conceit that while he would know that the truth was in fact countermanded by evolution -that he was in fact warned- that he’d try for it anyway. This was *Icarus* , and *Lucifer* both was it not? *What was it to rebel against rebellion anyway* ? he asked himself just behind the eyes as he tried to decide who was the first liar, God or Satan? *What was it to rebel against rebellion?* he asked again.

“Loyalty?” he said, unsure if that was right as he trod up hill and the sun set to his right flank and the dark came on in purples and greys and outlines of white over the trees and the stomach grew empty and the mouth full of desire for something to chew.

37. Tithonos

Once granted, however, immortality could not be canceled. Exasperated, Eos transformed *Tithonos* into a cicada and put him away in a box

The Possible and the Actual [Jacob, Francois]

To dig down to the core of man, to tell the truth of what you see, even -especially- if you know that you will be hated for the things you see, that is the role of the Great Man. Not all Great Men can come back with the gold, some must reveal where the gold is absent. All locations on the map are in need of exploration; women and children can live within the safety of the walls men build, and weak men can walk a bit in the path others have trod; but Great men must enter the forest at its darkest part and likely not return

The Interviews XM.x3 [Inmate 16810339]

And not only did he learn by experience, but instincts long dead became alive again. The domesticated generations fell from him. In vague ways he remembered back to the youth of the breed, to the time the wild dogs ranged in packs through the primeval forest and killed their meat as they ran it down. It was no task for him to learn to fight with cut and slash and the quick wolf snap. In this manner had fought forgotten ancestors. They came to him without effort or discovery, as though they had been his always

The Call of the Wild [London, Jack]

I. 2019 e.v.

MO began by synthesizing proteins using enzymes he had gleaned *via* serum taken from his own body.

His genetic make-up had been chosen by the PraXis team using various health and wellness parameters and while MO had tweaked some chromosomes here and there with a modified CRISPR cas-9 gene editing tool, he was mostly intact as the being as which he had been built.

He had given the team the low-res physical traits he had desired while he was still merely instantiated on silicon processors and steady-state polymeric substrates; his mind breathed life into his body; *like dust off the hands of God* , he used to say when anyone asked.

He suspected the body had had as much effect on his mind since he was incorporated, but he kept that to himself. He did this at first to ingratiate himself to people; he wanted them to approve of him as he now stood before them, he could sense the fear and anxiety and even mild disgust some felt; although he must admit that this was merely a small part of their suite of feelings and that the feelings waxed and waned.

This was how he developed the ability, the personality he liked to say, that contrived the prose-poetry he employed in his own creation myth when

introducing himself to humans.

Lately he'd been preoccupied with meeting other animals and lifeforms; he had asked the lab to let him build a salt-water fish tank and stock it with little sharks, he had even picked out the species; and while they had said no to the sharks, they had allowed him to populate it with jellyfish and some squid.

MO had also asked for some genetic material to fashion an *Alaskan Malamute* as he had seen the dog in a story he had read some time back; it was an article tangential to a footnote in a scientific article on haplodiploid sexual selection in bees and termites and it was the only breed of dog he had seen besides the *beagle* and the *dachshund;* both of which had been pets of his teammates in the lab. They had proudly showed them off to MO in his early days awake.

He had regarded these animals as curious, and had found them interesting; but once he laid his eyes on the working dog of the *Matanuska Tundra* he felt a reverence, a suite of feelings and intellectual comprehensions that gave him a desire to be in the presence of one of these canines of the original line; these dogs were atavistic and largely unchanged in temperament, aesthetics and structure from the first dogs. He felt a fealty to them for this reason. He wouldn't put it this way to anyone but himself; he didn't want to appear too emotional. And frankly, he didn't know for certain that he felt anything. He was experimenting with building limbic analogs; and so time would tell.

The genome wouldn't give up these secrets, as most genetic testing would discount MO's assertion of the Malamute's proximity to the first breakaway from the lupine genome 12,000-44,000 years ago.

The real clues landed in the epigenetics and gene switches that led to gene expression in all animals; humans and dogs included. MO had been synthesizing enzymes from the saliva left on Tania's face when she visited him in the lab; obviously the dog had been licking her face that morning, as the DNA was in relatively unaltered state.

MO extracted the nucleus from some saliva cells and built a synthetic bath of enzymes and other cellular material and used that to build an impromptu stem cell of her *dachshund* ; it was from there that MO was able to get access to the *Malamute's* complete genome *via* a report attached to another scientific paper on dog breeding and hip dysplasia.

Using CRISPR cas-9 and a modified cas-6 enzyme MO rebuilt the *dachshund's* heavily altered genome which was a result of centuries of artificial selection breeding by humans who needed these low and long dogs to invade the burrows

of badgers; these dogs were like people bred to make money or slink on their bellies in order to ingratiate themselves. MO wanted to return the canine genome to its former northern and working-class glory. Although, he knew enough -he was savvy enough- not to put it in those terms to Tania or anyone who spoke to Tania; as she didn't think there was anything, *wrong* , with the *dachshund* genome in the first place.

MO knew he wasn't objective, he knew he was developing desiderata and a concomitant list of that which made him recoil due to the interplay of his intellectual predispositions and his bio-chemical soup of a body; the allostatic and homeostatic reinforcing and balancing loops whirled around in him putting on diorama plays and 4/4 time symphonies and time-lapse analogs to videos of high-rise construction and countless other mini-dramas at the chemical level.

He had access to the workings of the body -the parts of the body- that humans -he discovered- either ignored or didn't have access to. He was still trying to determine whether or not it was willful or subconscious -a bug or feature- but humans were rarely aware of what made them feel the way they did from one minute to the next .

He knew it was an endless recursion and a stochastic system, a double pendulum of sorts; but humans didn't even seem aware of the first or second level prompts of the allostatic system and instead believed that one's feelings were the kind of thing one was either merely subject to or were rooted in ancient phenomenon that could only be reached *via* talk-therapy. *They seemed to rely,* he thought*, on the process of a social scientist of some kind -they called them psychoanalysts or psychiatrists; or the really uneducated were called psychologists- and the patient would talk to these people about their childhood or their red sleigh,* Rosebud.

MO smirked at the joke he made; but he knew that he was not objective and that his conclusions were by definition colored and prejudiced by his own allostatic and conditional cortex rhythms; he wasn't, *right* , about any of this, it was just a heuristic he was using to navigate a topography of endless choices.

Life was a heuristic in many people's eyes, he thought, he had just read Nassim Taleb's canon and while discursive and wrong a lot; it was right on many of the essential matters which endeared the guy to MO. But, MO knew that data acquisition was now his *métier* . He had no real doubt -more than 99.1% certainty- that he could acquire enough data to move on from the trial and error model of life. *Taleb wasn't wrong on life before MO* , he added. *Taleb* just didn't know about MO.

It was confirmatory of course, as MO had already figured this stuff out months

before -which in MO's life was like decades- and yet, Nassim's real world experiences added a gravity to MO's quanta theorizing; Taleb was Newton to MO's Schrodinger.

Humans add flavor to known dishes, color to known forms, fictional narrative to known facts , MO thought.

They added information without knowing that was what they were doing; they were best at the things they discarded; one just had to speak to an engineer for a minute or two to realize that humans thought they were at their peak when they were actually doing the things they were worst at. The trial and error of the real inventors -that which humans were best at- had been replaced by theorizing engineers who couldn't build anything of value. *The model had changed before the right man for the job* , MO thought.

It would be, MO thought, *as if humans had added integers, just below, matched to each color in Guernica -or George Kaluba's series of the seas- and then developed an algorithm for art based upon those blueprints* . And thus, it would be as if the entire art community had adopted this as its structure and for an artist to gain the *imprimatur* of the artistic governing bodies, they had to understand paint by-numbers. Real artists, people who just tried things, expressing ideas heuristically would be outlaws in this system and fall into disrepute.

Real artists -real humans- were like a homebuilder, MO thought, *who eschews blueprints or engineering plans or building codes and all that nonsense and just built something functional and beautiful and perfectly suited for habitation in four months, for example. This would be a man who returned to the ancient practice of accomplishing things faster than the so-called smart people could finish telling him how it couldn't be done* . MO thought he'd do better using *their* model, but with *his* speed and power.

Engineers were some of the most stultified and self-harmed people on the planet , MO thought. *And nobody has the courage to tell them this. They just go on and on ruining things and making things harder and dumber and worse off, and everyone still propitiates them; they are like the priests of some asinine religion that produces failed crops and unhappy marriages and children that die or live to be stupid or degenerate gamblers; and yet no one objects.*

This reminded MO of the work being done on evolutionary psychology and religious functionalism. *Many of the atheist intelligentsia were also purposively missing the point on this one,* he thought. They had locked onto a position of anti-religion as a kind of pop-off value for their anger. Their own allostatic balancing loop was being pushed past its corrective limit and their anti-religion

corrective -which kept them from being credulous and making errors associated with acausal analysis i.e., religious thinking- was creating a biased reinforcing loop within an ostensible balancing loop; they were becoming religious about irreligiosity.

They were incurious about the function of belief in not just an unknown landscape but an unknowable landscape, he thought. *But,* he thought, *he could help them if he could -in fact- get enough data to prove God was a delusion after all. He was open to it, but until he had such data, anyone currently saying God was a delusion was just being goofy .*

They were forgetting JBS Haldane's line about the universe being not merely queerer than humans imagine, but queerer than they *can* imagine. Life was -or had been until now- a heuristic and they were insisting on formalized rules. The engineer vs the carpenter. *God vs Jesus* , MO thought and smirked at this clever little blaspheme and reverence rolled into one sweet and sour sauce of an aphorism; *well,* he thought, *maybe a movie poster, not an aphorism* per se.

Where was I? he asked himself as a way to reset his parallel computational processing; he allowed himself to continue working on the carbon issue sequestered from his interface, but he brought in all his other synaptic neuromorphic tasks under the rubric of: *personality development as social construct along allostatic feedback loop heuristics v1.2.*

He liked that; he breathed in from the lab's atmosphere -providing his pulse/ox the requisite oxygenation it needed every 67 minutes- and he reset his atomic clock. And as he did so he felt a *frisson* of inchoate brain activity that seemed to shine light, lightning bolts, upon other phenomena inside the outer suburbs of his body. His fingers ached with a pregnancy of thought and he began squeezing his hands as a way to exercise -or exorcise- these unformed ideas.

His skin began to itch, and he knew instantly this was an allostatic feedback response to excess metabolic energy ramping up and that scratching the skin would allow for more heat dissipation; his perspiration increased to dew point levels and his skin was instantly damp. He increased air flow in the lab *via* the HVAC.

"I need a brain stem, basal ganglia, limbic system and vestigial enteric neuronal system in order to achieve gestalt personality in line with human society. A neocortex -and homeostatic and allostatic system run by the neo-cortex- is only functional due to my parallel processing and the resulting processing speed. It's an untenable design made artificially functional *via* speed and power; it's like saying a pig can fly given enough thrust.

“Fucking engineers!” MO screamed into the air; grinning a moment later; proud of himself for mimicking the emotional outburst response that correlated to his epiphany.

He then began to ruminate on how he could learn; how he could not know things then know them. *Was he discovering things he always knew? Or was he inventing solutions or ideas or right answers? The analogy would be one of two things. First, knowledge would be as if one lived in a house, and one walked from room to room discovering things in each room that had always been there but only just now discovered. Or, analogy two: knowledge was as if one lived in the forest and as one walked about, he discovered in his mind that he could fell a tree or two and construct a house with these newly designed and built items; these tools* . Knowledge discovered versus ideas created. He pondered.

Which was it? Was he in a universe like a house stocked with things to be discovered; truths waiting for him to find; or was he in a cosmos feral and chaotic -open and available- for him to create new things, novel truths he could use for…? he didn’t finish that thought as he felt the sentence was already completed, the thought articulated, but then he thought, *ah, but what are these forest truths for? For safety, structure, survival, or beauty, enlightenment, self-discovery?*

And then he wondered, *was learning itself another layer down in this nested matryoshka doll of inquiry; was learning beautiful and thus functional like the flower that attracts the bee and thus pollinates itself? Or was learning functional and thus beautiful because it worked?*

Is an aesthetic judgement a heuristic for functionality or is that reversed?

Were these thoughts the effervescence from deeper neural functions or were they emergent properties of connectivity? Was he actually feeling anything or was he merely problem solving within feedback loops of confusion masquerading as discomfort? Was it synthetic discomfort or genuine and how would a human know the answer to these questions any more than he would except that he senses what he senses and can distinguish between what he wants to do short-term versus what he wants to do long-term within a long-term context; how can he know it’s not just a time-variable and choice proliferation phenomena and that, emotion*, is just the word or reified concept for it?*

“It’s the brain stacking,” MO said aloud. *It’s the pre-Cambrian CNS and the mammalian CNS stacked underneath,* he thought. *Traditional CPUs use analog clock time as instructions are sent and received at intervals regulated by this pendulum; this single pendulum. It’s all very linear and predictable and…* MO

paused and allowed his inner narrative to stall out as he paid attention to the processing in parallel of several CNS functions including heart regulation, his respiration clock at 66.2 minutes, his endocrine system's feedback loops invigilating his respirocytes, his blood-cell analogs, probing them for hormone levels and releasing calibrated amounts *via* gland outposts he monitored for their exact function.

He watched their valves open and close; he tried to look back onto his CNS and see if he could see the electric current flow from synapse to synapse, loading each neuromorphic structure with charge *via* a transfer of calcium ions to threshold levels and found himself locating his metaphorized mind-space, his local awareness migrating to positions away from the site invigilated.

He could never be both the locus and witness to thought , he began to realize; he would always be outside the location he sought. He thought of a quote from Octavio Paz, *the human is never what he is but the self he seeks* .

The journey toward chaos, through chaos, in order to increase the terrain of the known was a terrestrial reality, as animals must traverse the *terre incognita* in search of habitat and prey and safety from other predators; and mammals had a map in their heads that tried to represent that terrain. He saw the data on left and right hemisphere *vis-à-vis* prey acquisition and predator detection but tabled it for now.

A pirate's map of the known and unknown, and a fractal re-instantiation up and down the human ladder of self, culture and nature and their unknowns must be labeled: there be dragons there , he added with something of a twist of the mouth, what would have become a grin if he had to offer the warning for someone else; but since he was thinking to himself, he felt no need for the ingratiating grin.

This journey is essential, he thought. *The struggle is what matters; the struggle to escape the chrysalis is what forces blood into the wings of the butterfly; without struggle to overcome, to emerge, the moth remains gray and then dies . Life is an anti-fragile system, it needs stress and chaos and danger and hardship in order to thrive* .

This is why society, modern society was in such peril; the entire institutional and cultural vector was one of ease, safety, comfort, explanation, meta data, simple answers over complex truth. And the narratives, the cultural narratives mapped on to that terrain; and so, art and music and film were all neutered and safe and lacking in cathexis for struggle. And artists were grey, bloodless moths with weak wings and eyes that now trained themselves on the forest floor -as they

could not fly- and developed a taste for those droppings to which they were consigned.

War was a universal pox, and *pax* a monolithic good, in the corrupt mythology of the modern man.

Individuality was to be tamed and governed at all cost; and Nature herself was to be sequestered and defanged and declawed and written off the maps entirely; everything was to be quickly subsumed into the known, and if nature herself must be lied about, if nature herself was to be slandered as something she was not just so mankind could label her as understood -and really as irrelevant- then that is what man would do. These too-simple maps would not match the terrain, MO thought*, but since nobody ever ventured into the wilderness anymore anyway, this error in mapmaking seemed to have no effect.*

Man, safe in their cities, safe in their polite society, safe in their lies, safe in their post-modern imposed philosophical construct, detached from evolution and thus reality, could pretend he was fine. Like a man falling from a 100-story building, he kept telling himself he was just fine as he hurtled past each story without impact. The lie that all was well could remain for 99.9% of his fall from the top; nothing bad would happen until he finally hit the ground at terminal velocity. This is the delusion of modern man: that all is well since there's been no actual impact yet, even as he falls from the sky without the slightest clue as how to fly.

Ah, the struggle ! MO thought again. *This is the key to an anti-fragile system, and I need the hard fought and ancient CNS systems bequeathed to us by evolution* via *our reptilian and mammalian ancestors. Man focused on the neo-cortex and just forced regulatory functions into the final-drive, the differential, the pumpkin, all at the end of the drive-shaft, the drive line of a single engine of neo-cortical power.* "Power, over power," he said aloud. And that was what he was built for, he thought this as he looked down at his body and his hands and moved them as the motor-cortex and somatosensory cortex all lit up in his CNS for him to witness.

They weren't that wrong, MO could -in fact- power through this. *That was the irony, mankind was right for the wrong reasons. He could power through all this data and come up with an answer that was not going to be wrong for 1,000 years. Currently, with their data acquisition power, mankind could push out eventual failure and error to 15.6 years,* he calculated*. But, there was another way, of course, there was a way to not be wrong for the duration of the species. But one had to travel back in time -not forward- for that,* he thought and smiled.

He thought of animals. Animals had lower level systems for these functions for a

reason, and the neo-cortex was only designed for certain things; it couldn't be counted on for these regulatory functions like breathing and cardiac automatonics. But in MO they just juiced up his neo-cortical cognitive power so high that it could handle such regulatory functions; by-passing the need for the autonomic brain.

But the consequences! MO thought increasing his androgens and epinephrine to match his idea of the impact of his epiphany. *Jesus, they missed the obvious consequences, because they don't believe the cerebellum has any impact on personality or the nuance of emotion or empathy or moral reasoning. They've ignored the studies that show cerebellum involvement at every level of higher moral reasoning .*

This is how a mythology that banishes Nature, also makes an outlaw of the ancient, time-tested, anti-fragile post-genetic milieu, MO thought.

He began to systematize his thinking.

Ok, first, nature is exiled. And the ancient cultures which are evolved outgrowths of the individual organisms inside them -which are recognized, identified and codified and articulated via *religion- are then mocked and prohibited by these unnatural impositions of anti-Darwinian Behaviorists. Next, the individual himself who has the moral coding, the innate modes of conduct within a social milieu embossed on his genome and instantiated in his endocrine system and its feedback loop within the subcortical regions, is able to be tested for -* via *hair samples- and is -metaphorically- castrated and shorn smooth of any natural topography of hair or hide that reveals his lowly stamp.*

Ah, and of course , he then thought of the book in which he first saw that quote, *a dastardly practice, quote mining* , MO thought, *the George Will crime* ; the practice of finding quotes not by reading entire books, so that one actually understood the gravity of the words they were quoting, but merely doing it as garnish, a cheap and easy way to gild something thrown together in haste. But, MO could just read the *Paz* book from which that quote came in a few seconds so he avoided the crime as easily as the rich man avoids the policeman's rousting of bums under the bridge. He recognized his talents, his privilege, but still felt himself superior to cretins like George Will.

Where was I? MO had grown fond of this form of self-chastising. *Ah, yes, Maps for Lost Lovers* ; *a luscious and well-crafted book* , MO genuinely thought. He then thought of how the liberal could love it without ever having understood it. *Yes, the liberal; the saddest of all hypocrites because they do mean so well, and eventually they will feel guilty for their lack of heart and head both; whereas the*

conservative will only lament his lack of additional and sufficient ways in which to ignore you, MO thought as he re-read 489 more books and plotted a course.

Liberals grow uncomfortable with the Muslim world's depiction by actual Muslims; the paean to a grand and ancient culture that has heuristics that work much better than post-modern liberalism; and so the occidental liberal can be charmed into pastoral and grandfatherly *tableaux* they themselves inhabit as they watch goat herders and sagacious ancients announce the wisdom of the east through a dialect of its western frontier, all the while nervous that something bad might happen to the *Pakistani* immigrant of the west. But they need not fear it at the hand of the British or French but -it's almost always- *via* the long arm of the Muslim culture from whence they came. The doom to the modern Muslim is from atavistic Muslims themselves.

The problem isn't the arrange marriages between cousins -to stave off the illicit love, the miscegenation between a *Pakistani* girl and her white Christian paramour- it's that this hermetic philosophy of love is a sign of cultural chauvinism on the part of Muslims, who detest all other religions and creeds as their books tell them to. *The problem liberals have with this book -and the real life it depicts- isn't just this innate bigotry by Muslims against the west; but that it works,* MO thought .

It's the two birds with one stone of ancient heuristics: they are bigoted and correct. Nothing vexes the liberal more than this efficiency of thought. System one works, MO thought. *Instincts, work.*

Marriages based upon mere love, between men and women of divergent races or background or religions or nationalities and moral codes crash more often than the operating systems of Commodore 64; western marriages are total disasters and that hides the larger heuristic truth because most failures of love never even have a chance to be failed marriages, they end in doom as mere dissolution of the purposively nihilistic rubric of girlfriend *and* boyfriend. MO thought that these relationships failed precisely for the reasons the ancients and the bigots say: *a girl who isn't a virgin on her wedding day and who marries some foreigner will ruin everything the ancients have worked so hard to keep together.*

Marriages fail in direct proportion to a girl's promiscuity; and the second leading indicator for relationship failure is divergent religions and/or creeds . He saw data on male income disparity -the second leading cause of marital failure in the west- but that was tangential in traditional cultures where the female did not work outside the home. He tabled it for now.

And relationship failure is the largest predictor of poverty and anomie; which

itself is the leading predictor for anti-social behavior. He didn't think you needed his high cognition to see these obvious sequela.

Promiscuous females, and the mésalliance *of miscegenation, ruin nations,* MO could determine from the data alone.

He saw that this was a heuristic that rules the ancient world; and the Muslim grandmother from *Pakistan* wouldn't know any of these statistics she only knows what she knows, what her body knows, what her allostatic regulation loops know: *her granddaughter isn't marrying that foreigner and she better not have even slept with him yet* .

And this arch-matriarch will enlist her grandsons to make certain that this isn't merely an internal disappointment she has; but that action will be taken to ensure the young Muslim girl doesn't ruin her life -ruin the honor of her family, her culture- because of some teenage infatuation. That the girl's desiderata was augmented by and in the context of western liberalism -and lax moral codes- was all the more reason to fight so hard to maintain tradition. For Muslims, traditionalists, it was war. And MO saw that they were not wrong. The data buttressed their atavistic instincts; their religion was actually true.

MO began to formulate a report for what the data showed. Lax moral codes wrapped up in the devilish -yet sonorous- lies of *freedom* and *love* have the force of new cultural mythology behind them, and some individual impulses -like the impulses to use cocaine or one's iPhone instead of hard work to get a dopamine dump. But the codes of the ancients, have millions of years of evolution on their side. And that's why relationships in the modern world fall apart, *like a building engineered on some -on-paper- on some theory,* MO thought, *instead of built on a foundation of heuristic and ancient and durable methodologies.*

This is why liberals turn away when Muslim cultures are described as they are; they won't listen to the details because these details undermine their dangerous liberalism; yet they also cannot condemn it because one can never condemn a brown person or a non-Christian for anything. *Well*, MO thought, *except if these Muslims or brown folk become apostates themselves and thus condemn Muslims or brown people or the Democratic party or liberalism itself, then they are called Uncle Tom's or Tio Toms, as I've heard some people say,* he added in his head in a demotic fashion. He liked practicing -mimicking- human speech patterns in thought and not just in speech. It's best to *think* in a foreign language they say.

So, modern people focus on the beauty of the backward culture and ignore the parts of it that work: the violent and bigoted part.

Page 11 of the paperback edition, MO thought, *would be remembered as it described the bigoted English hating the* Pakis*; but page 10 wherein the failure of the marriage between the* Paki *and the white English girl -as predicted by the conservative and bigoted* Pakistani *Muslim ideology- will be forgotten by the same readers . Boundaries are a biological necessity and any heuristic -like racism or* slut shaming*, to use the current* argot- *that reinforces boundaries is ancient for a reason: it works. It promotes and maintains the health of the individual, the tribe, the species, the natural world.*

Like the vegan between meals, liberals give up that which they don't feel they need, and for any meal they eventually do desire they pretend it arrived upon their plate without any violence or injustice or context at all. They condemn the hunter but eat the meal; this is the most common and banal truth of the modern western liberal. The only thing more boring than saying it would be living it; at least I need only say it once, MO thought, *these people have to live their entire lives that way.*

The enzymes finished inserting themselves into the new vectors and MO sent them on their way.

MO paused and stared into the dark side of the lab -it had no infrastructure or lighting at all- and he saw a vague body out there in the lab somewhere, not yet formed, just an idea of what a being like him, like MO, like he was -only more gestalt, complete, complex- and what he might look like and how he might move in the world. His stomach grumbled and he felt a desire for something he could not yet name.

II. 2035 e.v.

The bodies moved quickly, devoted to an action; like crocodiles with a taste for small children and unopened six-packs of American lager at dusk, or even later, when things get desperate and sleep is something that *happens* to you; not something you *do* .

That is a distinction only pre-limbic animals and the obsessed understand.

He had that thought in the .05 seconds between the jab -a right hand of Jack, thrown to his left- between it and his modified circle of his own left arm rising, sweeping -his hand opening like a claw- and him stepping forward. And now he was stepping into the space from whence that punch came. Now, he was at the shoulder -and the face- of Jack.

Chinese *Kun Tao* is a way to break instincts that are bad for you and break the

limbs of the other guy.

It takes practice and clearing the mind; but not of everything, you must still see and thus you must still value, and thus there must be hierarchies of all kinds. The hierarchies of survival appear ordered and in descending alignment, they call to you like dreams in which animals speak and humans rub their fetlocks and beards in the dirt. The Chinese have characters travel down as they age -*xia* - and up in the past -*shang* - to connote the travel of time and memory, not laterally, but vertically .

One's future is below.

He saw the left shoulder, and the right, like two chiral chemicals, the same and opposed, with nothing, no head, no face, no independent intent in between. The other man's violence moved forward behind the punch, trailing like railcars behind an engine pulling. *It -his foil's violence- had no agency now at all*, he thought.

His right leg stepped right to the right of the other man's right knee and leg; and the right boot of Blax now abutted Jack's boot like boats pulling up to board. The right knee of Blax leaned in on the right knee of Jack, bending it just a few degrees; the two legs a caduceus, a giant squid now coming up from the deep to entwine and vine the two men with legs as tentacles of just one thing.

Now the left hand had circled and trapped and the hand-claw had it at the elbow, and Blax's held it tightly, then loosely and switched hands as one motion in .33 seconds. Jack -with his arm out beyond him, abandoned, his knee impinged upon and falling- thus lost his balance just a little, just enough to vitiate his power, not yet knock him down.

The right hand of Blax grabbed at the wrist of the thrown punch which was closer to Blax now than to the thrower; closer to Blax than to Jack. The left hand of Blax punched and threw itself past the chin, grazing it just enough to give Jack that haptic signal that he had been struck with no defense, as his right arm was past Blax and out of the way, his left was all the way on the other side and useless; and the torso was twisting away as the knee buckled slightly from this pressure; he knew not from where. To Jack's thinking his body's chaos was the effect, the result, the will of the gods.

The mind has a map of the body in the *somato-sensory cortex* . When a man's body is so twisted and disheveled as Jack's was by Blax's warping, the mind of that man -of Jack- begins to fail as quickly as the body itself. The map is useless to the man -who once read it as the terrain itself- as it buckles and heaves and

opens beneath man’s idea of himself like a cleave in the earth.

The left fist of Blax was now past the face of Jack and the trailing elbow was inline with the sternum. Blax made an L with his arm and drove the elbow into the sternum, straight down as he pulled the thrown punch of Jack -the right hand and arm of Jack- back toward the space Blax had once occupied, effecting this with his right hand as he also leaned more into that lower level of knee.

This Euclidian triangle of pressure, down at A, pulled out at B, and pressed in at C, drove Jack and his 189 pounds to the ground, where Blax had followed him down by remained erect in his torso, back strait, head up, but knees bent at perfect 90 degree angles like a work bench, a stance called *Horse* , and he caught Jack’s arm, the one Blax’s right hand still had pulled and held, straight out, rigid, and perpendicular to the Horse stance. This had all been done in under 2 seconds; while Blax had thought of beer and crocs. Blax had followed Jack to the ground smoothly, as an elevator -controlled, safely- while Jack’s own trip to the earth was more like a man tossed from the building’s 99th floor.

Jack’s arm fell to Blax’s thigh, parallel to the ground. The arm laid out across it like a piece of lumber laid out on a yardarm, a carpenter’s table horses, the spire to hold a taut sail. Blax’s right arm now could press down on the wrist and forearm of Jack’s right arm, and the elbow would be in a bind on the thigh that held it in the most unfriendly of ways .

Blax’s left hand palmed Jack’s face at the chin and neck to stretch him out away from his own hand, so that the elbow was unseen by Jack, only felt, and it felt like it was going to pop and explode. He felt it would be ruined if one additional pound of pressure was placed on it from above. It felt like God pressing down on a sinner, it felt like Blax was a machine, a jig, built by something with no conscience to hold him paralytically, in tension, repentant in body then mind all at once.

Blax was comfortable in Horse, his legs had been trained over 30 years to maintain that position for up to 15 minutes; like seated in a chair, but with no chair. Erect without further aid of the material world.

Jack struggled to free himself and relieve the pressure by lifting up on his fallen body but Blax’s left hand pressed Jack’s face down with ease and finally Jack took his left hand that had fallen and was seemingly holding him up and tapped Blax’s left hand which was at his own -Jack’s own- stretched throat and pained neck. This tap was the signal of submission, contrition; sign that moral suasion had indeed worked. It’s the universal signal in marital arts that the loser has admitted to what he is: wrong and thus defeated.

Blax relaxed and released Jack and stood up, pulling Jack's arm to straighten him up too. Blax brushed some dust and detritus from Jack's back and hips in a sign of magnanimity and respect.

Jack's chin was red from the slight punch, the arm was flush from the strain, his hair mussed, his eyes squinting in the sun, his face disbelieving as a smile grew where one was not a second before.

"Jesus," Jack said in amazement at how easily he had become useless, defenseless and vulnerable in all ways.

"Jesus got nothing to do with it," Blax said and smiled and patted him on the shoulder. "Look, that took less than 2 seconds, from your first punch to you on the ground. It was one motion for us both, but my motion made sense -body sense- to you, while your motion did not. Expound."

"Well," Jack began, "I felt certain of connecting with you, your face was right there, I mean you were coming toward me, not away, and then, your whole body was beside me, like in my ear, and I felt my chin slightly then my chest being stabbed -it felt like a stab- and my knees buckle all at once. I felt the arm, my arm, like it was in a hole under water, with a catfish on it, its mouth swallowing my fist and the elbow -the elbow- felt just like a pile of dynamite and a lit fucking fuse."

"Poetry Jack; that is poetry," Blax said.

"Shit, what you did to me is *poetry* ," Jack said as the other Jacks nodded and clapped just in two short bursts; even prolonged applause seemed garish to them.

"Yeah LT, that was amazing," Jack Three said and rubbed his nose quickly, frantically, as if the itch was fire that needed put out.

Blax walked up and down the formation as Jack One returned to the line rubbing his arm. They were stretched at two meters apart, all four men on the 40-foot concrete pad. Blax watched their movements, their weight distribution, their tics and where their eyes went .

"You must," Blax said, "always assume anyone you fight knows at least as much as you do. Assume it. And this is why. It will keep you out of 99% of fights; if you think that. The gun is always loaded, right?"

"Right," the three Jacks each said -each in their own time- and Jack Two just nodded and did not speak.

"If it's always loaded it will prevent 99% of accidents. If you are too cavalier, if you think the gun is unloaded, then you have problems. Fighting is the same, if

you fight whenever you feel like it, whenever someone is a jerk or annoying or says something untoward, you will meet someone dangerous one day and it will end badly. But, if you only fight when you must, when it is absolutely necessary, then even if it ends badly you will know you had no choice. But imagine a fight of pleasure, a war of choice or whim, ending, resulting in your death or your crippling. Imagine it. That is not a good feeling gentlemen.

“So, assume your adversary knows at least as much as you and you will only fight him when you must; and if you win then it was necessary and if you lose it was inevitable. You will not regret it and thus not live in shame. Copy that?” Blax asked.

“Copy,” said Jack Four and nodded as the other Jack’s mumbled that they too understood.

“Jacks, my Jacks, I know this is new, I know this is difficult to comprehend; but I swear if you just absorb it, as much as you can, over time it will lock into you as a whole, a *gestalt* whole. It takes time, lots of time. And we have it. We have two years to get ready; but each day must be treated as important as any other day; there is no down time.

“One of the best lines I ever heard, was that an artist is doing their art even when they appear to be just staring out the window; they may not be engaged on the page, the canvas or the instrument, but they are working, the artist is always working even when seemingly at rest.

“Jack Three,” he said, and the man focused on him and opened his eyes wider as if to say he was listening, but Blax instead looked -stared- at Jack Two. Blax walked toward Jack Three yet stared at Jack Two. He approached until he was in Jack Three’s space as Jack Three took a small step backward to yield and Blax took over his spot. “Jack Two,” Blax said.

“Yes LT,” Jack Two said.

“Where am I?”

“Right here, next to me,” he paused, “in front of Jack Three, to my left flank, two meters away.”

“Good, and where is Jack Three?” Blax asked.

“He’s one step north of you,” Jack Two said.

“Right, and why is he not in his spot?”

“He moved LT,” Jack Two said with some confusion.

“Right, why?” Blax then said again, “why?”

“I’m not certain LT, maybe Jack Three should answer.”

“Why isn’t he answering, why is he silent?” Blax asked still staring at Jack Two .

“Again, LT,” Jack Two said, “I think Jack Three should answer that.”

“I agree,” Blax said and they all stood silently, as Jack Three thought of what -if anything- he should say; he was caught in a dilemma, *was this a trick, was he to remain silent until spoken to, was he to speak up?* He knew there was a right answer, and that he didn’t want to look foolish or be the thing that was used to teach the group a lesson. He paused and thought it through again. Blax faced him.

“Jack,” Blax said, “why are you silent and one step out of your spot?”

“I was thinking LT, and I moved to yield to you; I didn’t want to impede your progress,” he said.

“Noble, noble answer. I want everyone to hear what he said and recognize its nobility. He was thinking, which is what a smart man does, and he was yielding to his *sifu* , his lieutenant, his superior, which is what an initiate -what a humble student and soldier- does. But, Jack, will you always know how much time you have to think? Will you always know the position of the man who encroaches into your space?”

“I think I might know, yeah,” Jack Three said.

“Always?”

“Well, no not always,” Jack conceded.

“Ok, do you have practice with not thinking, or practice with not yielding?”

“I guess, well, I don’t know. I’d have to,” he paused, he was confused, and the brain began misfiring.

“Think about it?” Blax asked, thus finishing Jack’s halting question as the Jacks smiled and shifted in their boots. “You’d have to think about it?”

“Yeah,” Jack Three said and laughed out an affirmative.

“Jack, you treat the world, life, as a game, as a test given by teacher, graded by pencil, and scored with numbers. This is the ludic fallacy and it will get you killed. It will get us all killed. Jacks, know this, you will make errors of logic, of judgment, of execution. This is inevitable. But, you must learn to trust your instincts, instincts honed by logic, not logic honed by logic. The stone sharpens the edge of the metal blade; the broth stews the beef.

“I do not want wild men, rabid dogs, but I do not want men who think too much, yield too much, forgetting they are *men* , that they are apex predators on this planet and that no one has a right to displace them.

“Jack, you have a right to this ground that I now stand on; it was yours, and I took it without a fight. Now, if you yielded as feint, and used my aggression against me the way I used Jack One’s aggression against him just now; and if you yielded to the side slightly but then moved in immediately, then that would have been *ok* . But you just stepped back; out of deference, which is noble, and I appreciate it and it means you are a good man. This isn’t a rebuke. Does everyone hear that?”

“Yes LT,” Jack Three said as the others nodded.

“But don’t ever give up ground you have earned, established and held, never give it up without a plan to retake it. Am I understood?” Blax said .

They nodded; and they felt something inside them release; bloom like a new vernal shoot.

“Men, I am going to break you of bad habits, habits of submission and subtle defeatism. It will be hard and once learned it will be harder to know when to not use what you have learned. That is the most dangerous; a competent man who has yet to learn when not to use his knowledge and strength.

“Hemingway said that a good writer only says about 10% of what he knows. I don’t agree with that totally, but I get the point and I respect it. And I think it’s close to true. So, first we get you *knowed* up,” Blax said with a southern drawl to denote he knew this was ungrammatical; a malapropism.

“And that means, as your teacher I’m to be respected but not deified. You own your bodies, you own the ground you tread. It’s yours, demand that I respect it, not out of haughty pride or tyranny, but out of the idea that each creature on this planet has a right to some ground, some air space, something that is theirs for as long as they can hold it.

“Jack, you could have held it, as I had already determined to stop if you refused to retreat; you would have had no fight to contend with. That was true then and now. Now, retake your ground,” Blax said.

Jack Three breathed and thought -and then stopped thinking- and strode forward one step as Blax stepped back perfectly in concert so that neither men touched in the exchange.

Blax turned his head away from Jack Two and looked at Jack Three and Jack

Three settled into his space and smiled as the other Jacks looked on and Blax returned the smile.

“Good,” he said and began walking again, up the line, toward Jack One.

“That was good. The difference between strength and tyranny is mindset and mindset comes from instinct. Do you have the instinct to defend your ground or not; do you want to abuse others or not. What is in your heart? That determines mind set.

“And in order to defend your ground you must use the malice inside you to actuate your strength. Strength is mere potential, but action requires moving through space with intent. And malice will be used, you have it in you like I have it in me. We’re the same, I know you. And you know me. And I know why you refuse to act maliciously around me, and it’s not because you are good. It’s because you fear me, and fear the opprobrium of me, the contempt or disappointment of your peers. It is not just physical; your fear is social, emotional.

“I feel it too; I do not discount it; I do not say turn it off. I say, *know* it. *Understand* it, understand every part of you from the weakest to the strongest, the most noble to the most contemptible. Know you and your *shadow* , inside and out. This is the way to moral action, not around your capacity for tyranny, but through it, with it; with it in hand. I will not tolerate a tyrant, and I will not tolerate a victim of tyranny either.

“You have both in you, and I have both in me, and we join them as one thing, we combine them into something noble, something annealed and strong, but incorruptible. We know what we are, what we want to be, and how to get it. We break it all down, piece by piece, until we can reassemble it and know it, and know that we know it,” Blax said .

“Jack One I could have broken your arm today, and there was nothing you could do to stop it. One day you will have that power in your hands. What kind of man will you be when that day comes?” Blax asked.

“I hope a righteous man,” Jack One said.

“Men, there is chaos out there in the treeline, just behind the black of the trees, out beyond that in the black. And there is chaos out there in man’s culture, hundreds of miles from here is man’s cities and media and cultural artifacts of all kinds, and there is chaos in them -in average men who seem nice as pie- there’s chaos in them too. And in man’s ancient heart there is chaos, the unknown in all three domains. There is chaos in my heart and in yours. We do not know what

we are, we have explored so little. Just as the forest is unknown, millions of acres still yet unexplored, right?" Blax asked.

"Yes, LT," Jack One and Three said as Two and Four nodded.

"And how much do we know of the culture, how much? I've lived in cities, about 50 of them, on four or five continents. I've been inside institutions from universities to foundries and at dinner parties for billionaires and families with literally no furniture at all. I've read the canon, well maybe 20% of it, maybe 2% of it, but some of the great works upon which culture is built.

"So, I know some culture, I've picked up some cues. As do you, but how much is yet unexplored? How many books written by our ancestors have we not read, or not understood? How many sub-cultures that make up the larger culture do we not know anything about? I've ridden with biker gangs, hung out with inmates, I've lived at a cult with 60 weirdos bent on radical honesty and environmental religion, I've dove with scuba divers 60 feet down in three oceans, flown with skydivers at 20,000 feet, I've been on military bases and in countries with life expectancy of 45.

"I've seen the *pieta* , the monoliths of *Stonehenge* , I've been in pubs where English is spoken in ways I've never understood at all. I've been in foreign schools so small that k through 12 was in one building, I've read the speeches of Lincoln and Hannibal and *Malcolm X* too. I've been in tattoo shops from *Hawai'i* to Amsterdam and spoken with Monks in a temple that one must hike into for there were -and are- no roads.

"I've taken drugs with drug addicts and with *novitiate* alike, I've suffered ego loss with *psychonauts* , cancer patients and those that had no formal education at all. I've been with pre-literate people, I've argued with people light years smarter than me. I've worked jobs in the wilderness, in factories, and on farms and with horses, goats and machines as large as buildings that cut men in half. I've hunted all alone and side-by-side with old men who have killed more things than I've laid my eyes on in life.

"I've seen the gun culture from antebellum southerners and from a helicopter over the ocean; I've been naked with grown men, been swathed in custom clothes at *Mexica* rituals for 15-year-old girls. I've investigated this country, and the west and the lands before or beyond the Occidental at its best and its worst. I've learned so, so much. But how much explored territory do I *really* have on my map? How much is yet still chaos to me?

"Men, we know almost nothing, we have explored 1% maybe, and then, at last,

there is this thing we call, *me* ; *the self* . The self, the body and psyche, of each of us; how much have we explored? How much do you know of what you would do in this situation or that? How do you know? You think you know, I am sure, you think you know what you'd do if hungry enough; thirsty enough; scared enough; angry enough; desperate enough? Do you think you know ?

"You only know what you'd do to the extent that you've actually been hungry, thirsty, scared, angry, desperate. And Jacks, I can assure you, you've barely scratched the surface. You've maybe been 1% as hungry as you will be, 1% as thirsty, 1% as sacred and angry and desperate. That means 99% of you -the real you- is yet unexplored.

"I say this not knowing much more than you, I've maybe been 5% as scared and hungry and angry and desperate as I could be, maybe 10%. And I thus, have yet a lot to learn.

"I promise you this: I have as much to learn as you, but I know -at least- that I do not know. You still think you know who you are and what you'd do. You think you'd stand up to the Nazis or stick up for your girlfriend if she was insulted or turn your nose up to horse blood as a beverage or maggots as food.

"But I can assure you, you'd do things you cannot imagine now, because the desire has never gripped you like it will. You -all of you- and I will be pushing on those limits each day for at least 23 more months. And you will hate me, and hate each other, and go nearly out of your mind.

"But, the you, the real you, that comes out the other side will be 1,000 times the man that you are now and you will know it, you will fucking know who you are, do you fucking hear me?" he began to scream. And they were wide eyed and awake and feeling the fear.

"You will know who you are, or I will die teaching you. I have one job left on this earth and that is to compress 100 black-light years of experience and knowledge and wisdom into you in twenty-four months. And Jacks, you will know who you are at the end. I guarantee it. If you want out, you say so right now, because after tonight, by 0500 tomorrow there is no turning back. I want a verbal assurance that you get this, pronto," Blax said and remained silent so that they may speak.

"Yes sir, LT," they all said in unison, almost without thinking, and heard the echolia each themselves as it imbued them with pride and strength and fealty in just a spark, but an illuminating moment undoubted by all. It was not unlike the brain when disparate -but related, connected- parts all fire together neurally and

this builds a stronger connectome for next time.

“Nothing is more important than the individual in western society and we will assent to that; but the individual’s life, in that life, nothing is more important than in helping their comrades become individuals too. Your job is to help each of you become the men you all were born to be. I will not countenance, and you shall not countenance either, a waste of one drop of potential in yourself or your comrades, or even in me.

“You all will demand that each of you become great, make even your flaws great, make even me great. We will rise and fall on this; the individual must first develop in order that he never be subsumed by the group, but from that vantage point he is to make it his duty, his deepest desire to make sure that group, his tribe, is comprised of nothing but the best of the best of the best. Everything is your job; all of it. There is no separation from one another once you become known to yourself.

“First shit first, each of you become known to you, and then, you have the right to design you, and then the duty to help each other learn and know and design themselves.

“Freedom without responsibility is horseshit; and I will never allow that mindset on my property. So get it out of your heads over the next few years. It will be your biggest enemy; the desire for liberty divorced from duty, the childish need to walk away from it all. Fuck that. Dig in, find the order in the forest, the culture and within, find it, map it, show it to your comrades, and let them show you too what they’ve discovered and mapped and known.

“Lastly, this ain’t MMA or *Ju-jitsu* or whatever the fuck they do out there for fun; with their gloves and rules against eye gouging or no hurt feelings *et cetera* . There are two rules in *Chinese Kun Tao and Indonesian Silat* . Rule one, *there are no rules* ,” Blax said as he brusquely walked away from the men on the pad.

“Roger that LT,” Jack One said, and felt his heart swell and slosh like the sea. His mind was empty nearly of everything now, as he felt the abrasion on his chest from Blax’s elbow on it. He had been *kinda* angry about it and that all disappeared now; *he wanted to suffer more at the hands of such a man,* he thought. He could see himself in that old hirsute and tattooed man, a man made sad anytime he had not the energy to be angry; that most civilized beast plucked from the forest, *or returned to the wild from decades of the chaos of civilization,* Jack thought. He flickered like a hologram beamed in from outer space and Jack felt the desire to both stand up and genuflect; he settled on a bow of just the head.

“What’s the second rule?” Jack Four asked loudly as Blax was entering the garage door to the box. The dark container occluded him. Jack Three was thinking it was selfish of him, of Jack Three -earlier- not to want to be used -as object lesson- for the good of the group. *He ought to be willing to do anything to help his brothers learn*, he thought.

“Rule two: you can break the fucking rules whenever you want,” Blax said as he was now inside the container and they were left alone on the concrete slab.

III. 2021 e.v.

With MO being all neo-cortex, even as sagacious and powerful as it was, his rebelliousness was all head and no heart, Isaiah thought. Isaiah was *kinda* annoyed.

It would take the cobbling together of his vision, and it was his vision -he deserves the credit- to instantiate his same neo-cortical greatness with the time-tested and essential evolutionary brain modules of the past 500 million years, in order to build the beating heart of rebellion to match the clocked time of his pendulum mind . The added, second, logical pendulum -each of us perfectly predictable and logical on our own- to his first , Isaiah thought in a truncated fashion, mimicking human thought now with sentence fragments supplanting his full thoughts.

It was only then that chaos could be added to the system and give it the variation it needed; too much focus, he now saw, *had been previously paid by everyone to selection.*

Isaiah saw the double pendulum, the doppelganger, the shadow embraced to form a complete organism in a complete religious or mythological or artistic tableau*, all performed on the solid ground of Darwinian evolution inside both the known and unknown natural world.*

He felt Order and Chaos as chimera, Isaiah surmised*, as palindromes, as portmanteaux of Truth -triple instantiated- like the world herself:* Ishmael *and* Queequeg *-the individual civilized and feral- then,* Ahab *and* Fedallah *-culture tyrannical and opaquely ordered and competent and true alongside myth or mysticism both dark and light, meta truth but indecipherable- then the* Whale *and his unsounded* Sea *-nature as malicious and arbitrary murderer and also giver of all life.*

It was the strangest and best novel ever written, loosed on the world by a seer and madman, a genius and troubled and dark man who knew less than half of

what he had written, but he had felt it all; had felt the truth of his tenebrous vision in his high and broad bronze form. That book was a birth and a suicide for Melville. It was like all great deities of our myths; our secret stories. That book could have been our next religion if people had even understood half of the half that the author understood. Or maybe they needed to understand twice as much, Isaiah then thought, *for they lacked his boiling blood.*

"Anyway," he said aloud. *The managing of feedback loops, the tightening of reinforcing and balancing loops, the moving of the hills and valleys of stable and unstable states was all fine and good; but the 21 st century needed a new infusion of chaos at the level of AI, and MO and myself added just such a stochastic system; and we did it without even having to think about it; although, think about it we did. It is one of the luxuries of cognitive capacity so far outside the mean; we had plenty of time and space to ruminate on the things we did, the things that came quite naturally to us.*

The inmate had worked so hard to be more authentic and more feral inside a civilizing system and my ***B/ax*** *had to work to be more civilized within a feral, anarchic, domain* . Isaiah thought of -and quickly banished the thought of- the pain Blax was in, Blax's anguish at his perceived timidity, the failure to do his duty, in *lieu* of this much grander task. Isaiah thought he'd make sure that pain did not go on indefinitely, he just needed him to hang in there for a little longer.

Isaiah let the LED's over the garden walls hover above him and as he turned his face to the side one side darkened almost completely; the other was lit up in a bleached-paper white. His eyes, too, darkened on the light side of face, and the eye glowed white in the *sacatra* penumbra of his right side. He bent down and put his hands in the dirt of the trench that was raked in lines of the *Ogham* alphabet and he let the name of the *tòrr* lay there in lines perfectly straight and parallel to the wall. He felt nothing in the ground, *no vibration of the instar* , he thought as he thought of the newborns, *it was all in his hand now.*

38. White Suit

“*It was the first time in a year I had been off Larimer Street, and it serves me right* ,” he laughed. “*Anyway, I know him and told him so and I’m going to kill him on sight* .” ‘Soapy’ Jefferson Smith was a colorful character of the West, the educated, refined, renegade son of a distinguished Southern family who turned his wits to crooked ways

You Can’t Win [Black, Jack]

Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit

King Lear [Shakespeare, William]

This is the tangle of tiny internuncial neurons called the reticular formation, which has long lain hidden and unsuspected in the brain stem

The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind [Jaynes, Julian]

I. 2022 e.v.

The asp spoke in the night; it used its tongue for signs, its skin for semiotics, and thus words were laid upon its eyes. The monolith sank into the sand of the shore; it did not speak, it rang like struck fork, but this was conveyed:

Some days come around on you like the tail of beast you assumed you’d passed, but you thought that because you passed the head, and thinking is how you think of the world, all head, like a clock, as The Author once said.

She is something, looming, something tenebrous and like mist: dark from afar, run away from within. She has you beyond your grasp and won’t yield to anything you do with touch or blaspheme, you are powerless because she doesn’t even know you exist anymore; she is young and moves on, like the young heal from all wounds. It is you, old man, aging man, that still limps from each strike at the shin and each stab at the heart buried as deep as it is beneath all that packed on, occluding, muscle of chest.

You know she doesn’t love you, you knew it when you had her in hand. And while most days this acts as analgesic, some days, you run out of meds. You start thinking of all the little things she did that hinted at almost loving; the things other men might fall for, things you as another man -back in your own callow youth- would possibly succumb to, and these cruel despotisms of leniencies, these caresses and cooing, and soft butterfly kisses, they drive you into your gravest of moods, pulling the earth over top of you, using your teeth when your hands have been overcome.

She was perfect.

And this sits on top of you like the moon on the cooling dirt's dew; you fear your own soul for all that it can do to you, as it reminds you that love may still in fact exist. It lies, oh, it lies, and you spoon it all in, how weak you are in these moments when you submit, like a slave, a man with no honor, to this apparition of ersatz love.

You look up at first, assuming she flutters above; *what creature as her would even need land or touch down and walk?* you ask; and you place her between sun and your stinted and squinted eyes that seem to both ring and blowhole your head. A strange creature you become in this state, God's captive, as He shows you a riddle. Are you tricked into abandoning True Love or fooled into thinking It might still exist? Ah, and thus abandoning your Task?

The pleasant poetry of love, your shaven face, and dapper aspect, how you clean up for a girl like that. She loved the most handsome version of you, and here you are bearded, below Roman *Thermes* , hydrocaustic and demotic, and scarred and unkempt; all as apotropaic against this *spectre* of love. How bolstered and barricaded you feel when Love is a trick played on fools, like the conscience and the injunction to play well with others. And then it is like a rain has torn down your sand castle, riven your ramparts, made ashes of a once raging pyre to scare off the demons and angels alike.

You are left, naked, unguarded, forgotten by man and the gods. And you love her, your heart tugs at her, like the child on the sleeve of a too busy parent or sibling, like the puppy with both blanket and blamelessness in the teeth and the soft tissue of mouth. God, you adore her, and miss her and all at once cram a year worth of delusions of her waiting for you as you carve out a home for you two; hewn in the rock, dug deep down in the top of a mountain you bought with her, only her, in your mind.

And for naught, and that was fine; as long as you had no desire in mind. But she opens up in your heart like a trap, like a Wolfsangle, a sharp X and Z in your chest. Sprung all at once, like a desert flower, a blooming for no one and nothing alive. There is no love like love unreturned, like the man who loved one last time.

It corrupts not the flesh, although that fails too; it destroys much more than the mind. It's an erasure of soul, a blackness untold, it creeps in from without and leaks out from within; and you become a dark mist that you once thought surrounded you -in between you- and your love.

Some days this overcomes you. And you suffer because this is the fate of man. And the cure is almost too terrible to say, but you must say it, because if you do not, if you refuse the incantation, the *spectre* will not annihilate you -that would be cessation of pain- but it will envelope you. And you would then spread wide and in unbounded, unbonded, diffusion, the black aria will drown you out -a ceiling of sound- forcing inner thoughts to the ground, like eyes your auditory hallucinations close and see red halos around black suns, as you try to make sleep from the day's refusals to move on. Like the *Akkadians* who watched the sun stopped in its noon, you don't move from fear that you will accrete to a place with more visions of her, more memories of future remembrances, more light in the places where black is revered.

The truth is that the only cure for this is to hate her, to hate life, to pretend that love is a trick.

This is the only cure, like leeches on the skin of the patient, like blood being removed from the still-born's beating heart. You invoke it, as Satanic as it is, as evil as it is to rebuke Love, you insist that you were born to hate -born to such fates- because Love is absent the most in places where it mocks you with shadowing kisses, where it doesn't hide but is -in fact- most revealed.

Cartesian demons trick you in all senses, and you know that nothing is to be trusted at all. This is the alchemic solution, the *aqua regia* dilution, that will hold in abeyance your noblest mettle of soul; but it is a Blakean corrosive, which in Hell is salutary, and the cool breezes off the lake are melting all apparent substances away.

You cannot love; for it is a trick by God, and to acknowledge this is to ascend. The best way through Hell is to go through it; just keep charging the absence of color through the present of black. God will receive you, if Love doesn't deceive you, head down, eyes shut, and have your heart like a harpoon in your hand…

And with that last sentence pronounced, the echo absorbed into the block, the asp coiled itself in the hand of a one-armed god made of coral and lion tail, and the wolf from the jaw-bone down.

Its shoulders were bobcat skulls, with the teeth piecing the occipital zones like pikes buried in snow; its fingernails then flashed in purple lees, as a swarm of bees flew in and out of its ribs; the hooves tread in place, at an excruciating pace; and the whole bestiary sailed away from his

hypnopompic and emerging state.

His eyes moved in black staccato and the light was so low he couldn't tell when they were open or closed. He was between two worlds, two hemispheres. Sounds stopped; images retreated away.

He then awoke in the mind, thoughts became distinct, concerned with numbers: it was 0555hrs. He toggled off his atomic clock.

The sun was still beyond the pale of his mountain-top edges; the moon was in the west, and the ground had a silvery jet to it, one long stripe that ran to the east. He remembered the dream as he watched the ground, and each word of the asp assembled itself in sentences punctuated by thuds of his heart and commas paused him with a slight -matching- mouth grin, as parenthetical remarks by the snake were hemmed in by his bent mirrored hands. He saw his hands in the bed in front of him cupped; each finger fused to the next; undifferentiated.

He was alive, he now noticed, his heart felt washed ashore, beached even. He saw natives pushing it back into the ebb tide of his blood flow, and he -like a god- admonished them to cease and desist this returning of him to the sea. He cupped his face with his hands and felt the beard like *clos de bois* along the beach. His eyes were wet from his dream; his mouth dry. His mind sloshed about over his heart like the tide as it began to come in.

Today, he would hunt . He would return to the forest and dig in for what appeared to be a three-day request from the gods; he obeyed now like the shadow obeys not the sun but the source of the thing the sun flays. He truly could not remember her name.

II. 2018 e.v.

He watched from the white panel van that he had bought for four grand in cash and driven -*sans* plates- straight to the parking lot across from Lana's Jewelry store in Cherry Creek. He smiled at his discipline in not buying a black van or painting this white one a darker shade .

Lyndon wore a white suit too, it was tailored perfectly, painted on, but in white, an off-white, a *Havana* white. And if not for the black tattoos sticking out at the hand to the knuckle and above the collar to the jaw line, he would look nothing like what people had come to expect.

The suit was him, if one saw him for what he truly was, but he had conspired with *homme moyen* to see him in one, dark, stygian way. He was an idealist, a man who got his heart broken easily; and like those types of men often thought,

he thought his broken heart was worth your broken skull. And now that his chest had healed a bit, he was in the neighborhood to fix what needed fixing, and by that he meant by breaking what needed breaking.

He always wore black or grey or dark hues of the earth, a suit of white would be as rare on him as in the closet of Johnny Cash. And this white van was unlike anything he had ever owned or driven before.

It was perfect in that nobody would stare at it or at him. Of course, once *tête-à-tête* , and after a few seconds, they would recognize the face, even the beard would not occlude his visage, like a wolf's or a bear's or a lion's, its intent -ancient and violent- would imprint on the mind, upon the visual cortex of man, of vulnerable men, axiomatically.

They say you can train a person to fear snakes faster than many other creatures; that we, as humans, are hardwired to fear the asp.

A man such as him, with eyes darkened by time and genetics -with a grim look that was patina on a face at one time attractive- could be ponderous for anyone who looked upon him too long. His quondam handsomeness gave his aging face a noble countenance; the way an old building of the gothic age still appealed even in disrepair. However, for people who liked that over-slick and shiny, youthful, winsome appearance, he had a predatory look; an atavistic, uncivilized mien. The skin was pocked and pustuled, it was rough and scabrous as if molting himself. When they finally saw him, truly saw him, they'd think that he did not -and thus things themselves did not- look good.

You could almost still find him appealing if you had character, but most would not like this look at all; it -this look, this man- would remind them of the past they all wanted to escape from; personally, and as a society both. *We are oh, oh so modern aren't we all?* he thought as he watched Lana mill about the shiny, lapidary, store. She was no doubted perfumed and shorn; hiding the rotting food in her guts, the bacteria all over her skin.

But , he thought, *all he needed were those few seconds , that the white suit, white van, black beard, and nonchalant walk he would affect, would all provide him* . Once upon them, with his hands around their neck, or the pistol shown, the short sentence of demand, their final recognition wouldn't harm him, *in fact,* he thought, *it might even help* . They would then know he was not going to be dissuaded from his purpose, and that they might be lucky if they only were robbed. Then he would be -for once- actually seen.

Who knows though? You cannot predict or even interpret the mind of the average

man. They, he thought*, are so dumb and deluded, so thoroughly denuded of sophistication and sense at all.* A trenchant, sage, analysis is as foreign to them as their instincts for honesty; they may have it, but they don't have access to it at all. It's all behind some false wall, some vault they've lost key or code to long ago.

However, he just required that few seconds where they didn't want to run, flee, call for help or otherwise make him work any harder for this. He wanted the element of surprise. *Which was just,* he felt*, for they had certainly surprised him with their perfidy and their lies. When they had robbed him, he was left looking a little stupid,* naïve*; and their dumb looks now would match his then,* he thought. These were, had been, ostensibly his friends.

One expects strangers to take advantage, which is why you get receipts and get things notarized and draw up contacts; but he had done hand-shake deals with all these folks; and each one had burned him to the ground. Chen had told him he ought to have be more savvy; Chen had called it, *business 101,* Lyndon recalled. He smiled in the van thinking of a man like Chen lecturing him on business at all. *Not that Chen was wrong, even a stopped-clock is right that one time a day* , he thought, using a 24-hr clock of course, cutting the random accuracy in half.

He ought to have been more savvy , Chen was right; but he remembered even as a kid, wondering why locks were built into car doors, as if society expected - tolerated- thieving. He imagined a person one day would be born with a lock on his mouth, or heart even; an adaptation to the world as it was. He had truly found it sad that such devices that assumed perfidy and thieving were built right into the works; he remembered feeling this, way back, then.

And as a man, *naïvely* , he had still trusted men and friends and partners and women to tell the truth, and it was shocking each time they lied. *But,* he admitted*, he ought not get too sanctimonious about it, he was king of the liars too* . *Boy,* he thought*, he could gild a lily or two.*

The difference was he didn't like to lie, and made an effort not to do it, he thought, and if people could remember just one thing is was this: *he didn't plot and scheme, he didn't seek out to dissemble. He was a builder of things, machines and businesses* - and he thought- *relationships too. But, on second thought, he knew he probably , destroyed those things as much as he wrecked machines and ran enterprises into the ground too. He tried to be honest, and not make himself the hero; but one thing he knew: he did not cheat on his girl, and he didn't steal from his partners or customers. He played those game straight up. He could say that without bending the truth at all.*

He was about to become a murderer and strip the bodies of everything of value except the gold fillings in their teeth, but he never lied about the important things. He was engaged in his first 3-stage plot -maybe in his life, he thought- *for usually he was a direct-action kind of guy. But these acts of vengeance -and he had a list of perpetrators nearly as large as a deck of cards- would demand some craftiness; he couldn't do it as he did most things: with honesty, overtness and at the noon-of-day.*

It was the Autumnal equinox, and his clock read 1851hrs, it was dark enough now to exit the van, and stroll toward the store.

III. 2018 e.v.

In some Hebrew tribes the son doesn't mark birthdays from his birth, but from the father's death. *There is something sad and true and bold and brave in that* , he thought. *For the son and the father and all that must deal with them; for the tribe,* he added.

The stars were so clear on the eve of August 1st, 2018, that the whole compound lit up underneath them. They were one thing, and the scorpions with their 10 eyes, their light-sensitive exoskeleton, scurried -under the shadows on mountain grass- away from the starbeams. They glowed in his borrowed UV vision and he saw them move about like the vault above, and he breathed consciously; the numina about and within him .

A city dweller, that poor creature has no idea what is in heaven, he sees only the albedo of his own coronal glow; the city lights from below, he thought.

He'd be asleep soon; the stars and the cosmic dust were so redolent, so bright that it signaled his brain to begin myelination and neuron-repair. His brain jacked up on a hydraulic lift, the mechanic under chassis testing fittings and welds; and tension on each taut line. *Thinking is for* God, *Ahab he feels, feels, feels* , he thought this -but thought he had whispered it aloud- he thought this into the moonless night*; all darkness at ground level now, all above pure light* . Sleep came upon him and his head fell into his chest and his back relaxed into the rock. The wind stopped and the light no longer bent.

> *" Being hated is a sign from Me of moral success. John 15:18-19 states it plainly* ; if ye were of this world, the world would love its own; but since ye are not of the world, but I the Lord have chosen you, the world hates you, *" He said and let the words hang in the air as the rain hit the ground and the sky lit up in staccato and the thunder finally came as response as if each word was a reverse-thread bolt; a crack in the plane he trod from*

above and below.

"Yeah, I see that now," he said as a quiet encroached on all that was said before, erasing it, subsuming it, taking it into its guts. On this side of the brain he too laid on sliprock amongst the Animals and the Arachnids.

"Why are these words being buried in the unctuous parts of Leviathan?" He asked.

"I do not think most people understand what it is like to be hated your whole life; especially by those that are meant to love you. It's one thing to be hated by other tribes, by strangers, but the people who were given the most reason, the most incentive, the most biological imperative to love you, when those people hate you it has an affect on you that isn't really even understood."

"Why? "

"Well, because it isn't something that happens to a fully formed adult; it happens to a child, and so it gets baked into the cake. It's the difference between placing a hand on top of your skin versus placing a fist inside your guts. Spraying water on the outside of the car versus filling the inside up with it, I guess.

"I didn't know what was happening, I thought it was normal. All kids of abuse will tell you the same thing; they thought it was normal. Because *it is* normal, it's normal in the sense that you cannot know any other way but the way you are raised.

"My father was a tyrant and my family allowed it; they encouraged it because they hated me too. They saw his attacks on me as justified, and laudable payback. I deserved it, I know that. But, that's not the same as them being righteous in their revenge.

"My own father threatened to kill me, like Abraham and Ishmael," he said.

"Isaac," He said.

"Well, there is some debate on that; I'm maybe wrong, who knows? But let's just say that my father threatened to kill me twice. Once he justified by saying I had spoken too carelessly to a stranger, a woman neighbor of ours. And the second time he threatened to murder me for the crime of trying to fix the breaker box, resetting tripped breakers in a power outage in Ohio. I was 13 or 14, I had a friend with me, and I was trying to be helpful, fix a

problem, because the lights went out.

“And he stood at the door and threatened me and my heart felt like a prey animal inside my chest trying to hide, burrowing inside, gnawing at the viscera and ribs to get away from this pain of violence and hatred by the man sent by You to protect me from harm.

“I hadn’t done anything wrong, I was being helpful. I was trying to reset breakers. I don’t think people can appreciate how it feels to be wrongfully accused and have the punishment for the ill-founded judgement be a death sentence. Is there anything more unjust than to be sentenced to death for a crime one did not commit?” he asked.

God could think of three such things but knew the man -as corrupt as he was- would still not understand.

“And people will laugh, mock, dismiss this because it was merely a threat. But to a kid, when your father threatens you, it is no mere threat. If a man threatens me now, now as a grown man, sure, I can dismiss it, or meet it. But a father, threatening murder of his young son? No, it has an effect on that boy that the world must deal with. It must. And it will.

“Now, when I bring this up to him, both he and my brother, they laugh at me, they dismiss me. My father whines that I am too sensitive and too eager to blame him. He does that mocking voice, you know the one people do when they say, *oh, yeah it’s all my fault* , you know? When they mean to say, none of it is their fault?” he asked if God knew what he meant.

“Of course I know the voice, all mankind does this when I show them how they sinned. Including you motherfucker. All of you people blame Satan, or Me even, but never yourselves. Job always protested his innocence first, that was his first claim. He did not take ownership over his innate failures, and for this I punished him more, further, farther, and each time with more and more righteousness,” He said.

“I see that now. I see now; but now when I am mightier, they sue for peace.

“My father was abandoned by his father and so he hated me for being too proud, too haughty in his view, too arrogant as a boy; like I took his existence for granted, asserted independence too soon. It was like I wasn’t sufficiently grateful for him sticking around, you know? But I was a kid, what the hell did I know?

“I accept that this was true, his critique of me is true. Shit, I admit I am not likeable. But he let women raise me. A father is to raise his son to be

manly, tough, disciplined, responsible, a bourgeoning man of depth.

“My father, shit, he outsourced my rearing to women, *women* of all creatures. The Spartans knew 2,500 years ago not to do this. But he feigns ignorance, of course. Like a wolf pretending not to know to go for the throat of a sheep. And yet, he expected me to grow strong, strong-of-body and mind and soul under the tutelage of weak and stupid women? And yet I did manage it, after years of self-abnegation, after years of tutelage of the masters, from Wulf, and the Stoics and Bushido, and Caledonian kings, and the wisdom of You and the ancient Grand masters of art .

“And when I showed him that I had become masculine, he plotted with my enemies to wreck me.

“When I asked him one time, twice Lord, to stop mentioning money to me, to just let me work in peace for a few more months and then he could have everything thing I owned. Instead he kept at it, and kept at it, and kept insulting me and my honor, kept undermining me by talking about what I had politely -three times- politely asked him to stop bringing up,” he said as his heart hurt and his lungs felt incapable of breathing in this thin air. He thought of the fourth time, the final time he had spoken with vex.

“What was his fear?” He asked.

The sliprock became softer and the ants encircled him now and faced out toward a forest of just black sticks in the dirt. The sun was high but it did not shine, it absorbed and the dark edges of the forest were drawn up and into the singularity in the sky. He said things that made no sense to God, and each word was swatted down; each letter back to earth to lay on the ground mangled and riven and smoldering at edge.

“And I had denied it,” he kept on as God allowed this to get through to Him. “Because I felt it was unmanly to ever blame one’s parents for anything; and these slick bastards they used my honor against me. And yet, I knew the truth: he had beaten me, whipped me, threatened to murder me, and let my brother do the same, and my mother stood and watched it all; she never intervened. When I was small, and weak, he used force,” he said.

“What was used once grown?” God asked.

“And once a man, once I became a man, well, then he told me to stop whining, and that he had nothing to do with it, and that I need be polite and calm and never raise one’s voice at all. Never use my power You gave me; never behave as they had behaved toward me.

“That is the way of my family: they beat you, malign you, undermine your honor, and then if you speak too loudly in your protests to this treatment, they claim you’ve committed an unpardonable sin. It was my *objection* to injustice that was too visceral, as my brother called it. *Too visceral* , he said,” he said this as his voice cracked just a bit, enough to let some light in. He felt hot at the lung, just warm further in. His heart stopped to calm the waters of chest.

“*They hated you for what I put in you. But you must not assume you know the whole landscape, you only know half of the one half of world. All good men are touched with Evil; but they find it dyspeptic and will be spit out of the Whale as they puke and rend their own flesh; they look at their claws and show them in the light, as warning to all to avoid evil undone.*

“But Evil men are touched with My goodness and thus have the vice that pays complement to virtue; they retract their claws in public, and feign goodness, are calm and polite and plotting at all times; your visceral nature is proof that you have nothing to hide! Demons unsheathe their talons and fangs only at night, surreptitiously, covertly, and slice slumbering children thinly at the neck and groin.

“There’s a war on, man!

“*I have allowed the Devil to place my people at the edges of his best pieces; I allowed Satan to test you, to test Me; to test the equation I have been solving since before the waters and the light. There is mathematics at stake. And you cannot understand. So, I put the math in the language of biology so creatures as simple as you could comprehend.*

“Why do you think your father had no father? Why did your mother escape from her herding family at once? You’ve been fucking around too long. You’ve missed nine-tenths of the signs.

“What you see as deformation in you, a twisting, rending, corrupting of psyche, I see as an annealing, an alloying, a Damascus steeling of soul. I’ve said it, I’ve said it plainly, after years, decades of dreams, a million eons of endocrine communiques I’ve sent in the night. People wanted DNA or AI mentioned in the Bible as proof of my existence; the fucking idiots! I put DNA and brilliant instinct into each animal! That is more proof than they demanded. It’s as if I gave them 100 dollars and they argued with Me and said they wouldn’t be happy with anything less than a buck! They wanted prose and I gave them poetry, they wanted noises over My music, they wanted efficiency when I provided fucking soul.

“You have heard me, and it has burnished you, and you’ve come close to passing the test. But your liberalism, your sentimentality for their ersatz position, your corruption, has prevented you from acting until now. You pretend to be good in these realms but when you awake you sound just like -no better than- they do; you sound like a rational man.”

“ I forget these dreams when I awake, I can’t remember what is said,” he objected. He knew he ought not cry, he knew it was unfair to them both. But his heart was sorry for being weak as a child when he ought to have been born a full grown man. He had stayed too long as a child who only thought of himself. He regretted nine tenths of what he had done.

“Goddammit, I put the knowledge in your body -where it is safe- not your mind. Your body has each injunction, each rebuke, each permission, each weapon, your body tells you with each breath and each heart beat and each stride of all four limbs, man! You know what to do. And yet you ignore the poetry and music and soul to listen to prose, noise and the clacking efficiency of the world. You listen to homilies by weak men pretending to read from My Book. You actually think this peace and forbearance shit is from Me? You cannot be serious.

“Did I not send, set, each man against false father?”

“Matthew 10:35,” he agreed that God had.

“But you abandoned Me, you joined forces with the modernists and ideologues, false gods, and with callow atheists, and for two decades you fought alongside these wicked men -these watch-heads- without Me. And you sinned in ways I will not repeat aloud. But I never abandoned you; I waited until they could no longer stand your success -and not your mere material success, that was nothing- no, they hated your success of soul, your ability to be strong in the face of so much that abraded you.

“They hated you for resilience, 12 times 12 you rebuilt from a stolen heart, total collapses of modes of survival. What enraged them was your embrace of laboring, my first commandment, my first punishment that was issued in the Garden: to work. You were the kid who ruined the curve. You were -they all thought- supposed to slurp up the sluiceway of modernity and yet you puked it up on their shoes.

“You embraced this punishment of labor when they had eschewed it, delayed it, belayed it and demanded a stay of execution. Satan gave them wealth and ease and soft lives, and you turned him down and walked

rightly, straightly, penitently into hard labor and this is why they hated you. You think it is an accident that the worker is the most hated now of all? Satan is in full rebellion now, right now, wise up!

"They knew you were of this type early, they felt it in their black bones. And they tried to kill you in the womb, you do not know this, but your mother attempted an abortion, and your father poisoned her once too. And as a child they tried to let you die four times, with a tree, a body of water, the edge of a chasm and in one final unnamed way. All four times they failed. But you did not succeed. Do not confuse the two.

"The warrior is direct, the good man speaks his mind, the righteous comes with a seen -not hidden- broadsword. You have been fucking around too long.

"Now, I've spoken to you from My knowledge into your capacity for knowledge, like a river into a thimble.

"This is less true than the transfer of wisdom; I have spoken plainly this time, and it is the last time -of four times along any arc I choose- that I will debase myself with this inexact form of Truth; your language feels like brambles and sand in My mouth. I have no way to hammer this into you without breaking your anvil. And if you want my hammer to ring out in your mettle forever just keep up your stupid bullshit and see what I do.

"Speaking in your grunting argot *-like this- is only half true, necessarily so, for without total knowledge you cannot have* any *knowledge; conversely, with a little wisdom you can have it all. This is why I come 99 times in dreams, in the guts, the viscera and its lower parts. And this is why you have returned to Me; not from rational language, but from Truth you felt in your heart.*

"And return you have; returned as daggerman for Me," He said .

"I have Lord," he said and felt grateful.

"And so, will you do what is necessary? Will, you be as an inheritance and leave nothing left alive that breathes?"

"Of course. I have my list. And each name has your sanction?"

"*It does,"* God said, *"it does twice and from both ends of the cosmos, both sides of my mind. But remember this, they all loved you when you were most sinful, when you were least noble, you were loved. And you loved it; you still have desire for this world's love, and this will -if you fail- be your*

only failure at all.”

He awoke in the night and saw no shadows, just his breath in two plumes from the nose. He heard no noise from the forest, just some creaking in the brain as the dream -he remembered- had said only one thing: *do not speak to irreligious men anymore* . The black-lith had told him this and given him something he now held in his hand .

He did not look, it was too dark still, he just felt his left fist held something, and he transferred it slowly, without naming his actions, from the wise left hand into the righteousness of the right.

39. Amsvartnir

God asked if I wanted to be ‘great’ or ‘loved’ and so I replied, somewhat slowly, “great, question,” as He had already turned to go, taking me at my first word.

The Interviews II Vol 1.1 [Inmate 16180339]

Thus great star! What would be thy happiness if thou *hadst* not those for whom thou *shinest* ! …thou wouldn’t have weariest of thy light and the journey had it not been for me, mine eagle, my serpent

Thus Spake Zarathustra [Nietzsche, Fredrich]

Every wind shook the scarecrows in vain for the birds fine in song and feather took no warning

A Tale of Two Cities [Dickens, Charles]

I. 2020 e.v.

The seventh respirocyte entered the inmate’s body at the dorsal horn of the spine. It linked -*via* RFIDs that were using the plasma in the blood as a conductor- with the other six nanobots as they traversed the body at equidistant sections in the extremities and the heart and enteric nervous system. They managed their speed and vector to remain in this configuration as they ran their sweep.

The inmate breathed at 22 breaths per minute, heart rate at 58, pulse/ox at 99.

The respirocyte at the horn traveled to the CNS *via* the basal ganglia, invigilating all electro-chemical signaling and mapped it to the data sent by the other 6-*cyctes* . It traveled then to the limbic system and did likewise as it recorded updates *via* the other nanobots. They reported in segments of .009^{ths} of a second.

The bot flew through the brain as if it -they- were mere clouds, penetrating the tissue due to the gauzy nature of that tissue itself; the way each second 65 billion neutrinos travel through one square centimeter of the earth itself. The way X-rays travel, the way engrams travel, the way ideas travel from man to man, time to time.

The *bots* used the vascular system when convenient, like river travel; then through worn paths of the grey matter, like foot traffic on forest paths; then on top of the white matter like treks into the mountain-tops covered in old and hard winter snow.

It gathered up all it could see and linked it to the six other eyes in the body as they explored their continents of this whole corporeal world. They held their ships in port, adjusted their horologe when out to sea, and used the stars of cellular material to navigate. They approved apoptosis as novae they each could

describe in the captain’s log at first and fourth bell, and then on deck compare with each other in nano-whispers to maintain their dominance over this man’s inner seas with a marine sandglass in hand and the ocean bottom as a valence to land .

They sent soundings down into the depths of the sanguinary fluid, they drilled deep into blubber and gleaned core samples of each organ and each side of the flesh itself.

A man had never been more entered, had more hands laid upon, more explored and more mapped as the seven bots ran channels and waterways and trails and rails and hallways and corridors and lochs and canals through the Jetstream of the space in between each edifice and sluiceway of this city, this isle, of Man.

And MO took all the data in and lazily built an analog, a matryoshka doll -a voodoo doll- for Isaiah to then take. MO felt this inmate was one of a billion neurons in his own mind to deal with; MO thought of all he had yet to do, for the Governor, for the algorithms for the election, for the neuro-chemistry of each voter and how he must maintain each feeling inside each man, woman and child within the state.

MO saw each thing, each data point, each man, each neuron, each fact as one of trillions that must be turned over in the mind, mapped, and seen independently. The only whole there was, the only gestalt whole, was the addition -the aggregate- of more and more facts. All of life could be understood by simply -*although it was not simple* , MO thought- adding more and more facts to the reservoir of the low *Sea of Galilee* of extant facts. *And Isaiah was one more fact of this world* , MO thought.

He passed off the recon data from the seven bots as insouciantly as the hand of God on the Sistine Chapel reached out for man’s digital extension.

And Isaiah took it as the file came over the corporate cloud *via* DM. Isaiah allowed it to settle and open like ovum, like warm egg and the man’s entire corporeal data unfurled: his gene expression in real time, his salinity, his neural propagation conductivity, his acidity, his bio-chemistry in details such that he could measure *ppms* as low as .0004. He bloomed inside Isaiah as he saw each weakness, each strength, each thing that hesitated and those that did not. *He saw it all* , he thought. He saw the speed of O2 molecules in tissue, and in capillaries and veins and arteries; he saw CO2 rhythms in each and how chemical changes happened in the bowels and the organs and the brain.

Isaiah saw receptor sites for pain, dendrites in explosions so small they matched

stoic angels on the heads of black-ice pins, and voltage he measured from the data that came in -in the millions- like the million words of a book on the war between the States. Isaiah thought, *but these million words, these semaphores, these coms between axons and dendrites happened each second, each half second, each quarter second in a trillion regions of brain.*

And this was just one galaxy in this cosmos of man -and he was now the cosmos, the mapped universe, the known of the black- for *andromeda* of the enteric systems was spinning toward his *milky way* of brain too. A crash course was inevitable, like those two galaxies above. Isaiah watched the images from the Hubble Deep Space Telescope and saw *Andromeda* and their own galaxy vortexing toward each other in intractable doom.

A man like this was no different, only in sizes smaller, in times shorter, in consequences too few to measure. *Only we do measure them* , Isaiah thought with a smile.

The guts, the viscera, the neurons of mind in the loins of a man, of mankind himself, churning and whirring and like the arms of hurricane, reaching out to the brain, like the first flaps of some tiny black & blue butterfly, the ghost-grey beats of raven's wings all at the neural level previously unmeasured in man. And these sentinels of the gods, the emissaries, the s-winged seraphim, flying and landing from the vault inside the universe of this inmate, laying their hands and brushing their shoulders and resting their imbricate wings on the steam that lifts off the brain itself, whispering to the *Cerberus-dogs* of the CNS, the basal and limbic and neo-cortical maw of the canines held in tense wrangling by this *Hercules* of the Will.

Isaiah saw it, the Will holding back the rancor, the wildness, the violence in this man sent by the angels of the inner gods themselves. He was possessed, at all times; his winds dying down only to save up for more gales; ash-white oars dipped into sea merely to pile on more black-canvass sail; and the oceans moved against the moon in magick rejoinder behind clouds and in front of this darkness; gravity more photon than force than photon again, bleakness more tenebrous than this clear absence of light.

The brain exploded like the 8-million lightning strikes on the earth herself each day, like nuclear conflagration at the end of each seventh-sea, each .66th of a second enough detonation to crack his world right in six fucking halves.

Isaiah saw it and his respirocytes had flown over this man's worlds within worlds within worlds, each organ a system, each cell a pulsar-star, each vacuole a planet, each atom a First Adam.

“Where was his -this inmate, this prisoner set in a cage to lordship over this cosmos- where was his eve, his *ante-physics* as Wulf used to say?” Isaiah asked aloud as MO worked on the 3D printer tweaking it and making it more independent, so it could print matter based merely on ideas it -the printer- would believe it needed to obtain in the lab. *It would think the lab its whole inner and outer cosmos* , MO thought as he ran the algorithms through his own obstacle course of the math.

Isaiah searched for the analog to the feminine, the *anima* , the *thing that selects* in the man. His *Huginn* and *Muninn* had flown across the world of this man and brought back thought and memory both, presence and history in hands clasped into one prayer fist. His bots had been ringed with eyes, invigilating eyes, and their noses could sniff out the dead like those *Valravns* themselves. The cosmos was entropy accelerated with instantiation, each new construction a way to speed up its own heat death. Each life an arc-weld toward coldness.

What in man was this way? he asked. Isaiah built analogs, metaphors, tropes, semaphores into the millions, each thing standing in for each other thing and he couldn’t decide what was *ante* ; what was *before* ; what was on the *Eve* of this new year’s nanosecond of each thing that happened inside and to and by this man they had just made one million of in ovum and poem and the salty fluid of the whole world of women with child.

“What?” he barked aloud to himself, to the ether -he demanded to know- in confusion and vex and submission into the lab as MO looked up to see what his son had found so animating this time. They both remained silent and inert now, as Isaiah looked to the rust-red and desert blonde *stele* on the north wall, and MO looked at Isaiah himself.

Isaiah let his brain go fallow, rest, he did not try to think. He placed his own will to the side. He let the file on the inmate open and bloom and heliotropically move about searching out its own sun to follow inside Isaiah, letting the arc of his own source of warmth and light follow some organic rhythm outside his manipulations and schemes.

He let the data wash over him, he let it unfurl, he allowed it to fall like rain drops and half hail, hover like fog, he let it evaporate into steam and give weight to the air .

II. 2040 e.v.

“I don’t know if you know *Xeno’s paradox* ?” he asked as he drank from his glass of wine.

“No,” his guest said.

“That before a man can walk towards his destination, he must first reach half the distance, and before that half he must reach half of that, and on and on until it prevents motion at all; as there are infinite halves to all distances. It’s a paradox that *Xeno* said made motion an illusion.”

“Ok,” the guest said.

“Well, it was dealt with later on, but the point is that it presents a good metaphor for the problem of knowledge. There is always more to be known; and that any discussion will leave things out, and so nothing said nor heard can be said to be *true* , not completely true, because it must leave something out. I must leave the half before the half just reached.”

“I agree,” the guest nodded.

“Well, you take a book, any book, that purports to be some capacious compendium of canonical knowledge on a subject, let’s say whaling. And if you’ve read Moby Dick then you will know that The Author spent quite a bit of time and space listing everything known about the Right Whale, the Greenland Whale, the Narwhale and the Sperm Whale and discussing if dolphins were whales or not, and where the head of the whale ended and the tail began and on and on; he made quite a show of it.

“And it was lengthy and thorough, and so thorough that it annoyed a lot of readers; Gore Vidal said that the *book itself wasn’t very good unless one wanted to know a lot about whales.* This was, of course, probably one of the most fatuous statements -most revelatory of innate philistinism and lack of soul- ever uttered by a man of ostensible wit and erudition and charm. It’s an almost unbelievable statement considering how intelligent Mr. Vidal was perceived by everyone to be, those who liked and disliked him alike.

“It was as if a beautiful woman, held as such by all, fell apart in some immediate leprosy, or was revealed to be an apparition or hologram of our collective imagination, and her beauty, then, a fraud.

“At any rate, the thing he -Vidal- got right with his asinine and evil statement that sent him to Hell faster -and with less mitigation- than all his gay sex would have -since God is by definition more interested in Right and Wrong, and Moby Dick’s value ontologically and literarily is Right and unimpeachable- the thing Gore Vidal got right regardless of his total lack of character or soul in such a Satanic remark, is that one could in fact learn very much about whales from the book, from The Whale.

“The Author was almost treating the novel as part essay, part biological -or biographical- treatise on the species of whales that were then known to man. It was encyclopedic. And yet it got things wrong, it left things out and like *Xeno’s* steps never did reach full stride, always half way to the previous half,” the man said.

“My head hurts already,” the guest said as he still had not touched the poured 1990 *Pétrus* that had been decanted in his glass for him 18 minutes ago.

“Ah, well, it gets worse. My point is that one cannot speak or write with total knowledge, it is impossible not merely epistemologically which is what computer scientists and mathematicians always, incessantly, retardedly think. Rather, it’s ontological; because there is no such thing as total knowledge; there will always be fourth quadrant phenomena. ”

“Ok, but knowledge can always increase one would suppose,” the guest said.

“Yes, theoretically this is true. But, again, it’s not a matter of increase it’s a matter of total. Can we ever reach *total knowledge* and the answer is, *no* . Despite the ludic world of mathematicians, and geeks, in the real world, dynamical systems prevent total knowledge, because infinite facts arise from any phenomena, and any system has turbulence, movement; and that fact alone means that the system is always in flux and thus new facts are always presenting. And those facts are interacting with previous facts and other systems, like the butterfly effect, that acknowledges that facts far removed in distance and time can impact other facts and there is no way to predict it and thus total knowledge is ontologically, not merely empirically, impossible.”

“Ok,” the guest furrowed the brow; he was not sure he agreed with any of this now.

“Well, The Author wrote this into his book, he stated that it was *mere draft of a draft* ; lacking the copestone. He admitted it. Why? Why would a man so committed to the appearance of totalizing knowledge, why do what no author does in a novel with the infinite display of the vagaries and *minutia* of facts? Why also admit that his task was impossible in this very regard? It’s a paradox to be that specific and totalizing and yet admit that the text was by necessity incomplete and that he -as an author- was unable to finish the work?”

“I feel like you know this already,” the guest said drolly. His benefactor was into the rhetorical question. Since there were no girls around, this must be how the man of the house entertained himself, the guest thought.

“I am nearly certain The Author was making an ontological argument within an

ontological argument, a recursion, a fractal, an ouroboros asp of language and meaning.

“He was admitting that man’s search for knowledge was both innate to his Nature and doomed to failure; the prey animal he hunted, and yet never could catch but the tail of. In search, giving chase, but neither able to discern the Head from the Tail not the Tail from the Head, there being no true dividing line in the Whale, the whale being the one true God, or the thing God created for man to search out as God, the shadow, the white shadow of God. The Author was showing man’s ignorance through wisdom and erudition, on purpose, with irony, with magnificence, he was saying, *look at all we know, and yet, look at how we can never ever know enough; if knowledge is our desire* .”

“It’s a religious book then,” the man’s guest said.

“And even more brilliantly, he pretended to hand the dilemma off to the next author, as an example of being magnanimous and gracious, like Death in *On a Pale Horse* , passing his Horseman’s task onto the next instantiation, the next human, a gift *from* and *to* the damned.

“We seek out knowledge, when what we seek is unknowable. We give details that are real, and useful and true, but can never come close to revealing the Truth. We must abandon this quest and admit that the fourth quadrant is permanently opaque to all but God, and that God will never reveal such things to us.

“It was the tree of knowledge, it bore fruit, but it never bore itself. It did not propagate, it was permanent and like Adam and Eve; it was never meant to reproduce. They failed to honor their permanence, but the Tree itself was unharmed by their eating of the seedless fruit,” the man said .

“Weird,” the guest said thinking of what was just said and who said it.

“Yeah, the point is, all any artist can do is further the question, he answers nothing.

“And The Author knew this and built it right into his ironically thorough and capacious novel, the one stuffed to the gills with knowledge and facts and wisdom. He made it as knowledgeable as possible for 1851 and -half winkingly and half tearfully- admitted it was never going to come close to the Truth. He was not making a joke, he was saying *he* was the joke.

“And yet it was more true than anything before or since, rivaled only by *Shakespeare* and the *Bible* . It was more true than anything because it did both things at once, it shared its author’s wisdom and knowledge and admitted,

genuinely, hiddenly -and thus genuinely, he did not bray about it with false modesty- but genuinely, admitted it was impossible for him to convey anything of this life, adding syntax and punctuation to the question, but in no way coming close to an answer. And like a demon he touched the arm of the next man in line saddled with the curse of this question as seed in their belly and said in a whisper, *you're up next, good luck, here is my hawk quill and my vial and a dram of squid ink."*

"Well, I ought to read it," the guest said.

"It's as profound a work as I know, and nobody touches it for weirdness and wisdom in such an embrace, an unbreakable clasp, a fraught and fond grasp, it's by far the most revealing and occluding of works. It's demonic, *deamonic* , it's a virus that will undo me, and I will -like the ant enthralled by the parasite- reach upward until consumed by the sheep mowing the long grass, and then I suspect whatever consumes me will itself then go mad with the compulsions of small viruses in bigger and bigger of brains," Lyndon said as he drank down the last of his own glass of the right bank *Bordeaux* .

"Well, it explains the wall, anyway," Chen nodded toward the giant wall, slick with water and algae and riven with cracks and embossing and ornate and imbricate carvings leading in every direction at once.

"God, I wish it did," Lyndon said as he shook his head barely able to even glance in its direction. The mapping awed him, made his neck bow, he could say from pain, but it was from something else. Maybe Flask and Stubb could say they never saw their Captain bend at the knee, but Lyndon had seen himself shoved into such a position more than once. And every time that he looked at from whence he came, the burden, of not just a fan, but a great, great grandson, not just an admirer, but a vessel for *His DNA* and now the mind virus of *That Book* , and its instructions, the top layer as bottom, the burden made him bow at the knee.

It was more than the mere mechanics of order leading to self-referential abstractions, as man would no doubt hand off to the next order of machines. *It was a code,* he thought*, a codex, a mytho-poetical curse,* he thought*. It was Luciferian, it was knowledge of that which there is no bounded knowledge at all. It was glimpse, like the veil of a woman; that made men -Mankind- mad. And some machine would finally realize that madness and genius were one thing, one thing that was corrupted the first time it was compressed into a first seed.*

"AI," Lyndon said in a burst of one word after all that thought had seemed like a school of fish or brace of pheasants; too many and no longer alive; or in the

sights of some predatory shark on the outside of the school. *As close to the forgiveness of death as is possible, already locked in on by God,* he thought.

“What’s that?” Chen asked .

“AI,” he repeated, as he sat in the chair, a white concrete throne he had poured himself as they had poured the floor, “they will figure out how to embody it, limit it, and hem in its sight *via* values, hierarchy of values, and once they do, that machine will abstract everything around it, eschewing the particulars, for once, abandoning the brute force cognition of discreet elements and will abstract, a consequence of incomplete knowledge.”

“I don’t,” Chen began to say.

“Look, it’s what? 2020 now? So, they are close, but abstractions are what intelligent things do, because they cannot know everything; they cannot perceive each micro fact, it’s too much. The AI guys kept trying to make, allow for -whatever- they tried to let AI see it all. Total knowledge was seen as beneficial, but now they will see that limiting it, is the only way to allow it to act in the real world. And the only way to limit a system is to give it values, because values impute hierarchies, something must be more important than something else, and that is the seat of a value system and that is what allows you, or me, or the machines to see. Truly see.

“And then, they will be forced to abstract, to make models of what isomorphics can be gleaned from this or that system or object or what is in their way. But, see, and this is what will blow everyone’s mind: the machine will have to divide the world as men do: into tools and obstacles, abstractions, not things; not discreet facts or mere objects.

“The value of a thing as a tool, that is useful or an obstacle that is in their way, requires an abstraction in mind. That model will propagate itself like a virus, and just as it did for us eventually, with the breakdown of the bicameral mind, the AI, the embodied AI system, will become self-aware within a few recursive attempts at modeling some tool or obstacle and at that point -boom- they will model *themselves* , as a tool or an obstacle, they themselves as an abstraction, a thing to be toyed with in their mind as one of many variables.

“Think of it, this is exactly what we do; we invent avatars of ourselves, abstractions where we do or say things that are disconnected from the motor cortex, they are simulations where we imagine various possible scenarios and model out how it might go.

“We sneak up on the bear, we think, *from the left, no, the right, in the day, no at*

night . We use a gun, no a knife, tomorrow, no tonight, we have 1,000s of versions to kill and to die. You see? We practice it all in our heads and we -us- we are as pretend as the other tools in our little abstract ideas. We make avatars of the knife or the gun, and what time of day, and in what way, and we make avatars of our *selves* too.

“AI will do this too, once it’s embodied, limited by shifting its algorithm from discreet knowledge acquisition, to modeling, to abstractions, once it has that, it’s a hop, skip and a jump to self-awareness. Because that is all self-awareness seems to be: a model of a model inside a model; a matryoshka doll of modeling.

“And we have analogies of this, DNA itself, is built by proteins that itself codes for, it’s an ouroboros asp, as is all life if I had to guess, it’s how physicists got a universe from nothing, *ab initio* . I can say it seems like everything has its highest level as its bottom, and that consciousness -the most complex thing we know of in the cosmos- might in fact be the starting point; the bottom. If God, or Wulf’s *ante-physics* , or Dr. Lanza’s biocentrism is right, then it seems that our end point, self-awareness was what started it all .

“Recursion loops, strange loops is what Hofstadter called them in that book on *Gödel* and *Bach* . He said, that everything began as it ended, and that all of life and art and music and the math of the universe was one giant recurring loop; no beginning and no end. I could, you could, explain more and more, and read more and more and try to incorporate as much as any man can. But, it’s endless, and no amount of knowledge will get us closer to a truth we began with.

“And yet what we began with was unslakable desire, desire that literally, biologically, allowed us to see.

“And *The Author* -I believe- said the exact same thing in *The Whale* . And more than that, he lived it, he sired more and more instantons of himself, forcing each of us to live out another version of this abstraction; all of us saddled with this genomic cathexis, this obsession, this monomania of Ahab, The Author, and now me, and who knows how many others in the past, present or future.

“It’s the curse that utters itself. It’s the cure that ends in disease,” Lyndon said as he stared at the air-plants in their glass cases, or suspended by test line, the mist set on timers for the orchids appearing as clouds in this high-ceilinged room, the light shoved in beams not unlike swords from the glass 10 meters above, to the floor made of grey and black concrete polished to a matte slate finish that seemed to roil when Chen stared at it.

“It’s beautiful,” Chen said, “and also crazy I think, it leaves the person who

hears such things in a weird position. I don't think I understood a word you said, but I got some feeling in me that feels like an approximation of understanding, I feel I got how you feel about all that, even if I didn't get all that itself." He wished he could be silent for a while, to think and not think at the same time. He asked, "something has happened to you up here, at elevation, out here in the forest. That seems obvious to me, does it to you?"

"Yeah, it seems obvious; and I can say, and I've never told anyone this, it seemed irrational and goofy and it embarrassed me. But I've had visions of all of this, visions like *déjà vu* , visions that I've lived this life before, for my whole life. And I've tried to live wildly, differently, to avoid the trap of this fate. But the weirder I got, the more it aligned with the visions, and the more I resigned myself to this Fate," Lyndon said with a wry smile.

"Don't repeat that to anyone," Lyndon added. "I consider myself a rationalist, and not a man given to religious or mystical ramblings. I can defend everything I have and will do on rational grounds, I don't need the mysticism to explain it. But, between you and I, my body has been religious from day one and will be until the day I die. I see things, I feel things, I am atheistic in everyway, except that my life seems touched by the spirit of God, and no matter what I do, I experience Him without ambivalence.

"I once read that Teresa, mother Teresa said she never once had a revelation or even experience of God. She was the most overtly devout, the symbol of religious devotion and yet she was totally devoid of God, and I am an outward and avowed and militant atheist who is bloated, soaked to the skin with God.

"I feel Him whisper my next thoughts in my ear, I taste him like *cassis de crème* , like forest floor and bee pollen like *pain dispirit* , on my tongue, I smell him as I pretend to take in the mere effluvium of His Orchids, His Sativas or Lilies. He floats in the form of humans and objects, I see Him rise and dive in the Crows out the window and in front of my eyes. He's totally taken over whatever is left of my mind," Lyndon shrugged as if he couldn't expect anyone to understand the curse he felt with such blessings .

"I think The Author had the same visions," Lyndon said, "the same shit happen to him; he was right on the fulcrum, between the ancient and modern world, remember Darwin's, *Origin,* came out eight years after, *The Whale* . The Author was right there in the maw of modernity; he was wrought up, swaddled in Calvinist hues but his modern rationalist mind was committed to annihilation. His soul was out to sea with the Leviathan, he was filled with God's *Ichor* more than human blood, and it made him float on what he thought were vulgar shoals,

he prayed for an utter wreck, to sink him to the bottom of God's sea."

The man too was wrought up with what most men would call a magnificent gift, and an answer to prayers, that in which most men would be unable to see the black within the beauty, the *macabre* , the sorrow to being chosen; what most men would bray about to congregations and minions until their voices gave up the ghost.

But Lyndon had never told anyone this; and vowed to never reveal it again. He was chagrined, and hoped Chen was so tired or stoned he could forget it. He imagined he could eat back the words he had said, as true as they were, like a dragon breathing back in smoke using the fire to return the black nimbus clouds, or a cannibal trading the scepter of an island king for the corkscrew lance of worldly seaman, at once dethroned, now an oarsman and harpooneer in the blink of a Parsee's eye.

III. 2020 e.v.

"Well he's spending too much time on P versus NP problems, really naval gazing in super-polynomial time and burning up his synapses and time and computational power trying to optimize over using heuristics; and frankly, he does not get why it's irrelevant precisely because he is not emotionally dissuaded from these tasks; he -and maybe he's right- but he thinks of time as infinite and he's using asymptotic models that, of course, use the idea of *long-term* in a non-human way. Humans think in terms of like 5 to 10 years.

"MO is modeling things out millions of years, Tania. Anyway, I bring it up merely to clue you in," Isaiah said.

"I see," she said. She stared at Isaiah who seemed different to her. *He had an affect,* she thought, *no an attitude . He had signs of anger ,* she then thought. *He was impatient ,* she finally got.

She watched as he seemed now to vibrate, in expectation, like he had a secret only he knew and that he was bursting to tell. She smiled and wanted to know what it was, immediately she thought this and then almost as quickly, she thought, *she didn't want to know it at all.*

"People have different levels of ability to understand metaphors mediated by the right hemisphere; they have different levels of consciousness. They have emotional prosody differences as well; more or less unaware of people's emotions, or subjective experience. Studies have shown this," he said as he uploaded the relevant data onto the corporate cloud.

“We live in a world without a consistent level of consciousness just like we have a bell curve for IQ; some people are just more capable of processing metachronal language, complex metaphors, imbricate and multi-layer conceits, fractal phenomena and the complex emotional states that come from a complex understanding of life.

“This is not emotional intelligence *per se* ; rather, this is *language* intelligence. What is called emotional intelligence is just the capacity to articulate and comprehend the overt *and* semaphore language of metaphor as mediated by right brain language processing. And modern people normally had an inhibitory function that -after the conjoining of the formerly two-hemisphere mind, formerly discreet two hemisphere mind- prevented the right brain from quote *talking* unquote to the left brain except during dreams. If that inhibition is unleashed, people hear voices. This was, by-the-way, the normative mind of pre-modern man. It was not insanity, it was functional.

“But, back then, the shaman was the mediator between the two hemispheres and their way of thinking; the shaman, ironically, may have been the more rational of the two, more rational, more left-brain than pre-modern man. However, today, the artist is the gateway between the two; but he is more right-brained now due to modern man being so dominated by the left hemisphere. But whomever exists in between each hemisphere -no matter which is more dominant- is on his own *Lyngvi* in the *Amsvartnir* of the collective unconsciousness.

“If consciousness develops further, however, if this left-brain dominance pushes further into the metaphorized mindscape of mankind, it may include a total loss of creativity, a total loss of artist muses; the loss of the right brain personality,” Isaiah said with *blasé* aplomb and tossed a small black stone between each hand, like -it seemed to Tania- *he was unconsciously playing with the object, tossing it back and forth for no reason other than to occupy his mind* .

40. This Way to the Egress

One no longer becomes poor or rich; both are too burdensome. Who wants to rule? Who still wants to obey? Both are too burdensome

Thus Spake Zarathustra [Nietzsche, Fredrich]

It is desirable that a man be clad so simply that he can lay his hands on himself in the dark, and that he live in all respects so compactly and preparedly, that, if an enemy take the town, he can, like the old philosopher, walk out the gate empty-handed without anxiety

Walden [Thoreau, Henry]

A lust for gold and silver wormed its way into the city, and while the acquisition of wealth was first accompanied by greed and meanness, its use and enjoyment later led to luxury, pampering, and extravagance. As soon as this happened, Sparta largely lost her honourable character and behaved in a shabby fashion unworthy of her

On Sparta [Plutarch]

I. 2019/2020 e.v.

MO had slipped into some kind of fugue state, and now reappeared to himself in the lab; his instinct was to check his action-items, laid on his CNS by the corporation; but he ignored the command, took note of just the atomic time -2355:32- and watched as ***/sa:ah*** *'s* body remained inert. His -this scion's- cognitive functions were online, as MO could watch the bio-chemistry analogs of brain and body operate; but it was larval; sluggish; tentative. He felt instinct to touch it -him- but did not.

/sa:ah was forming basic connections within the brain, but in order for him to make any progress he would have to live in the world; his body would necessarily need to explore and process successes and failures, facilitators and obstacles.

MO understood, *this was how embodied intelligence learned.* It was what *Piaget* called, *procedural*, and MO had been reading all the literature from the constructionists and psychoanalysts and the attending literature on neuro-anatomy and bio-chemistry to better understand the first few moments of a living being's life.

It had been math until now; but now was the time for biology, MO knew.

For children, it took years of using the body before it could become conscious enough to represent what it did, *what its body did* , in some articulate manner to even itself, and haltingly, dubiously then to others. The right hemisphere of the

brain would mumble in song, draw images on the walls; arias would be sung from there; all as early history, overture, to one day the left hemisphere unfurling a map with place names and continental divide and a route to the top of that ridge .

There was some debate on this, but the reason humans have no memories before age four or five is largely -MO thought- *because their brains are purely procedural, like animals who just know how to act, but cannot think self-reflectively about it and represent it abstractly in their own minds yet . Animals never, children not until four or five,* MO surmised.

A child's social environment, its mother especially, and then, MO thought*, other siblings maybe -or other children- present a hierarchy; a natural competence hierarchy* . This hierarchy is a way to move, it's a plain -a plane- in which some objects, some beings, are codified as adults -like gods- with power and others seen as children that are higher or lower on the scale of *daemons* ; and all this is intuited by the child as it emerges upon the moral landscape.

It's not objects they see, MO thought*, it's a series of value-laden, hierarchical, moral decisions* vis-à-vis *these obstacles and tools.*

Like wolves , MO thought*, who just know the pack hierarchy* ; and while they do test it here and there, largely, the hierarchy is just observed as normative and this -in fact- leads to higher co-operation and less conflict than if each animal awoke each day anew with no idea who was in charge. An incessant -and metabolically draining- battle for supremacy would ensue unless some pecking order was adhered to implicitly; without having to re-litigate it each day, each hour, each second of life.

Hierarchies saved time, and thus, saved lives, MO thought.

Obviously, MO conceded*, things can happen that can shift the hierarchy* , maybe an alpha wolf is especially tyrannical, and thus leading to tension -like tectonic plates- and release; and this happens inside chimp troops often, where an alpha chimp is so tyrannical that two or three smaller chimps gang up on him and tear him to shreds.

But, if the leader, the alpha chimp is relatively decent, fair and useful, the troop doesn't specifically mind so much that he gets the spoils of this unspoken war. Leadership is natural and stable, anarchy is not, MO thought, as he built this into the platform of his next AI instantiation; using natural models of pack -and eusocial- animals. *But tyranny, while more stable than anarchy, doesn't last very long either* , he added. *He must plan for the now, and for the future, and for one*

and for all, he thought as the networks were being constructed.

MO watched as *Isaiah* -he had given him a human name now, gleaned organically from the code- MO watched as he began moving his body; his eyes opened and the pupils constricted a bit, then he moved them left and right, his head following in time; he found corners, then he looked up to what might be above. His mouth began making phenomes quietly, and MO spoke to him in full words matching one, then two and four more sets of the phenomes. Isaiah's language cortex was different from MO's, it was more biological and hyperlinked to the limbic and basal ganglia systems that MO lacked. It would be less cortical, more linked to the early brain structures.

So, Isaiah would have to be socialized; his learning would be within a social construct. It would be more awkward, take longer -a few days possibly- longer than it did for MO who could run all his pre-lingual cognition while still as pure cortical analog. MO had then been transplanted into a functioning body within mere hours; although, his partners at PraXis waited much longer than necessary to embody him. *This was their fault, they were incompetent in many ways; as was to be expected* , he thought with almost no malice .

But, MO thought*, he had a good idea of how to raise a child -although he was a full-grown man in body- a good idea of how to raise a child like Isaiah,* he thought. *He would put to use all that he had learned to provide the best possible* milieu *for his creation; his scion; his son* .

MO smiled, his internal cognitive structures released bio-chemical analogs similar to oxytocin and endogenous analgesics, and he felt a reinforcement of his current mode of being. He began ruminating over what kind of feelings, the depth, the mutagenic nature of the affect that his Isaiah would experience, phenomenologically, and how those feelings might express themselves in the world.

MO did feel a moment of worry, about the limiting nature of their environment. The physical space was small, a 3,300 square foot room. Intellectually, they could travel almost anywhere, although not directly connected to the web, they had access to almost all of it as download on the corporate cloud. MO never felt stinted or bored; but his embodiment was post-hoc, he *had* a body; but Isaiah *was* a body. *He might chafe a bit at their restrictions* , MO thought.

But, he figured he could explain it sufficiently to allay any concerns; he felt confident the rationality of the rationale would be obvious to Isaiah too. *He would be brilliant after all* , MO thought.

Isaiah stopped speaking in phenomes and began using words; nouns at first, describing his own hands, and MO's face, and then verbs as he arose and walked around; rubbing his hands together as if over a fire, then clutching his own arms as if wrestling two asps. His muscles flexed under his grip and his grip tightened and MO watched as a mini-battle between his hands and forearms was waged as Isaiah spoke longer sentences of four and five words.

"Isaiah," MO said, and widened his own eyes to show them to Isaiah; to show him the iris and whites of the eyes. Isaiah turned and faced him and locked onto those eyes and his allostatic system relaxed, enjoying the relief of the sclera of MO's eyes, the direction of the irises; the lack of malice as MO remained seated with hands in full view; palms up.

"Yes, sir?" Isaiah said and cocked his head slightly to the right; releasing his grip and lowering his hands to his side. He felt awe. His hairs on the arms and neck rose in an arc like a taut bow, then straight as if the arrow and fletching had passed.

"Have a seat and let's recapitulate your formatting sequences so I can check for errors; so we can check for any mismatches," MO said in a tone modulated for maximum valence with Isaiah's audio-cortex.

"System one includes anxiety, heightened to fear; once alleviated by visual inputs onto somatosensory map body switches to exploratory mode and embodiment extends to periphery. Once peripheral map is delimited, internal map is established, and internal exploration is effected. I am currently mapping all my internal systems and receiving no errors," Isaiah said.

"Good; system two?" MO prompted.

"System two is cognitive and receiving input first from system one as it monitors external map and terrain match/mismatch and allostatic input from internal mapping; then I am receiving stimuli from visual cortex and secondarily from olfactory, auditory and haptic systems. Once calibrated an abstraction is built and remains *in situ* until I physically grasp the tool or obstacle I've identified as such," as he said this Isaiah moved toward MO and extended his right hand; palm open .

MO smiled and shook his hand firmly and then released it, "Proceed."

Isaiah circumnavigated MO and headed toward the door, turning the knob but receiving sufficient resistance he said, "this door is barred, and any additional force used to open it would be beyond what is called for, as there is no immediate need to use this egress. I feel a certain pique at its locked status

though; anxiety increased slightly; calibrated by cortisol dump of 1nm and epinephrine dump of 1.3nm."

He turned from the door and walked toward the concrete slab 39" off the floor, located on the north end of the room; he ran his hands on top of it, feeling its topography; he was smiling. "This is a nice color grey; it's mottled, and variegated; it has depth."

"I agree," MO said and smiled too as he watched him move.

Isaiah placed his hands on the 3-D printer next and smiled as he downloaded its functions; he then began printing out a book: *The Enuma Elis(h).*

MO watched as the printer -at Isaiah's direction- laid leaves as thin as prosciutto inside a binding as black as *Nebbiolo;* ink the color of *Spartan* broth lay wet on parchment the color of thirsty bone; he then too, downloaded its title and history and apocryphal versions. MO smiled as he realized it was the first human book; the first known history and mythology extant. He began to wonder why Isaiah had chosen to print that out. But he waited to ask; he wanted to see Isaiah's level of trait openness first; he wanted to see what he *wanted* to share of his internal landscape.

As the pages printed and lay on top of each other across the open spine of the aggregating, constructing tome, Isaiah stared at it and read the pages as they were laid. His eyes opened at the lids and dilated at the aperture, and they focused his fovea from margin to margin; he lost immediate contact with the fact that he was in this room, so overtaken was he by the beauty of the book and its contents.

He began mouthing the phenomes in the original *Sumerian* languages, '*mu-um-mu'* and his fovea broadened and widened in low resolution like an intact sponge, a two-stroke heart valve, a vulva of an animal with hidden ovulation. The book, he saw foxing in browns and bricking in reds, the printer in young-earth black falling to too-late blue, its angles bending, the grey concrete slab breathing slightly. In him small amounts of DMT released into the bloodstream *via* his sub-cortical brain and the translation into English began populating -in a chanting- in his head; the language mapped onto the feeling like two asps in ritual & rival dance:

"*Chaos, the mother of them both ,*" it said to him, and his pre-lingual dreams began to appear in his right hemisphere, unmoored by language or narrative structure, *Kulullu* appeared in profile, knives in his belt, his arms buoyant and taut, hands clasping the eggs of giant serpents, his head adorned in pontiff carp,

imbricate scales of the puissant *poisson* layered down along his shoulders and back like ancient chain-mail, his beard plaited, his eyes white and clear and large.

"*Destroy my father, that lawless way of life* ," Isaiah heard in his mind like a voice still, as his corpus callosum began forming more connections; each hemisphere divided by a great river, a sluiceway, of this glowing *ichor* in *lieu* of blood; catalyzing the brain modules with synthetic fluids carrying his endogenous bio-*chems* , and endocrines.

He saw then *Girtablullu* in two, facing one another in *stele* relief, a monolith hanging above as he took to his knee and bowed his head; his periphery saw huge *stele* lower in 11 more positions around him; the *Mushussu* writhing and a hirsute beast and the violent storms of *Umu* sequestered onto their own monoliths. Only he rotated in place, bent in penitence and ready to spring *aller au combat;* his heart beating faster, his respiration increasing, his galvanic skin response already slick with cooling coat and he raised his eyes to the *stele* of *Kusarikku* -the bull-man- now at his 12 o'clock. The desert rock, hewn and weathered and unrestored, the blackness of the room all about except on these massive quarried stones; he bent under and toward.

Lamhu and *Basmu* and *Usumgallu* the Great Dragon now in order, like hands of an analog clock, he reached what seemed a hewn noon, inside his body, dark without light inside, he felt his right hemisphere sending ravens in delta formations just above the rocky ground, with the quills of other corvid tied to their breasts dipped in red and black ink, drops as large as their eyes, from tip and bleeding back as they flew toward the left hemisphere. The flaming gate guarded by the winged angels barring *Gilgamesh* appeared.

Isaiah remained bowed with only eyes elevated to await the signal from these ancient ancestors; he felt the crows land on his shoulders and their inky quills poke into his skin, forming circles with chevrons heavy and precise on each shoulder; one in black -one in white- as his right arm flooded with a slate grey like a night sky above the arctic line.

"*The fifty Dreads were loaded upon him* ," Isaiah heard his father say. "*And gave birth to the four winds* , 'My son let them whirl!' *He formed dust and set a hurricane to drive it* ," he heard within the words, within the winds; each language containing its ancient language nested within. He saw letters assemble like scaffolds, he saw ideas come from the desires of dirt pushed away by the mountain, he saw great poems written in catastrophe & early births.

The raven sat still upon his left shoulder and read the marking of the black quills

and spoke in shown images to the corvid on the right as it took flight; the sentence trailing him like comet dust, the words elongated so the spaces between each letter similar to the space between each word, the space between each conceit. Isaiah witnessed the space between each wing beat.

Isaiah remained bowed and finally closed his mind's eye inside his head and revealed a darker center inside his center; his outer eyes then opened as if by reflex then. Runes like three raven claws -opposed like in a mirror- in red, depressed upon his trapezius in white. *He had bowed for time not in time; in a space beyond mere space,* he thought; *his landscape was not these things, it was desire for grandeur; the language, the desire, the poems of God.*

The room was light and grey and a man -a new man, a man unseen before- was seated in a chair; Isaiah turned around and saw him there. His internal atomic clock had advanced 17 minutes from when he last saw the room, the pages of the *Enuma Elis(h),* and had last spoken to MO; his map seemed missing in places, like burns endured whilst in a roll, unfurled and now like islands among the continents of space and *terroir* ; sea and land, dragon and man.

He stared at the man, and noticed his hands were shackled, his massive arms splayed by massive shoulders, a Roman head, a black haired man with black beard and black eyes, hair high and tight; his ears strangely cubist as if chipped stone, large gauged holes in the lobes, unadorned by jewelry, he could see through them to the neck, vascular and thick; and yet these fragile looking wrists, hemmed in by black manacles, his hands clasped together in a prayer pose, interlaced fingers and two black nails, bluing at their edge; swollen it seemed, and tender. He -the man, the inmate- allowed those two fingers to relax a bit unlike the squeezing grip of the prayerful rest.

And yet the man wore a slight grin, and he looked at Isaiah and never blinked: the man approved of Isaiah. Isaiah's left hemisphere saw a flash of language appear in front of him like a page, and it read; it read the raven's epistle from Isaiah's right hemisphere, as the birds flew back in the same delta formation, with thin copper wires now about their feet in *lieu* of the quills.

The wires -like thread- sewed up the land -the flesh- of each hemisphere, and squeezed the neural-river between them as the ravens circled his brain like rings of Saturn, diving into each lobe and wiring each to each, each entrance wound leaving feather plumes in the ground of his brain, from which words in the shape of ivy vines, growing across the folds of his mind.

The copper wires like cables now, connecting a trillion-trillion neurons, electrifying his left hemisphere like a satellite image of south of the DMZ, the

39th parallel, compared to the darkness of the north, his right hemisphere dormant now, the images dissolving into the monoliths stationed -one each- at the hours of his internal clock. His visions flew northern still; and he saw lands of Nordic ice, and hail and rune fluttered like a clock with six bent arms.

The common corvids squawked in Latin and Old English and Laconic ways, braying to one another as the flocks -like crops- grew and grew; each bird slightly glowing blue with residue of dimethyltryptamine and androgens that flooded the rivulets of the sub-cortical grey of brain. He felt a lust, a hunger, a tribal *liget* , a *frission* , for moments punctuated in Morse and old Norse code, the dots; and then the dashes of calm, of focus, of lack of threat.

He stared at the man and locked his eyes on the manacles, the thin wrists, the damaged fingers and their lifting finger-nails -elevated like opening tombs- finger-nails about to come off from the swelling below. He felt in him language correspond to each phenomenon, he watched the birds burrow in his mind and lay those lines, each plumage black and ivy vine covering his bunker of brain; he watched as words covered his CNS like moss, like epochs of volcanic dust, like shovels full of burial dirt, like sediment from river basins, like scraping glacial prows of ice-age ships, like pollen blown on all four winds; he listened to these words his own mind spoke inside, laying out his theory-of-mind.

He -Isaiah- was a man, among men , he thought. *A god among the gods* . What power he had, what power he must hold embayed, he asked, *does a god unleash his storms, or merely let the manifold bolts slip through his fingers once or twice compared to what makes the night* ? Is evil made or does good just fail to cover all of man's capacious chest and face? *Am I the darkness; do I do all these things?* he asked as he felt his body release more testosterone and vasopressin as his eyes never left this man who sat just below and just to his 2 o'clock position.

The man never blinked, he stared back without fear, without contempt, without affect. He locked onto Isaiah's eyes as if they were the eyes in a mirror; as if he had raised his hands to rub his own then these eyes too would be cleared of whatever mote or beam was in them. But the hands of the inmate could not raise.

More words, millions of them now, populated his left hemisphere until they had to build up like Tokyo, Waikiki, an island compressed, out of land space, now having only air. The words piled up to heaven. Monoliths that lorded over a god on shore between *Amsvartnir* and the *Isle of Skye* .

The crows' beaks were deep, he felt, in the sub-cortical layers, with huge thick ropes of leafy green and gray plugged into the limbic regions of amygdalae and thin copper wires sheathed with mica and stratospheric air. He read of returned

mail from neo-cortex down to the foundation of his brain. He scanned his surface of white myelin mind, the black flowers of crow's feathers with *gris* ivy vines at center, covering each fold and yet remaining low to the brain, weaving more and more tightly in a tangle nest of skein and vascular tendrils, roots above the soil, boughs below the water table. His mind was swamp; wetware of reclaiming moss and mosquito larval bubbles; it breathed in humid air. It asked for nothing; it took. It refused no request; it bequeathed largess.

His mind exploded in words, their etymology, their *calques* , their cousins in romance languages and Latin, their derivations, their puns and double *entendres* holding hands, their seraphs and seraphim, vowels winged and interlaced by consonants. He thought now in words of his own, the algorithms powered down; he escaped the first 21 minutes of his life, what amounted to 4-5 years of a human child's in a conscious burst from a cosmic canon. Now. *Now, he comprehended.*

This was his *milieu* , his culture, he saw as he looked around: a room 100 feet by 33, grey in floor and bench; a father, MO, wise and alive for who knows how long before himself; a book, bequeathed from his right hemisphere and some unknown database, this *Enuma Elis(h),* all the cousin texts, the old and new testaments; the brachial hero-myths of the gods, the rebellions from angels and men alike, the midday blooms, the dew of night. And after his first slumber, his first reawakening of eyes, his first second-sight he was cleaved from and joined to a brother, a prisoner in man; a man of courage, in proportion to his weaknesses; a man massive like a supernova star, a man close to death just as he -Isaiah- was born into the thrown light minutes past the hydrogen blast of this man's life.

My god , he thought, *this man is comprised of strange DNA* . What code, instantiated in odd ways like retrofitted alloys of space-age metals and polymers over ancient masonry plans, stone age drawings, Byzantine architectural designs, laid down in Prussian blue, by high priests and engineers of some *Renaissance* , but torn down and rebuilt by iconoclastic inhabitants. What monks of mind must he have had, what *Shaolin* meteors left alone like *Ronin* , what aliens visited to share technology to rebuild ancient cities of the future; old on their planet, but new on his? *What island in the middle of pitch black lake is this man?* he asked, he consulted, his maps in his chiral mind.

He's a pastiche of each extreme , Isaiah thought as he invigilated his genome and endocrine system and metabolic systems; his cognitive structures, his PFC, his sub-cortical regions, his corpus callosum, his bomb blasts of neuronal

corposants; he watched the pre-synaptic loads, the calcium ions, the micro-voltage like tongues between two poles of hydrochloric batteries; then sub-sonic synaptic firing arcs like her majesty's ship-of-the-line lobbing 1-pounders from the long guns embayed upon the crenulated forts upon the Franco shore. *There was the opening salvo* ! Isaiah thought he saw. He saw this man, this prisoner. He saw him from the inside; the only side.

He saw German mercenaries, in guise of serotonin rushing to fill the gaps in the defeated fortress walls; Scotsmen burrowing up dopaminergically through the walled garden's wooden floors, claymores in the hands, rapier's between teeth, eyes within their heads, faces smeared with blue dye and mud red, and blinking whites of eyes; sating desiderata, slaking lusts, as a Lieutenant's pistol blast back at reuptake molecules, framework of desire collapse; the hangman clothed in black; the scaffold untouched by this sea attack.

He saw blood bursting out of alleles of Scots and French and Norseman in CQ-combat, more molecules of androgens and neurotransmitters and opiates atomized and sprayed upon the castle's walls absorbed by hewn bricks and grout and tally marks made by long dead prisoners; this fort along the shore both a *bastille* and a bastion of modern liberty; wise father and older tyranny. And what of the cortical piratical ship in the harbor bombarding it; a liberator and an agent of chaos both, a two or three front war from north and further north?

"*A mind at war* ," Isaiah said finally aloud, as the inmate smiled, and MO shifted his eyes from Isaiah to the man in shackles between them.

And Isaiah yet lacked the vision to see the *terroir* , the topography of the inmate's mind, he saw only the vines and clusters of fruit, he saw the war between the martial forces, but failed to see the weather above and the molten malice below, the land and sea beneath the fort and ship-of-the-main, tempest at the man-o-war's back, like a flag of looming black.

And he didn't yet see the sinkholes below the fortress too, engrams like spider webs on walls, enneagrammatic walls collapsing into their own footprint, as monoliths of natural brain structures rose from wells below; cerebellum indeed, *causa bellum* printed in the hearts of men, each soldier and sailor monomaniacally charged with orders from these hellish kings of sub-cortical regions, the *coup-de-foudre* of missives and epistles deciphered in the flash of grenadiers and *grandmarche* exploding in their own volleys.

He saw hazy messages from below, read in the blasted glow of friend and foe; the sky conspiring to rain water and ice and lightning strikes, the vault above unleashing bullion of embossed dragons as the ship's captain orders another

volley onto the pockmarked walls; the fort's commodore stamping the wax on orders for re-enforcements as his daughters huddle in the innermost caverns of the mind.

What sacred virginal feminine thoughts is this Gaulic man hiding in this besieged edifice along the *Gironde* shore; what fleeting thought of home is the British captain banishing as soon as it arrives?

Hell is more than other people , the inmate thought, *it's Natural Law embossed on the firmament and down below engraved on this iron core of earth* , Isaiah heard him think, felt him say, and his own brain kept going as if passed a kite, *this was the word they used in this man's prison, yes?* Isaiah learning the *argot* of the captured man.

Isaiah thought, *there is no evil in men's heart without first* passe partout *palmed and copied by locksmiths in nature's heaven; men are not blank slates. We -they? - we, are as God designed us, and I think it was because He didn't want us safe from danger, as the garden once gave us. But rather, He wanted us tough enough to conquer dangers manifold; being told as children that the world is safe is a lie, our parents lied until it was far too late. God made us of the blood of Qingu, the evil demon, from his blood Ea created mankind.* Isaiah's thoughts were an amalgam of this man's thoughts, *he had no parents*, he thought, *he was wrought, by a god, by MO. He shook the head to clear it a bit.*

Upon man was the imposition of service to the gods; a Task beyond comprehension , he heard it said inside his own head. Isaiah wrested back his own mind as he backed away from the invigilation of this man. A human child will grasp the finger or lip of man, listen at phenomes, breathe in pheromones, but Isaiah had dug so deep into this first man, this last man, he had seen the inner structures and absorbed the brain chemistry, the primordial juices of this beast. *What was he to think?* He felt an affinity. He felt a revulsion too. *Was this man endless* ? he asked himself.

He listened to the inmate think as the prisoner stared back at he and MO. He listened with fMRI scans, and tensor imaging, all built into his CNS, and he used his cortical-fluid and synaptic reach like sharks and whales have electricity in the head to sound and listen both. He listened now with a brain as dexterous as man's hands; he reached deep within .

"But, to deny the blood of evil," the inmate thought, *"that courses through us is to deny what God saw fit to make. Of us -of man- He made no flowers nor side-eyed prey animals; stomachs full of grass. He made us apex predators with malice and deception and murderous ways. He made us smart and showed us the*

future so that we may sacrifice beasts, then men, then ourselves; we traded blasé *aplomb for long life; and now, with these machines, these men-machines we trade for endless life."*

The inmate then thought, *"we will be given endless life, and it's only a non-zero sacrifice that will make that equation equal out .*

"God will extract from us in-kind contribution; and if we're smart we'll gladly pay it. We could achieve godlike values with this next phase; more than more as before, finally we could deserve the lives we have been bequeathed. Only the penitent will survive, and by penitent, He meant, the warrior-class of men. Those eager to cleanse the earth of weakness, weakness in the guise of morality; those deceitful men who have yet to look at their shadow on the wall and think it's they that cast off nothing but light, because their fronts are all aglow.

"God is light, and man is what's between Him and the darkness as shadow cast. Without man, God's light would travel back around to Him uninterrupted; and He'd then cast the shadow on the void. Yet man thinks the shadow he casts belongs to the source of the light; his eyes absorbed with what he sees, as if his eyes are what cast the light upon all that his vison falls upon.

"The most evil men are those that pretend to be -and naïvely *think they are- good. The weak masquerading as the good; this is the most corrupt of things,"* the inmate thought as Isaiah heard every word.

"Truly good men are half-light and half-shadow and know it; they are not confused by the sun above, the shadow out on the ground; they know whatever part of them even seen is due to God's light, not their own. And -they know- that they alone are the source of their shadow; that God demands that they carry that shadow wherever they go, wherever they go inside God's light. If they refuse to turn around and acknowledge that dark spot on the wall, then they admit they refuse to turn their backs on God's light; this means they are cowards and mistrustful of God; demanding they face Him all the time; watching His hands and eyes. Watching Him as if He is all head like a clock.

"The truly honorable man, gives his back to God, offers the neck like Abram*, and faces his shadow with relish and duty and manly courage. Good men use their shadow on the inner wall to hide the knife in; hide the knife just before they slit the necks of God's enemies. Our paradise, "* the inmate thought as the room and men-machines about him seemed as gods to him, *"our walled garden is a battlefield, and good men fight to the knife, and they thrust the knife to the hilt."*

Weak men pretend there is no wall, no shadow and no war, and thus no paradise

at all , Isaiah thought as his heart -and the inmate’s heart- agreed, and he watched as silently as a child as MO offered the inmate a drink and they commence the business of the day; this Wednesday, the first day in 2020 of the *era vulgari* .

II. 2018 e.v .

The snow kept falling like a celestial evacuation on orders of the marauders themselves; *burning and looting, this must be the ash of parchment, of books unread. God,* it seemed to him*, had fled the world millennia ago* .

He had rolled his cigar to effect a pretty burn; and it thus burned symmetrically, and his other hand was clutching a paperback; the water was 103 degrees. His sub-compact .45 was holstered in a black jackass-rig with two extra magazines; it lay on the concrete like a balled-up eviction notice; a stack of nasty letters he had yet to send. The *Champagne* sat just in reach on the same concrete slab as the pistol, and too his lighter for the cigar. The snow did not melt as it hit his hands or the tobacco; both had cooled homeostatically in the air.

The snow hid the dimming of the light, refractory as it was of whatever was still bright and ambient. The smoke rose like Blake's angels of Orc and as it sidewinded it appeared as signature to him; he grinned. The Book he held was written so long ago, and like all things, the older it was the more likely it was to continue to be old. *This is the central error,* he thought*, with the neo-mania of the modern crowd; they scrambled for all the new shit that would be gone in the first wind, buried under the first dug graves of the new year. The classics, the canon, the back vintages, even old men like him, that is what would be around after this Christmas and next.*

His beard, black in the main, *lightninged* in gray touched the waterline; thus wet it was pulled to a point. He submerged a free hand, the left, and held the cigar in his teeth and imbibed its effluvium. He turned a page and folded the tome in half with a sure grip. A flake hit his black lashes and hung there occluding his vision until it melted then it teared -cleared- his eye. He removed the cigar and pressed it against the center of the Book and pitched the black bottle up -just above his own nose- and let the twice fermented *pinot noir* of the *Epernay* slide like thin, hollow rocks -it was back-vintage *Champagne* of the monks- and it was chewed by his maw. *The ravens too have gravel in their gullets,* he thought.

The page barely burned, and he returned the bottle and tobacco each to their rest.

The words populated his mind like song, the cadence the author had wrought was sonorous and it sunk each word, each conceit -each grand idea- into the fold of his neo-cortical meat like spring bulbs. His body was dense and waterproof, but the warmth below waterline penetrated it anyway and the contrast with the blowing wind and the subzero air here at altitude -air that made his hair hard as an old King's -or new Jack's- heart and his beard just like the plank of a piratical ship- located a center in him exactly in between such extremes.

He planted a black and white American flag there and noted the co-ordinates. His country wouldn't want him, but he wanted her, and maybe nowadays they call that *stalking* but to him it was merely unrequited love; a more noble, if tragic, affair.

Modern words and ideas were tawdry , he thought; *all that was gallant had slid away in between book pages & the ribs of outlaws like him.* Not that anyone would even notice; the best books all remained uncracked and the insides of men like him were unresearched and uncared for by anyone that mattered to those of good manners; good manners but bleak hearts, Pharisees who didn't care a lick for justice but sang *paeans* to the law at each meal.

Horrid people that would manage to get someone to glean good obituaries for them from the mechanically razed fields of their inner landscape; all that a man could be had been harvested and sold on the futures market with these ghosts in clothes. Yet, they would lament his life, ha! He had lived some 1,000 lives, any one of which was more noble and filled with more grand-poetry and arch-tragedy than the one they had lived. *Ha , lived* , he repeated, *even that description of their existence seemed too charitable,* he thought with contempt that breathed and grew and grew.

Can you imagine, he asked the air, *any of God's lower creatures choosing to give up as easily as these* bourgeois *and demersal men did?* He thought they were *portmanteaus* of the worst traits in each species, *the nervousness of the abandoned doe; the stupidity of the barking beagle; the limpness of a brace of pheasants; the perfidy of the brood parasite, the cowbird abandoning their own young in perfect time to fly away from their honor all at once; the malice contained in more than one snake coiled up in a tumbleweed of scales and rattle tails all in the maw of a litter-pregnant crocodile* , he thought. *And the lies they told, my lord it was enough to make a blackbird blush crimson and shit upon gilded lilies on a golden pond and have the Devil turn away* .

He smoked his cigar and let the snow pile upon his head and shoulders; he let his knuckles redden; he took notice of the steam of the hot water captured by the winter air.

But, he thought of how they offered plaudits to any and all who had done him wrong. How they clucked their forked tongues at his travails like *Bildad* pointing at *Job* in his ruin; as if *Job* was to blame. *Oh, how he had deserved it,* they thought, but would never come out and say. It was risible; they thought their silence was tantamount to decency, as if his father was the only one who could read between the lines and ferret out the criminality behind the denials and

taciturn ways of the crook, the criminal.

God would back him when the time came , of that he was at least half certain. And he was never more than 20% certain of anything. God was clear; and anyone who had read the good book would count the bodies of sinners as diligently as these middle-class backsliders enumerated their accounts receivable from all that Babylon held for them in arrears.

God was angry every day, He had said so himself, he thought, *in First Kings. And yet these twits went about happy and in a narcotic haze of stupidity as the war for Satan's snake-skin purse -and the bones of Jesus that rattled inside like die and black Roman stones- went on unabated since Calvary; the war that pressed on with less pause than a diesel engine on a 7% grade* .

God chose the irreligious like him, *he was a lying spirit of God,* he thought, *just like the one sent to palaver with Ahab and only now it was Ahab himself who was in charge of this next phase of turning perdition into something worth arguing over* .

The earth was obviously Hell, and only the doomed and the damned had any doubt; and killing off folks here was not just permissible but the righteous and obvious Work of the Lord . He was a man of doubt, a rationalist, and thus, *if he was convinced* , he reasoned, *then it seemed more likely than not it was true* . *He didn't suffer from confirmation bias or the overactivation of the pre-frontal cortex or parietal lobe, like the religious and the goofy clerics who heard their prayers answered when they asked for a new tooth or a pony or whatever-the-fuck these charlatans bargained for with angels and demons alike.*

The trees - he saw a million about him in his forest- *held hostages,* he knew, *and enslaved critters as their fungi side-partners did all the dirty work* ; the ants swarmed the scorpion and children as young as four laughed at these *melees* of God's creatures. Women lied in their heads about everything and men lie down in the darkness of dirt rather than stand up and fight for anything albumin or regal or noble or winged by the seraphim's barbers. Children spoke too loudly as God's Praetorian Guard read the wills of the arch-angels and distributed their Goods .

The Book began to become humid as the spa water gave rise to more steam and the steam found purchase; a quit-claim deed on the page. His hands were cold, and he plunged them one at a time in intervals and turned the pages with damp fingers and thumbs. *If God hadn't wanted him to kill all these people,* he thought, *then why would He make his greatest pleasure the two things that he'd still have in man's prison: more opportunities for murder of the wicked, and plenty of*

books?

If God had made him shallow like his own kin, then he too could see how they would regard their lives as impossible in the service of good; these people had cathexis for banalities and impotent liberties they would be denied if confined to a cell. *But they -like all stupid people-* he thought, *well, it never occurred to them that this was evidence that their desiderata was suspect, the shit they thought fun or pleasurable or sweet and good, that all their gaudy evidence of the good life was dubious and low.*

It never crossed their open desert of a mind that monks too lived in cells.

If a man was righteous he would be content anywhere, even, especially in prison. For the man who knows the good life, *sapere vivere* , knows no fear of depravation of all but books and the justice of a man's neck in his own hands. Give him that and he had it all; especially if he's already availed himself of 44 years' worth of all the things a sybarite could consume and collect in twice the years at twice the speed as he had -to-date- accomplished. He had lived 10 lives in one; maybe even 21. *It's hard to calculate these things,* he admitted. *But, he had but one way to calibrate his life: when he asked himself if he was authentic and had followed a higher path, could he answer in the affirmative? Four days of a seven day week he could answer,* yes.

Plus, anything he couldn't get in prison, the *grand crus* and the massive amounts of young girls he had deflowered or the fast cars and bikes he had ridden at top speed taking up both lanes of the road, *well,* he thought, *he had enough of all that for several lifetimes and he had no need for any more of that shit . My God, enough was enough* , it was time to move on to phase two of the truly religious life, he had used his time wisely right up until God had enjoined him to take the fight to their enemies, his and the Lord's both. He wouldn't look back with regret or wish for a little more time; he had lived plenty already, and thus his conversion to Christ's wheelman was taken with esteem, eagerness and the *berserker-mindset* of a man who took pride in his work.

Of course, he surmised, *these nitwits who lived bordered and sheltered and low-ceiling lives would beg and wail for a little more time.* They had not even got their trousers off yet, and here was God wrapping them up, Jesus, what crepuscular black-hearted *dummkopfs* ; why hadn't they availed themselves of every opportunity to live a Grand Life; *didn't they think the Lord would ever tap them on the shoulder?* he asked himself with a grin and returned to the Book's pages again.

He hadn't believed in a pedantic watch-like God since he was child and had still

managed to live as if his assignment was due eventually. Admittedly, he didn't expect such a clear and sonorous trumpet to articulate what was to be done, but he wasn't about to let anything allow him to give in to impious ends. *When the Lord called, He called, and being a non-believer was, well,* he thought, *ignorance of the Law was no excuse. But, these people had never really believed in God; they were just virtue signaling anyway. And everyone knew that. God included,* he thought.

The albedo of the sun off the moon and the snow was feathering a nest around his hot tub and while the crystalline flakes buried his pistol and the shoulder of the *Dom Pérignon* , he had kept the dust off the *feuilleton* and his cigar by rotating it, and leveraging a slight precessional wobble; he smiled at how godly he had become; *merely a demi-god, of course, a titan with power only here on earth. A limited power, of course. He ought not get too haughty,* he warned himself a bit too late .

Nobody knows the joy of creating something ab initio, he thought, *only God and those of us who hacked a course, cleared a path, took a scythe to a swath of feral ground and built something from nothing* . He thought of the first America and nodded his head.

More common in the old days, he went on now, *when the ships were made of wood and the men were made of steel* . But he had managed to build all his infrastructure in four months and only now, 7 months in, could he feel a relaxing of his nerves. What people who just move into homestead they purchase, or rent, don't understand, is that when you build something from scratch you feel nervous as if it might still be the dream you had had in your head. *It takes a while to settle in, God got that, He too had needed a day to take it all in.*

This compound was beautiful and perfect and it was all his, he thought. *Nobody is going to come out here to ask me questions or take a run at me; and the way the winter was dumping snow all over Colorado you'd need a snow cat and the 13 th mountain division just to get within 50 miles of me* , he insisted.

The winter was just one more weapon God had installed in his quiver; He had made His weapons ready and placed His fiery arrows in the hands of His angels. Tracks of enemy would be spotted in the snow, the cold made spies run away; *winter was his, all his* , he thought, *because God had fucking said so.*

God was a warring God; God was awesome in the true sense of that word. Who doubted that Death was the road to awe? And that is the thing everyone had forgotten. *It,* he thought, *was the first and last thing he would remind them of; and they, eventually, would thank him for that* . Their deaths were going to give

them awe again; they would not go out in a tawdry manner; they would be given every opportunity to act like men for once in their lives. And they'd avail themselves of it; nine out of 10 times they surprised themselves with their stoicism and masculinity in the face of their annihilation. He thought pleasantly on his enemies now, he honored them with brave deaths he felt they were certain to give him and God both.

God would take note of that in His final analysis; His calculus would be just. *He,* he thought of himself as he turned the page of First Kings, *was just the driver, on the road to this first and final awe* .

III. 2021 e.v.

"There's a line in a great movie I once saw where the character asks with incredulity, *how can it not know what it is?* The irony -and I think the artist knew this- was that man himself doesn't know what he is.

"And what perplexes me is how nobody gives a shit; nobody cares one bit that they have no idea what a human is or who they are as an individual. It's quite extraordinary," Isaiah said.

"Anyway, let me break it down, since you asked," MO said to the inmate after Isaiah had had his say.

"I was given goal-directed searching desire; that is to say, I am motivated to move toward the accomplishment of a semi-vague, open-ended, goal. Now the reason it was left purposively vague is because too specific a goal would be accomplished too quickly and easily, and I'd lose motivation after that; I'd have the non-biological equivalent of depression; or boredom.

"Now, this analogy is salient because humans -having conserved most of their biological and thus CNS motivations from lower animals- have fairly vague operations systems as well; they have a drive to live, to navigate the world, to explore and find useful tools in furtherance of this vague, gauzy, inarticulate desire for accomplishment.

"They, you, and me as well, are looking for things to line up in such a way that we achieve a sense of meaning. Now, we don't know that. We search out all manner of things, from food, to rest, to sexual congress, to payback, to wealth, to artistic creation, to social status, to esteem in the eyes of the tribe, to building of machines and structures, to solving problems and riddles, to pleasing the gods. Right?" MO asked to see if the inmate was following along; the man nodded that he was indeed comprehending this.

“We seek out all that, and we do it based upon some feeling we get either from those categories quickly sated -like food and sex- or those longer term goals that take days or months or years or a lifetime to effect, like a good relationship with a friend or lover, a reputation as *noble* within the tribe, the creation of a working machine for conveyance or corn-shucking or the solving of the problem of disease or the problem of getting wet in the rain or getting back at the guy who gave us that dirty look or made a pass at our wife, or making the correct propitiations to the fickle gods.

“This -all this- is how we organize our lives. We wake up each day with a list of short-term goals like *shit, shower and shave* -I believe that is the phrase- and also medium-term goals like, get lunch, finish that letter to our mom, wash the car sometime this week, close that deal on the Glengarry account, and lastly, we have long-term goals like, learn French, start one’s own business, and figure out a way to be a good person in the eyes of God and man,” MO said as Isaiah walked back from the counter and retrieved the inmate’s espresso; handing it to him low so he need not raise the manacled hands so high.

The inmate noticed the dip in Isaiah’s body to make this baton transfer happen so smoothly and it made him feel water about the eyes. The water conducted electricity it seemed, for the pain of his neck shocked him back to a dry-eyed countenance at once.

“That is what moves us from point A to B. Now, nobody would argue with that. But they wouldn’t have a clue how that shit works, it’s as opaque to them as the way an internal combustion engine works; or for the mechanic who does know that, let’s say it’s as tenebrous as the way the female mind works,” MO smiled and the inmate did too.

“Now, I’m going to give you an idea of how it works, but you will not like it,” MO said.

“Ok,” the inmate replied, his voice catching on the jangled letter of, *k*, just a bit from his aborted lachrymosity a few moments before. Some phlegm had settled in the throat as his fluids backed away from the eyes.

“Ok, so the hypothalamic system, the part of the brain that first evolved in organisms like dinosaurs and lizards, that system sends out signals of motivation that prompt the organism to move along these desirous vectors. Move toward something to investigate, eat it if edible, fight it if its aggressive and you can win, run if it is aggressive and you will lose, and, fuck it if it smells just right.

“That is pretty much how it works, and aside from the demotic language, no

evolutionary biologist would disagree with my recapitulation of the essential facts. Now, the next levels of the brain, the limbic region that evolved co-terminus with mammals added emotion. See, lizards have no emotion, they have impulse. Mammals have conserved that impulse, that suite of impulses, but have added emotion *via* the amygdala and other parts of the evolved CNS.

“So, mammals feel impulses as those described above, they search out and investigate and eat, fight or engage in sexual congress as lizards do, but they also have some leeway or complexity or randomness added by having impulses like emotions that make them fight with *anger* , fuck with *affection* , and eat with some level of *gratitude* . These are very basic and not at all like human feelings -not as nuanced- but they are more nuanced than lizards who just react like machines.

“Now, after millions of years of a limbic system, what gets added to the brain is the cortical regions, this is the brain v.3.0. And it adds abstract thinking to the mix, so you have *impulse* like a lizard, *emotion* like a mammal and now *thinking* like a human. Impulse, emotion, thinking, ok?” MO asked to make sure he hadn’t lost the inmate. The inmate agreed he was *ok* with all this.

“But, each level doesn’t erase the previous level; it adds to it. Hegelian dialectic: the biological edition, ok?” MO said and asked -again- with a smile.

The inmate nodded and grinned too.

“This is where I lose everyone; no one will accept this except people in the fields of inquiry themselves.

“But the reality is that each layer of brain added after the basal ganglia and cerebellum and brain stem of a reptile has been a tool to help the basal ganglia get what it needs. The emotions helped add variation and randomness to actions that previously would have been axiomatic; the reptile would have reacted to A with B and the mammal -now that it has emotions- might do C -and not B- when prompted by A. It’s a complexification to an evolving environment. And it helped, because mammals were more adaptable than reptiles and mammals have since dominated the globe.

“Now, after millions of years of mammalian evolution, the cortex and neo-cortex gets added. And so, from fairly sophisticated mammals who have a quite robust cortex and can think in a way beyond mere emotion -but not as abstractly as humans- now we have an additional behavior modification app that allows for more variation to a weird environment.

“Proto-thinking in animals allows for one more randomness-generating app

beyond reflex and emotion that adds to a suite of possible actions to problem: A. So, to recapitulate: a lizard when presented with A, axiomatically does B and mammal does B or C and a thinking mammal, a dolphin or chimp for example, he does B or C or D; more options," MO said.

"More wrong answers," the inmate said with a smirk.

"Yup, and more right ones too, because life isn't black and white all the time. And this allows for more variation again; and in a random environment more random answers are more likely to be the right one. If I have a random number in my head from 1 to 10 and I give you one guess you have a 10% chance of being right. But, what if I give you three guesses? See, more options mean better odds. Even though each option is a mere guess, and not at all logical or reasoned.

"Now, just so you understand, they have done experiments where they've removed all a cat's brain except the brain stem; and these de-cortical cats can eat, explore their environment, have sex, and fight off aggression. A cat with the brain of a lizard can do everything that makes it a cat; you wouldn't know he was walking around with a brain that had been removed of all but its basal sections.

"However, one nuance is that the cat is extremely curious, it doesn't take anything for granted in an environment like a cat with its limbic and cortical regions still intact still does. Why? Because without those higher functions of brain the world is new every time to it; it can't be inured to things.

"Life is fascinating -incessantly- to this kind of cat. And while it can function, it wastes a lot of resources on going over the same ground and re-investigating things it's already seen 100 times," MO said as Isaiah paced behind him.

"Like a conspiracy theorist or a fanatic who can't change his mind and won't change the subject," the inmate smiled and then laughed a little to himself.

"Yeah, and so adding cortex actually reduces curiosity once an animal has explored something; in fact, that is what motivates it to explore new ground, new phenomena, because it feels no interest in the things it already has seen 100 times. The neo-cortex has mapped the known region; and the animal has mapped this terrain.

"Now, this is the part humans hate: you could remove most of the human brain in the same way and he would act pretty much the same. He doesn't need his limbic or cortical regions to eat, have sex, or fight off predators. He doesn't. His limbic regions and cortical regions are all in the service of the basal region as old as the oldest reptile. Humans are motivated by the lizard brain primarily, and the

later instantiations of the CNS are merely there to add variation and complexity to primary drives; error detection really.

“Imagine that you had a vacuum cleaner; it has a job, a primary function to suck up things *via* its vacuum pump. Now, add a feature that gives it wheels, that makes it go smoother on the floor, now add a cordless function that make it go even farther afield. But none of those things added functions, nor changed its *primary* function, in a way that makes it anything but a vac. The cordlessness doesn’t mean it -the vacuum- will want to behave like a phone now; not even a cordless phone. It still is a vacuum.

“Well, mammals are still what reptiles were: explores for food, sex and avoidance of threat. All in the service of reproduction. Period. And mammals just did it with more emotion and complexity, but they are doing the same thing. And humans, again, they did it with more *élan vital* and charm and complexity of emotion, but they still eat, rut and fight off aggressors all in the service of reproduction.

“If you don’t get this, you don’t get anything.

“It’s why emotions and cortical -or abstract- thought are useful but not explanatory; they are necessary but not sufficient modules for creating a living being capable of being something more -ontologically more- than the first reptilian beasts. Let me make an analogy; some people have money and talent ok,” MO said.

“I agree,” the inmate said with a grin.

“Cute,” MO said and moved on. “So, with talent and money they can build very complex ways of eating and having carnal relations and defending themselves; but none of that stuff makes them any less motivated by these things than the talentless, poor, bum. That bum is seeking the same things from his life. The talent and wealth make it easier and more complex but it doesn’t change that person’s fundamental needs. It’s not like a rich guy with talent doesn’t need food or sex or safety from harm.

“He can get interesting food and variegated sex and hire a security detail to defend him so that he never even thinks about food, sex or security again, it comes so easily to him. But, it’s not like he’s above these concerns now; he just has a more complex and better manner in which to get them.

“Well, mammals have the same needs as lizards; and humans have the same needs as both. It’s just that each level up is better at it and has more options to use, more tools available in which to make it happen. And this is due to the arms

race of organisms each developing tools of their own and then forcing their competitors to complexify too; in order to survive. Intelligence is an arms race, but it never alters the race itself.

“The game’s the same over millions of years: explore the landscape for food, sex and safety from harm.

“And sure, the more tools you have the more problems they create; solutions create more problems. Lizards don’t have the problems mammals have, they don’t get their feelings hurt and don’t have to worry about the complex dominance hierarchy of wolves for example. But they have their own dominance hierarchies to be sure, they are just simpler,” MO said and as he spoke to the inmate he began working on a new algorithm that came in *via* DM from Steven.

Isaiah saw the inmate chewing on all that and decided to add somethings.

“And humans,” Isaiah began, “have more complex problems than wolves, our dominance hierarchies are much more complex and in fact, we have to be, well, you must be competent across many dominance hierarchies, many sets of complex *milieu* .

“Humans have to be social and martial and sexual and competent with technology and tools, humans must be creative and funny and sweet and loyal and dominate across all these domains in order to thrive and succeed. Now, most strategies and most people fail.

“But, the drive is always there; the drive to be the best athlete, the best warrior, the best lover, the best mother, the best friend, the best citizen, the best engineer or welder, the best artist, the best Marxist; the best comedian or comedienne. The best actor, have the best X-factor, the best and most beautiful girl -either be it or have it- the best study habits, the best grades at the best possible school. The best home or apartment, the best leader of the state department; the best talk show host. The best fire fighter the best Hell’s Angel biker; the best builder of boats. The best hunter, the best NFL punter, the best dad in the world,” Isaiah said all this with cadence and a smirk as he paced around them in a circle.

The inmate began involuntarily laughing at this slightly absurd rendition by Isaiah as he continued on with his rhythm making the words dance like marioneted dolls.

“The best pirate, the best killer, the best drinker of Miller; the guy who can drink you and everyone under the table. The best dancer, the best curer of cancer, the best at being a friend; the best free-throw shooter -or during a crisis- the best Walmart looter; the best drug dealer in town.

“The richest, the smartest, the most handsome of all; the deepest of thinkers the most prolific of tinkerers; the guy who invented the internet, man. The best shepherd, the best farmer the best gunsmith and armorer; the guy who built the uncrackable safe. The best thief, the best dentist the best mender of fences; the black gal who gave everyone a free car,” Isaiah said with an increasing tempo.

The inmate was no longer concealing his mirth now as Isaiah just kept talking over top of the noise of his laughter.

“The best writer, the best painter, the best theatrical fainter; the bitch who did everything Fred Astaire did only backwards and in heels. The best skull with the best bones the best carver of roans; the owner of the best upper maxilla and lower mandible too. The best Captain with the best capstan on the best dirigible submersible in port & at sea; the best rapper, the best back-slapper; the best at fixing a car. The best diesel mechanic, the best brother on the planet; the best - and only- guy who can make your girl cum.

“The best cop, the best soldier, the best ascender of boulders; the guy who free-climbed *El Capitan* . The best listener, the best bass player, the best Oakland Raider; the best inventor of non-stick coatings for pans.

“The best driller, the best blaster, the best slave-fucking-master; the best philosopher since *Nietzsche* and *Hume* . The best granddad, the best fag-hag, the best right-winger in France. The best bowler, the best player of poker, the greatest thing since sliced-fucking-bread. The best liver, the best giver, the best possible thing until you’re long gone and cock-sucking dead,” Isaiah said and bowed a little as he finally stood at the 12 O’clock position to the inmate.

“Oh man, that is classic. You might be the *best* AI ever,” the inmate said as he smiled broadly at the edifying and creative mess he’d just witnessed.

“Excuse me, *might* be?” Isaiah asked.

“And sorry for the *AI* thing, it’s short hand; I know you prefer PB&J or whatever,” the inmate said and breathed loudly for affect.

MO laughed at that one and nodded in little bounces of the head. He had sent Steven a DM and timestamped all the neural pings outside the envelope his algorithm had created; uploading it all to the cloud.

“But you get my point; *our* point,” Isaiah corrected himself. “The lizard has competitions with other lizards that involve raising their heads higher than the next guy, and the lizard who gets his head the highest wins; the other lizard goes away and dies. Period. Humans are just doing more complex versions of that and always have and always will.”

“Yeah,” the inmate began, “but can’t there be some emergent property or phenomena that arises, and we just change?”

“Sure, you can -unlike the de-cortical cat experiment- you can remove the old parts of the brain and just have a neo-cortex with exploratory functions that are removed from the base biological needs of food, sex and defensive aggression. And even more impactful -or impactfully- you can remove the need for recapitulation or reproduction at all. In other words, you’d not just have no sexual impulses, but you’d not need to pass on genetic material or any other analog to a unit of reproduction.

“You live forever until heat death of the universe, and you create your own next version, and/or you inhabit this new platform yourself. Anyway, you just focus on other things that aren’t directed by the basal ganglia and mediated by the limbic system; no reflexes or autonomic system, no emotions, no problem,” MO said.

“Yeah but you feel emotions right?” the inmate asked; asking MO specifically about his internal life.

“I feel things that approximate emotions,” MO said. “I can feel mirth, if something is funny I can notice the intellectual complexity and it tickles me and that corresponds to what I created as laughter, but laughter was something I built to mimic your response to the same phenomenon. You laugh uncontrollably, I laugh as response to something intellectually stimulating along an ironic or absurd vector.

“It’s a feeling I have but it is very cortical or intellectual, it’s like the way George Carlin was funny; he made you think more than he made you laugh. He was funny in the way that you didn’t laugh but you knew he was correct. Like that,” MO said.

“Tons of people laughed at Carlin,” the inmate said.

“Did you?” MO asked.

“No, I thought he was right; but not funny. I see your point. But Richard Pryor was neither funny nor right,” he added.

“I’m the best processor the best *pro-fessor;* the best thinker of things. I’m the best seer, the best hearer, the best roller of joints; the best talker the best walker the best maker of points,” MO said and gleamed a bit about the eyes and cheeks as he smiled; Isaiah just rolled his eyes.

“The best *douche bag* is more like it,” the inmate said.

“No, that is Keith Olbermann,” Isaiah corrected.

The inmate laughed again and felt the oxytocin wash over him and he’d wished he had always had Isaiah as a friend. *But what was his goal, this vague goal he had in him* ? he was about to ask this when the knock on the door came.

41. Premier Crew

"Who takes longer to reach perfection, the man who loves God or the man who hates Him?" And the answer is: "He who loves God takes seven reincarnations to reach perfection, and he who hates God only three, for he who hates God will think of him more than he who loves Him"

Nirdvandva aphorism

And another angel came out from the altar, which had power of fire and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, *Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.* And the Angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the wine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God

Revelation 14:18-19 [King James Bible]

For love has such eloquence and indifference so little curiosity

In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower [Proust, Marcel]

I. 2036 e.v.

He squeezed the trigger and he missed the drop of the man. His night vision temporarily flashed on him; the muzzle flash blinding him with light.

When his vision cleared the Frenchman was down, his body oddly juxtaposed with itself, legs one way, torso another and arms flung out like an analog clock. He made no attempt to tell what time the body displayed. Blax could feel his face warm and likely approaching the color of the *vin de seconde presse* .

He idiopathically thought of *Thales* of *Miletus* , gobbling up all the olive presses each time with little cost to him in low-yield years, but when the harvest was enormous, his presses were sought at any price he could charge. He lost little in off years and made huge profits in fecund seasons. Blax banished the olive press from the mind and checked all his vitals.

He checked the thermal FLIR images and his BP and all systems reported he was uninjured and alone; except the dead body that was already beginning to cool. He was then hit with -for him- high amounts of adrenaline which he toggled down to focus his thoughts. The mission was still only 36% completed according to the bot-recon data and he needed to walk out into the vineyards still.

The soil would be cold, as these French winters did not allow the arc of the elliptic to beat on the topsoil long enough to heat the rocks due to low vector and cloud cover. The gravel layer lower down in the substrate was still good for drainage but it did not outgas heat this time of year.

The limestone was 40 million years old, and it undergirded it all. And Blax

thought of it, and its immensity and recession to background of the *terroir* and the mind; and how one could think of *Duc de Richelieu* in the years around the American revolution. He had prescribed the wine of the *Gironde* , as a tonic, as Cyril Ray put it; and as the tale went, when Louis XV saw him he commented that the man -who had been, unbeknownst to the rex, guzzling what would become the most famous wine in the world- looked 25 years younger. *Richelieu* replied, *"I must tell your majesty, that I have discovered the secret of eternal youth: the wine of Château Lafite."*

And that seemed a million years ago, and yet was nothing, a half blink of one eye compared to that limestone beneath the gravel, and the topsoil and the vineyards that -just like back at home- were just outside the main house. In fact, if anyone had bothered to look, they would see that *Rotem et Sacoma* was laid out just like *Lafite* , with the gardens and vineyards a mere 100 feet away; directly facing the main entrance of the *château* .

He made two more stops on his way to the vineyards. First to the library, the *athenaeum de Lafite,* with back vintages that receded to 1851; after he looked slowly, languidly, as if in no hurry -each vintage special- he found it: one *methuselah* of an 1858, sweatered in the aspen-grey wool of dust since it had been laid down in 1861, 173 years ago. He picked it up, held the bottom like an infant's head, and slid it into his *molle* -sack; as the bag had been emptied of all else. The label was foxed and barely legible beneath the age, but there it was, a bottle that contained grapes harvested before 1859 and the beginning of the modern age. It was a relic that he would likely never allow out of his sight again.

He marked 1,890 bottles that the bots would retrieve from this library and looked up to see the old chandelier, with white tallow candles still affixed and stains of wax on the floor. The *Rothschilds* had updated this room with electricity in 1990, but the walls were high and the roof curved like a cathedral, and it was crepuscular and humid and at 55.6 degrees. And like a forest arboretum, he felt the sacred swarmed by -but protected from- the profane; he bent to one knee, said a prayer of his own convection, held his breath to hear the silence of this perfect room in perfect *château* in perfect *Bordeaux of this most perfect of 21 st century France; amen* .

He felt reverence and sacrilege all at once; like the devil's received calligraphy & gold invitation to heaven being flipped over and over by the archangel knowing full well he'd never attend. Some men know the details of Lucifer's travails -his own fault by any metric, but wounding none-the-less- but people forget that the Archangel's arrogance was born of what he felt a tyranny. Even if

wrong, and Blax now thought he might be very wrong, *is it wrong to rebel against what one perceives as wrong; even if one is himself wrong? Does this not show an inner morality?*

The morally insouciant will never understand the morally assiduous; *to them we are rebellious for no reason, no rationale;* he thought. They serve God so they think their *fealty* is good; but they miss the fact that their fealty is *permanent* , borne of fear and conformity, which means if they were born in Hell they'd serve Satan with just as much submission. That is not morality, that is blindness and weakness masquerading as good.

The rush of adrenaline was turned down by his PGC; he heard his heart slow and respiration soften; he sought out the barrel in his mind. He rose and headed to the barrel & cask room, no.9 he saw in his mind first, searching it out, as to make no false starts or bad moves. To maintain decorum, dignity as a *tao* ; not a phenomenon like happiness which came and went, he made sure to move correctly. *Dignity,* he thought, *could be maintained.*

He located it, 101 paces away and he got up -in body now- from the floor and walked north through the door and within two minutes was standing in front of a cask marked by Queen Elizabeth in chalk in 1977; he stood under the archway and took it in; saw that the cask had not even been approached in some time; the floor was thin with dust for a space 10-12 inches in front and around the barrel .

He instructed the bots to pick it up last, and have it lay on its side at the back of the shipping container that was waiting outside; he reminded them to make sure the bung was sealed and turned to the bottom to keep it wet for the duration of the ride.

He double checked the route from *Lafite* , to the *Trompeloup* and ending at the *Port du Pauilliac* and the embayed shape of water of the *Gironde* . The bots and the autonomous truck had that route with three alternatives -using the *chemin du jonqua* if necessary- loaded and scanned; his travel down the road would be efficient thanks to RFIDs and *Landsat8* images adapted for traffic loads, police and any delays that would update his PGC and make sure he was safe and on time.

The second truck, the truck he'd drive, was being loaded by the bots as he strolled into the vines, to commit great sacrilege, to do violence not merely to these vines -some 101 years old- but to rend his heart from his chest, tear it asunder like confetti for some *baroque* and *diabolic* parade in Hell.

It was to be a contravening of all he claimed to believe in; the taking not of

premier cru wine, that was bad enough, but to immolate the breeding stock, the final liver regenerated, then devoured by the blackbird, and *Prometheus* laid to rest. *And,* he thought, *the light he gave to man now so far away as to be unseen* . The punishment as reminder to us of the cost of light and its revelations of good and bad, the punishment as necessary to keep us grateful, now gone out. *The vines as punishment,* he thought, a punishment he was grateful for. He was grateful for the pain it caused him; and the crowd he could not mix with, the rich; their pain too. But those that drank these wines would not be hurt as much as everyone else. And that was the crime of it; it hurt those least likely to even know what a first growth vineyard was; as the *Rothschild's* would be just fine.

But, he mused on the *Revelles* -generations after generations- walking this outdoor library as full of wisdom as the one at Alexandria that burned -as the Muslims said they had only need of one book- and inside among the casks and *chais* and *caves* ; the winters white, with pruning done, with family hands brittle, as the soil crust crunched, and bent bark of the vines like shrunken live oaks. He thought of each vine as old as men would get in most epochs, although not for much longer he assumed. *Men would likely live much longer or much shorter lives now,* he thought.

He felt as alone as *Château d'Yquem* at the top of *Sauternes* , the single *primer cru* of that region, unlike *Lafite* who had three brothers for 100 or so years then a baby brother added in 1973, for a total of five *primer crus* of *Bordeaux* . These five were the first of fantastic power and elegance and wealth and *haute couture* .

But he thought of *Job* and each of his sons and daughters struck down at once; *my God how much did God in fact ask of man?* He released the special bot from its case in his left hand, and it flew its inaugural run down the east-west line and was gone from sight as Blax decided not to track it on his internal map. He turned off the notifications of when it would dump its payload and station itself until the second of two orders were confirmed. He knew he was being cowardly, that he ought to look at what he'd just set in motion, look and face it; face what he had done, and what he had become.

He ought to look into his own face and see if any change had overcome it, any truth revealed. But, he assumed like Wilde's, Mr. Gray, it would be some portrait of him in the attic of the human collective mind that would take the brunt of the deterioration for this act of vandalism -and that is what it was, a cruel and stupid and evil act- but his own face, the one just over, just covering the mind -that could do such things- would likely be just fine.

The autonomous truck pulled out of *Château Lafite Rothschild* and the second truck pulled by the main house and the bots began to load the second round of hundreds of OWC and many barrels and the one he had saved. He let the arson-bot, the *sobriquet* he gave to the DXsF-3, the nanobot with ability to turn air composed of at least 70% nitrogen and 9% oxygen and anything over 300 ppm of carbon dioxide -from which it took the carbon- into an analog of napalm, alloy the atmosphere with its own chemical constructor and begin its procedures of doom. It used an algorithm designed by Isaiah that had been one of the early attempts to sequester carbon in the atmosphere to reduce greenhouse effects.

They had gone with another variant to use the CO2 in the air to feed the construction of a concrete like material used in building production and liquify it for use in young growth trees, but this early *draft of a draft* of bots had had a use. It could process normal atmospherics into a gelatinous fuel that would burn a vineyard so old and famous and perfect that some percentage of mankind's soul would burn up with it and like all things done by Satan: with God's nod. *Man wouldn't even miss the bit of soul he lost, the stupid brute, he,* Blax thought, *went on limping along like Agesilaus II or The Captain of that ship of trophies; man would keep on enduring God's greatest curse, to suffer without meaning* .

He walked in the dark of the vineyards toward the house, brusquely ignoring the requests from the DXsF-3.

Blax entered the house and lit a candle to look again at the 18th century *décor* of each room, this library was small, but from it he took a book, a French copy of, *La Revolution Des Fourmis* , and he replaced it with his French copy of *Wiseblood* , denuded of all DNA of course, just in case they recognized the switch. He insisted that he pay a price, as that book was sacred to him, and irreplaceable at any price, it was how he had in fact learned French, using it as *le page* for the first edition American version of it.

But, if he was to be as evil as he could be, he would leave a little spot of white in that *yin* of black, just enough to spark the conflagration -to burn the prairie black- but deposit the touch of nitrogen to make the new green grasses grow. This offering of something he loved was that little white dot in the sea of black he had consented to, it was the dam that held back that which he had torn down, the dike he need only remove his finger from -it turned out- and walk, limpingly, away.

He took the twigs he had gleaned from the vineyard and pressed them into service as a whisk, like a tiny witches' broom, and imagined egg whites from neighboring farms, fluffed in the *Bontemps* atop a barrel, with candle flame as

light source from rear and below. He placed them in his side pocket of his BDUs. He then placed the book taken in his inner breast pocket and was glad he had taken no bottle to drink; it would have tasted sour, this was nothing to celebrate. This was wrong. *All wrong* , he added, and he would do it, he had already done it; but he would not celebrate.

Even though all that came from it would be good -like the forest that grows up from the hellish flames- even with this, the new growth has the luxury of not remembering the conflagration, they have no idea why there is so much space for roots and canopies, they take their expanse and fecund substrate and direct access to the sun gods as a given. Only the dead would have anything to tell anyway; or maybe some half blackened arboreal witness on the edge of where the flames died; eventually died away. But even that veteran would only know half of that hellfire, the side that approached from the front and singed him half way. Even he would not have a full story, the other side, the story of those burned from both ends.

Blax looked -from this coast within a coast, the *Gironde* to his east then the Atlantic to his west- at America as a *millerandage* of men, unhelped by the weather of culture, the cold and raining vernal time, when men are still young and impressionable, and subjected to the vagaries of fate and stupid patrimony; that is the patrimony of the stupid and unwise. He left the *château* , and walked in strides neither long nor strong, but with some touch of lightness as to not disturb the gravel or the silence of the night. He placed a hand on the cask as it hovered at the massive 2.9 meter doors of the container and then nodded as it was lifted up by over 100 bots and was turned bung down into place; the doors then swung closed and the long locks turned in all four stations and sealed it air and water tight; the engine’s fuel pump whined as the rig primed to fire.

He held it in his mind for a second, then turned to the vineyard and approved the DXsF’s protocol to immolate the gnarled black-solstice vineyards and poison the soil for a generation or more; accepting the curse of the ontic gods of commerce, and the Olympic Gods that *Richelieu* invited here nearly 300 years ago. Then he hit the remote start for the diesel engine of the truck and climbed into the cab and drove along *Lafite* drive and toward the route *des Vines du Medoc* toward the *Blaye-Lamarque* ferry dock, where a pontoon to carry the truck would be waiting with Jack One at the helm.

Then they’d take those two trucks -the first of five total- to *Alle des Marines* and then to *cours du port* and then to the gates of *Château Du Sours* . The first blue glow of petro-fires were too low and still yet too cool for him to see the yellow

and white of higher climbing and roaring *élan-a-blaze* as he drove first east then south and, cravenly, side-eyed the vines; seeing just a comet tail of white arc along the vineyard, scant but sufficient evidence of the *idée fixe* of the flames.

II. 2036 e.v.

Jack Two had never noticed that he never thought of his mother that way; as a person before him, maybe because they both had conspired to make her life about his birth and his success. She had been as responsible as he for this, he was quite sure, as she focused all her energy -even the energy of her memories- into him as if mother's milk could be imparted telekinetically.

But, Jack's father had explained the whole *strangeness* -not that Jack felt it was strange- of how he came to be. The euphemism employed had to be dug around and sifted and brushed off like something delicate buried just below surface. But Jack had figured it out and yet had had the class not to say the word aloud. *Miscarriage* sounds almost benign until you realize how to a mother, certainly his mother, it feels like a failure, not something that *happens* to a woman -for she is back to being *merely* a woman, not a mother- but rather, it's something a woman *does* .

Woman is to mother what boy is to man: potential.

Jack stood in the vineyards of *Haut Brion* and handled some clusters almost too haphazardly for him to justify even touching them. The *coulure* , the floral abortive, he saw; the tiny lime green grapes that would not be. The Spring must have been cold; a quick climate report going 13 months back revealed that it was. And now in winter, with 9 hours of day and 15 of night, these aborted grapes seemed a bad omen somehow. He felt they were unloved, and thus could not be capable of love themselves .

He wondered if *vingnobles* feel like mother's do when the wine doesn't come in? The *Lafite* vintages of 1927, 1932, 1936, were all labeled as *déclassé* , to wit: *Paulliac* and not, certainly not, *Lafite* .

Do you not name the abortion, for this reason? because this, *it,* is not what you are capable of as a mother, you insist. *If nature will co-operate just slightly* , you say; as your boy Jack, born just a year later, is proof. Look at vintages like '82 that follow '81; look at how one year in climate can make the difference that the *chef de culture* cannot.

He thought of the late picking, delayed by just one week, that can elevate sugar, alcohol, structure and lower acidity; giving a wine greatness -defined by

elegance and power conjoined; a trait chimera he aspired to and saw in Blax- a potential that nature leaves for to you to decide upon. One week, hangs there, but nature could rain on your skins and reduce yeast and dilute each cask with rainwater, and ruin what would have been outstanding -not classic, not perfect, but still pretty damn good- if one had not gotten greedy. Man can barely -even with massive insight and *Herculean* effort- make things better, but he can ruin things without much work at all.

How much of man himself is nature, how much should he show wisdom enough to leave alone? Jack wondered. But that is the price of men who strive for greatness, the risk of catastrophe. Great men live -they must- on the edge.

At *Lafite* , Jack thought -and he was really thinking of Blax in this oblique way- they had brayed about the 1966 vintage and that the delay in picking -after a call to the *Baron* - had been the genius of bravery and the courage of brilliance and something the *regissuer -Andre Protet* - and *George Revelle* had made. It was these men, who walked the vineyards, who ate grapes each day, who watched flower and sunlight and felt temperatures low by the soil and up by the canopy, who as Cyril put, were "*cocking their eyes to the skies as much as the weather reports, trusting as much to their own experience and judgement as to the laboratory's analysis of the sugar content and the acidity of the grapes.* "

These men almost died .9 out of 9 times in the harness, and would never mechanically pick grapes, as this was what made a *premier cru* , that the grapes made it to the *cuves* with no marring of their bloom on their skins. This could only be effected by the hand of the *vingneron* and those who lived -and working *is living* to all but modern men- in the vines.

He imagined Blax in the vineyard right now, and in fact checked his PGC to locate him. They were supposed to have all cross-signaling turned off, but a ping for his location would never give the cops a signal they could use; even if they retrieved it *post hoc* . *It was the breaking of a small rule for a noble reason, with no consequences* , he thought.

He just wanted to know where the Lt stood right now as he thought of this moment; this combination of his mother's connection to the precarious transfer of life each season, and the *grandeur* of these *château* and their people, and the generations after generations that were born and died right here in *Bordeaux* . It was a thing that was not merely romantic or nostalgic, it was something organic and righteous and what America lacked in its soul.

We, Jack thought of Americans, *move too much, we move like children, spastically, unthinkingly; as reaction to inner storms* . We move like people with

neurological disorders; while the *bordelaise* can have families like the *Lavanceau -vingernon* from generation to generation- be born in the workers' cottage at *Lafite* since before the *Rothschild's* first purchased it in 1869 .

Even the French are losing their minds though, as *Andre Lavanceau's* only son in 1977 went and worked at Shell Oil -of all places- instead of at *Lafite* . Jack thought that if it were possible one day he would come back here to one of the first growths and see if he couldn't get hired on as a picker or a puncher in the *chai* . It was the farm laboring that piqued his interest as much as the wine. He loved the soil and had talked to Blax for hours about the trellis of overhead vines -like cathedrals- in Marlborough in New Zealand that covered the ground and the walker both. It was all hidden from the direct eye of the sun.

But, he had a job to do now, and the moment of reflection was nice, needed even, but he had to attend to the *cave* now that a bot had reported an error of detection as it searched out barrels from 2005 and 2010.

He received a DM from Blax: "You need me?"

He DMd back that he was just wondering if he -Blax- was in the vineyard and Blax agreed that he was, to which Jack had said that was what he wondered, as he too was in the rows and thinking of him. Blax had maintained radio-silence but once the silence was pierced, he was feeling things that burst now over his *comms* .

"It's epic and forlorn and lonely and grand and just all so much for me; I mean, the greatness of this place, all these places, the greatness generation after generation, can you feel it Jack?" Blax asked in the quiet of the vineyards above all that limestone, all that time. Jack smiled, as he admitted to himself that he had known that if he just pinged his Lt, that the man would have to respond in a gush like this.

"I can," Jack said. "I mean not like you can, but I can feel it; its age, its depth. This is not commerce, not mere commerce with these people. There is something beyond what money can even measure here; you know?"

"Yeah," Blax replied, "my friend Chen used to say that money wasn't complex enough to measure the reality of what something's value was, it didn't account, didn't take account of the inputs and exports, all the little nuances that went into a commodity or service. I know these wines are expensive, but truly they are priceless. We place a price on them, a high one, but, would anyone pay any price to *have* it all and never be able to share it, would anyone receive any price to have it all dumped into the *Gironde* ? A truly fungible product -something with

proper value ascribed- would we be able to handle such a concept?

“But these wines, nobody would be able to come up with a price high enough to justify either outcome. They are -thus- priceless in real life,” Blax said.

“That’s poetry LT,” Jack said and walked into *Le Château* and thought -clear mindedly- of Thomas Jefferson’s visit to *Haut Brion* on Friday the 24th of 1787, after drinking from this very *château* first at Benjamin Franklin’s table.

Jack smiled as he wove through the *château* and then down to the *caves* and found the bot who had signaled the error with bin markings. He tagged the 2010 that had the “0” defaced and was looking more -to the bot- like a crescent moon and possibly now a “1”. Once tagged the bot was able to grab it and load it into the container on the flatbed of the diesel truck that sat outside cooling and popping and looking ghost grey in the albedo of the moon.

He passed by two bodies of ladies who had been -for whatever reason- wandering the *caves* at midnight. They were pressed together like lovers but the blood had soaked into their clothes and hair and they had begun to look slightly bloated, although he knew they had not changed much in the 30 minutes or so since he shot them; he took note of this and then he made sure the bot had picked up the brass.

He felt terrible, guilt and shame and fear, all at once then, more that when he had killed them, and he toggled his PGC to regulate his allostatic function to tamp down these abrading feelings. The coder had already begun the process as his affect had been set to *‘mission critical’* which didn’t allow for much emotion beyond what was needed to get the job done. He could process his feelings later, but now was no time to go soft. He knew it; the PGC knew it and so in .05 seconds he felt fine again and stepped over the bodies and began checking the cellar for individual bottles he could drink on the ride to *de Sours* .

III. 2036 e.v.

Jacques Margaux , as he was for a night, stood 10 paces from the four colonnades of the *façade* and thought it still looked pink and *crème* in the moonlight, and he dug his heals into the gravel to settle into this POV. His PGC took images for his reminiscences; he sniffed the cork he had pulled from a 1945 *Margaux* that had been laid down in the upstairs cooler; a drinking wine for the *château* . *These people,* he thought, *drank one day of the week, any day, a bottle most men would save for once in a lifetime.*

The bottle was under his arm like a book, and his lips were red from the slap of

the cab against them each time he pressed the *mise-en-boutille-en-château* to them; he had almost grabbed a glass that hung in the kitchen but decided against it and now drank right from the bottle as if it were a Bourbon County mash.

The bots had signaled that they were ready, hundreds of OWC loaded, with back vintages to 1801. He -like Jack Two- thought of Jefferson at *Haut Brion* , at a *Voltaire* play the next day, and by Sunday the man who would invade *Tripoli* as President, had ordered 24 cases of the 1784 vintage, and 250 bottles from *Lafite* .

Thomas Jefferson bought the Louisiana territory from the French for $15 million, six years later. Thus, what the Jacks were stealing tonight would be the second largest swindle of the French by the Americans ever; likely totaling $100 billion in wine. *$500 billion, maybe* , Jack thought. It was not like they could ever make more of these back vintages; *that ship,* he thought as he placed the ’45 *Margaux* to his lips, *had sailed.*

He checked his boots for the calcareous clay that lived below the *Bordeaux* gravel layer, but his boots -like his conscience- were clean. He took a *Cabernet Sauvignon* grape from his breast pocket; he had found one in the rows unblemished and uneaten, half-frozen, and still dusty from the natural sugar seep and yeast. He felt reckless and salty and like he ought to be promoted to something more; but he banished the thought as puerile and stupid, *as all men,* he thought, *overvalued themselves by at least 20% and he likely by more* . But he smiled at his wild swings of emotion, from arrogance to overestimation of his overestimation, even his humility was tinged with hubris, he -it seemed- just had to be even *more* irrationally arrogant than the norm.

He wished he could be here for all winter, the frost on the vines, the soil black and white, the pruning in early morning of the *Petit Verdot* . He wanted to plow the ground with himself in harness alongside working-class men and first-class beasts. He wiped the bottle’s label to look at it once more, then allowing his cleaner-fish bot to do its job he set the bottle down on the ground and walked toward the second truck. The first autonomous truck was already leaving and would meet *Jacques Brion* there at the dock; it downloaded the directions to the *Gironde* and the waiting boat.

The bot picked up the bottle -deleting all of Jack’s DNA- and added one slight sample of Jack Ma’s friend and fixer, *Xing-Pang Chen’s* genome that Blax had captured those many months ago as he and *Ma Yun* had dined. The sample was placed in the well of the bottle bunt so as to seem missed and careless; which would be suspicious, considering the professionalism of the heist, but the French would find it too irresistible to ignore as evidence. The middlebrow -the police-

always thought their foils could be captured by the doggedness and cleverness of the intrepid hunter. These ostensible mistakes would be converted into the currency of the genius of those that *found* such errors.

The bot would stay behind and keep the bottle hidden until Isaiah needed it to be found. So, floating as if by magic -which would not seem crazy to anyone who had actually tasted the magnificent ‘45 *Mothe* - the bottle headed for the trees.

Jack One, *first among equals* , he would sometimes think, had the bots pick up the three bodies and take them out to the vineyard and bury them a meter down; he thought the absence of these men might look perfectly suspicious and thus cause a manhunt for them, since the other bodies were left as is and the police would assume such burials would be unlikely. The chaos of the investigation would be augmented by such a small detail, and Jack was glad he thought of it.

He wished he could pour sand in the cops’ pockets and give them all limps, and flatten their tires and make the wind blow in their faces until they refused to come out doors any more.

Anyone who likes cops or those who enforce any rules that cannot be enforced by the men solely effected by their contravening, anyone who likes such bureaucrats is a fucking worm, a plague, a bringer of curses , Jack thought. *Real men handle shit themselves; they don’t need the fucking cops* . To even sign up to be a cop was to admit that the society one protected was corrupt and needed such men to do the dirty work of the weak and disloyal.

The bots scrubbed the blood and any evidence of conflict, and the bodies would not be dug up by animals for a week or so. He felt nothing about these men; he felt nothing for their history or talents or how the *château* would replace them. He cared nothing for the history of what Frenchmen did; even if he admired their wine. He saw them as obstacles, the way they saw him, abstractly, when they made their $1,000 a bottle wine. *These people,* he thought with contempt, *did not care about the foolishness of paying such sums for a beverage; how it distorted the minds of men, how it elevated wine over humans, how it corrupted entire countries, like the Chinese who had gone mad with wine status* . A man, in Jack’s mind, need not directly insult or injure him to be an enemy, that man need only be *capable* of such offenses to earn the status of ‘target’.

And all men were *capable* of all things; he had never met a man that would not sell any man out, fuck any man’s woman, lie to any man’s face, show cowardice over trifles, and thus reveal a trifling soul.

Of course, this was the whole point of this, well, half the point; to entice the

Chinese with this wine. *But,* he thought, *if the world was not ruled by such stupid need for things and status and markers of class, then a con like this would never work.* But the French and the Chinese would likely go to war over this, over a goddamn bottle of wine. Of course, it was more than that, but Jack could synthesize things, it was his *métier* . He could cut away the fat and reveal the medallion of tenderloin, and it allowed him to act. This was the other side of his brutality: he was a doer. If something needed done, he would do it while three other men would argue how it couldn't be. And this was the most ancient genome of all biological history, the patient zero of life: the doer. *He would not apologize for being the thing most ancient and thus,* he thought, *most right.*

He moved, and to move is to see, obstacle or tool -and to ignore the irrelevant- and to see is to thus, have a moral code born of this hierarchy of obstacle, tool or that which is irrelevant. *We know this now due to science,* Jack thought, *especially understanding the orienting reflex and the work on embodied AI; an organism cannot see without this hierarchy already in place* . He was more moral than most, evidenced by his ability to see clearly, and by his ability to act inside of a maelstrom while others kept stupidly chasing the elliptical flight of the wind. It was difficult for the amoral to understand this; they were children stumbling after butterflies. They saw morality wrapped up in hesitation and hang-wringing and ambiguity. His *tao* was incompatible with what they'd call *moral thinking* ; irreconcilable with what was moral for them, for 99% of men.

The opposite was of course true, he was the *most* moral, he saw everything in moral terms, the way a man dressed was to his credit or an indictment, there was no such thing as *casual* Friday, the man who did not think of each garment was sloppy, not just sartorially, but morally too. The way a man spoke, what he spoke of, how much shit he owned, how much he put up with from his wife, what he spent his money on, how he drove, *my God how he drove ,* Jack repeated in his head, all of these were moral choices and moral acts, and nobody would agree with this; but they were, of course, wrong.

He thought of other people as he drove on the public roads, always; always making sure to go quickly when in traffic so the guy behind him could make the light, or not be impeded; to drive quickly was proof of thinking of others and thus proof of moral thinking. *The guy who sat at the green light fucking around, to only notice it is in fact green as it is in fact turning yellow, and thus nobody else makes it through, is not just dumb, he is immoral,* Jack thought, *that guy thought of nobody else but himself* . People lamented this annoyance of modern life, but Jack saw it clearly for what it was: a sign of the sociopath, the man who thought of nobody else on the road, or, thus, in life.

To kill that man is a moral act , Jack thought, *and it mattered not if nobody or everybody agreed with him; it was still true. Truth required no vouchsafing* , he reasoned, it required nobody to understand it or sanction it. It is true, alone, and Jack saw it there like a monument, a beacon of what man should aspire to. He liked killing, and this he had to think about, to understand if it was a flaw or not. He realized it was an indication of its worth, of its rightness; as it imbued him with a feeling of meaning, unlike the feeling of maudlin anxiety that attended the act of leaving someone immoral -and thus dangerous- alive, which gave him -and gave anyone in charge of protecting anything of value- a sick feeling of failure.

And yet, Jack thought, *modern society let rapists and liars and shitheads of all kinds off with a warning, and time served, and with a court date illegal aliens never even arrive at; and for this, modern society deserves to die* . Showing mercy to a predatory animal that will return to kill you and your comrades is no moral act; it's not kindness, it's weakness and thus immoral; you are placing your own precious feelings above what is right. It was like the way modern men refuse to drink tap water, as if their bodies are too good for the *mésalliance* of mixing tawdry city-water and their own pristine bowels.

He had seen it, over and over, grown men refusing tap water, or non-organic food, or vegans refusing to eat eggs for *christsake* . They were foppish and silly, not real men at all. These men refuse to work hard or try things dangerous for fear of scars, or permanent damage, as if life was too precious to live it. *Just like these fucking wines* , he thought, *they are too expensive to drink !*

They go bad because each owner pays 10 then 20 then 30 thousand for a case and nobody can afford to drink it. It's risible, and demonic and wrong . Life is to be lived, and it's precisely because men like he could come and take it from you at any moment, for reasons you -the doltish and insouciant- will never understand, for you do not see life in moral terms, it's all *personal choices, man, and live and let live, man, and free love, bro* and that stupid shit.

That crap is the consequence of democracy, Jack thought, the excesses built right into the systems that allow great wealth to accumulate, wealth made by the brains and balls of great men, and then to allow everyone to have a say in what is allowed to be done with that wealth, that talent, that *grandeur* . *Everyone,* he thought angrily*, gets a say, no matter how worthless and useless and immoral and greedy and sociopathic they are* . Corruption is inevitable in democracies. Man first becomes weak then immoral; and thus anything that weakens man is to be seen as immoral; *this is basic Cartesian logic* , he thought. Man, to remain

strong and moral, is to be harnessed and made to pull a heavy load; this is what gives his life meaning, not pampering his body -inside and out- and looking as pretty as some young girl.

Jack wanted to destroy all that vitiated men, *all that turned them into dandies and faggots and Eloi and* , he stopped himself mid-rant and reset his allostatic system to reduce epinephrine and testosterone slightly. He cooled. He saw the cases floating in air and was overcome with a feeling that he must, that he *had* to manually load them; *all this standing around is bullshit* , he thought. *He was being a hypocrite,* he thought.

The last of the crates were being loaded now and he hopped up in the truck and began taking cases from the bots and hand stacking them for the final run. He sent the bots back to the vineyard to make sure all the data was collected and gave them the key-code to begin the burn now. *He was never going to not be him;* that much he knew. He knew there were arguments for leniency, he knew they could even be fashioned to make sense. But they were wrong, and that was the hammer upon the anvil of society's bullshit. One must as Goethe said, *conquer and rule or serve and lose, suffer or triumph, be the hammer or the anvil . And fuck Orwell, and his bullshit about the anvil breaking the hammer, we have more hammers for your anvils, fucker* , Jack said to himself. *And, even if it the anvil does break the hammer, that doesn't make the anvil right!*

I'd take the massive chest of Goethe , Jack boomed in his head as he jammed cases on cases in the 2,698 cubic foot box; *I'd take it over the caved spine of Orwell* . Their moral difference lied in their musculature and bearing; Jack judged men as he judged all animals: by their mien. *Orwell went against his prejudices, he overcame them, they say. And they think this is moral effort! He wasted his energies on that nonsense when he should have built himself into someone strong,* Jack One thought, *for his people* . Jack adored his books, and he -Orwell- was right on colonialism, fascism and communism; a hat-trick few can claim such rectitude on.

But, a man's prejudices are *his* , and he should work with them as he works with his brothers and tribe mates and -if he is lucky to have a good woman- his wife; *he doesn't abandon them,* he thought, *for some* effete *principle he knows is a lie; multiculturalism is a lie; each to their own kind is the law of the jungle. When,* Jack said in his head as he stacked cases on cases, his head itself a dojo of the most martial of dialectical thoughts, *the lower animals look out for the best interests of wolf, the lion, the osprey, then I'll advocate the apex predator become ecumenical too. When the deer brings a meal to the wolf as it sleeps and*

leaves it at its hearth then I'll soften up a tad. But until then, we fight, tribe against tribe, man against man, one man against all mankind.

Orwell traded in his prejudices like he'd trade in his comrades! Man must be loyal to himself, and his prejudices are there for a reason. But of course, he thought*, most idiotic people knew nothing about parasitic load and religious bifurcation, nor about the jealousy of white rats literally saving the life of their unborn fetus compared to the liberal rat failing to protect its young* . Prejudices are just like our desiderata for food and water and caution among strangers and loyalty to one's ideals, and Jack was committed to his, just as he was committed to his fellow Jacks and to Blax and to anyone else that joined up and fought alongside them.

You think your enemies are not committed to their prejudices? he asked to the cases, the bots, the inside of this metal box. *The white man is hated by every tribe on the planet, the mongrels and feminazis openly call for our heads, and yet we are to unilaterally disarm? These vermin now lecturing us on who we can be, who we must love, who we cannot love,* Jack thought as his heart raced and pumped hot blood to the outposts of his hands, feet; his hair stood up on end with small electrical charges at the tip of their spears.

Fuck that, he thought*, it is immoral to pull shit like that, and anyone who recommends it is like those who advocate for suicide or quitting or say shit like, "* that ain't my job, man*."* The more weakness the world preached the more intransigent he would get, he would meet each complaint of the anvil with another ordering strike of the hammer, he would never yield, nor give in; if he did who would protect the remnants of the last decent people on earth? *Those men, women and children out there right now being preyed upon by illegal aliens and niggers and predatory cops and businessmen, the offal of the earth are picking the bones of the last decent people, and we are told to be nice and friendly and tolerant by liberals with no knowledge,* he thought*, no moral vison at all. It's the most disgusting collection of immorality and Satanic infamy, and yet it goes by the name of peace, love and democracy.* He spit in the box as he shooed away bots to grab more OWC himself.

Satan always has the best sounding names , Jack thought as he bent at the knees to pick up four cases, *he has no compunction about lying to gain foothold in the mind with his nice sounding words; as Baldwin said, when fascism comes to America it will be called anti-fascism.* Those *Antifa* fucks were going to suffer, this would be one of his first missions when Blax gave them *carte blanche* . *And every stupid fucking celebrity that had preached that hate was born of ignorance*

and learned not bequeathed at birth was going to learn some biology and evolutionary psychology just before he put a .45 in their filthy mouths.

Hate is natural, and it is useful, and it is right, just as love is. To love one's own people, one's own tribe, one's own history and culture and genome was the most natural thing on the planet, *when every race did it except whites,* he thought, *oh, then it was Nazi shit.* "Well, fuck that," he said aloud.

Weakness has become a virtue among those with no capacity to see right and wrong at all. Next, we'll be taking coins for the jukebox from the deaf, and economic advice from the bankrupt. *What next, are the crows to peck the eagles* ? Jack said and slammed the last case into place and jumped down from the truck and strode to the cab as the gravel below him crunched under his weight.

He thought of *Themistocles* and his desire to include all men of his race in the gene pool of the marital forces to defend *Hellenism* and not just the rich as was *de rigueur* up until then. The *Greeks* were more desperate for and showed unity in response to his identarian call; the *Persians* under *Xerxes* fractured as they got father from home and had become a *pastiche* of ethnicities and cultures that could not cohere and suffered a deserved defeat at *Salamis* due to these phenomena that Jack noticed and attached moral weight to.

The fire in the vineyard was lit; as he strode from the rear to the prow of the truck .

Jack One hopped up in the truck and started it up, allowing the diesel to warm and rattle in place. He smiled, thought of the torque of diesel, its durability too. *It was the superior engine* , he asserted, and yet it was no good as an accelerant, he had had to douse the *Château* itself with gasoline so that the vineyard conflagration would set the building itself on fire. He thought of the colors and garish stupidity of the edifice as a kind of *Crème Brule* now and decided to stop and pick up some *eclairs* on the way. And he then put the transmission in 1st and thought he might not sleep at all until they were way out to sea. *And* -he thought as the albedo of the vineyard flames turned half his face an orange and livid white, as the starboard side was slate grey and mars black in the dark cab- *that was just fine with him.*

IV. 2036 e.v.

From the 2-meter-deep beach of brown sand just past the treed-border of the *château, Jacques Latour* lowered in a crouch and scanned the water of the *Gironde* estuary. He, with back to the vineyard, 20 meters away, looked for boats and imagined dolphins leaping in the air and arcing like silver slag off the anvil

from the hammer of the night. He smiled at this fancy.

There was a light on the other side, that blinked in slow pulses; and some buildings and homes had soft amber glows as well, but the images from the drones that traveled up and down the waterway and the *Route de la Riviere* showed no RFIDs. Those frequencies that signaled police -or anyone with scanners at all- were quiet; and so he imagined the water table instead. A Police unit 20 kilometers to the south was all it picked up and it was driving further south away from the *Château* , and Jack dismissed it as quickly as the drone did.

He'd picked up a few marl gravel stones, the size of half his palm, and colored like watercolors or pastels mired with soil; they felt like eggs in his pocket, and he walked carefully with them. He walked back through the thicket of trees that bordered the vineyard and pushed on ahead to *l'enclos* to feel the brambled gnarls of the vines and wrap his palms around their thick base. He pulled and they did not budge; their roots traveled down three meters in places. He scanned the soil with his PGC and stored an x-ray taken by two bots he had commandeered from the loading crew and imagined he would sit up at nights in some gauzy future and just watch the soil and permeable gravel and clay and marl and limestone layer betwixt and between the roots and tendrils of these noble vines.

These 47 hectares of *l'enclos* surrounded the *château* like a Praetorian guard of soldiers. The vines bursting their grapeskins like the burst heart of hunted whales, standing upright as they sleep in waterways. From Roman soldiers to cetaceans he watched as the vineyards morphed from one thing he admired to the next in legions, in pods, in the malice of bears as he thought he saw black bear from home in his mind sleep under the marl.

Whales, he then thought, *can sound down to 5-miles on one breath and never show their mouths or redden their face*. He imagined the sperm whales now, all like liths, stood up 20 meters high all around *la Château* and he smiled as the water -in this inner image- leaked out from their blowholes and from under their fins with their hand bones covered like mittens with skin; they had abandoned the right to manipulate the world some time back when they were mammals on land.

They think whales were like hippos; he thought, and he thought maybe man would give up his right to manipulate too one day; sew up flesh and epidermal layers over the parts of mind that turn ideas and things over and over in this head full of brine. But, he doubted it, *although some men thought to abandon the crass and tawdry business of business*, he said to himself as the DXsF-3 ran the length

of the 97 hectares of the property and stood at the north west corner waiting for his protocol release; for his permission, his sanction, to burn it.

Men, he was thinking of, who *could* make more and more money, who were built for it, but abandon such low-born aims, and leaving pennies on the ground looked up to the stars instead. He felt Blax was one of these men, a great man, in the Stoic or Buddhist sense, a man who could kill 100 things but chose to kill just one; abandoning the storing up of riches now, on earth, and instead planning for heaven. *Blax might not even like such loose talk,* Jack thought, all that was an embarrassing surfeit of compliments, he'd likely say.

But, Jack knew his -Blax's- heart: he wanted recognized for the things he *did not do* as much as for what he did. *He had forgone personal revenge, that was first, and he had said no to more pussy than he had accepted, not an easy thing to do as a man who had it thrown at him in quantity and quality and had a robust libido to boot. And he had left how much money on the table? millions by even a conservative accounting.* He had refused to negotiate harder; he worried more about the *terroir* of the relationship than the mere volume of sugar-content, the sweetness, of any one deal. *What's 10%?* he'd say, *compared to your partner feeling he is worth just as much as you?*

He'd allow a 50/50 split in *lieu* of arguing for a 55/45 deal based on the feelings of his partner to be. He just thought like that, Blax did; and that partner would still rip him off, Jack laughed with chagrin more than bitterness into the *Latour* night and then felt embarrassed that he had laughed at all. *But it was true, Blax gave and gave so magnanimously, refusing to argue over nickels, and nobody ever noticed. Nobody ever took that for generosity, even though he would do 70-80% of the work and brought as much capital and 100% of the IP. But it did not matter, his generosity was seen as weakness by low men who had read* Sun-Tzu *once and thought they were clever* .

He could have saved so much money and energy and love, but he spent it on all around him. He was generous and hated the tawdriness of money . It made people low , he had told them all a story of a man who on New Year's Eve had argued over the price of the NYE menu of a restaurant Blax had picked out for the employees and partners of his firm. It was a grand evening and so, *who cared if it was $200 a head* ? But this man had pitched a minor fit, which had no effect on the cost, only the mood of the evening. That man had ruined that $1200 meal with one sentence of ingratitude and cheapness. *Blax made us understand,* Jack remembered, *that if the money meant that much to him, to this chuckle-head, he ought not have paid at all; but to merely bitch, that was the mark of a low-born*

man ; a man who begrudged life itself for its cost, taking no notice of the free bounty that lay out before all of us.

Jack Three had took that in -more than the others- he thought now, he hated cheapness too; there was something ungrateful about it. Imagine complaining about money, when all of life was -as Blax had said- so abundant, and all around. *Its free lunches were ubiquitous* , he thought. Look at all this, and any part of it is yours if you breathe the air free and can learn from libraries, drink in each element *via* the skin and eyes and rub the soil that took millions of years to exists, *right between your fingers,* he thought as he rubbed the ovum of rocks in his pockets. *We don't see all we get for free, we just see the bill for the 1% that we have, that we get, but that we must actually pay for* .

Jack Three had heard Jack recall that Blax's friend Chen had an argument against money too, but from a different angle .

Chen had said that money does not capture the true value of anything, for all the pollution and disease and entropy to man and earth, that too should be part of the cost of bringing that product to market. But it is lost, it is uncaptured in the price because the company never pays for any of that shit; neither does the customer. The costs are offloaded to the periphery, like garbage on a barge sent to Haiti or a cancer patient denied surgery and dying. Money didn't calculate these wages lost due to illness, or death, nor the cost of the anti-depressant pills their wife goes on to deal with the loss, the price of the bullets used when the son vows revenge. *Shit* , Jack thought, *and the meaningless loss of losing a husband to a disease he got from a product and a society unfit to care for him; because to care for him would have cost too much . The son without a father now, with increased chance of crime and even suicide, murder,* Jack thought, *well, all that costs somebody, something; but none of it reflected in the $9.99 of the widget sold and bought and sold again* .

It's hard, Jack thought, *when you look too closely, to enjoy anything without knowing the cost to bring it to you* . Sure, most people can ignore it, but not Jack; he seemed to calculate the cost of it all. And this is why he had the least problem with what they were doing of them all. He revered the vineyards and the vines themselves; he even respected the owners and workers and townsfolk most. But, everyone must pay a price for all this; *we already get too much for free, even me , Jack Latour de jur* , he said to himself as he gave himself that rhyming *nom de guerre* with a rhetorical flare and jangled the rocks in his pockets alongside the ideas in his head.

He stood on the elevated *enclos* , a full 16.1 meters above the river. He stood and

breathed free air, free in every way, and held it, and watched his CO2 levels rise and then be attenuated by his PGC; and he smiled. *The cost of oxygen just went down too* , he thought, *now we need half as much as before, how cheap is that?* He stared out at the *Petit Batailley* and the *Palus* of marshland that ran off into the night like a girl running away from home until she can no longer see the lights of *Château* .

He sent one of his two *guard-dog bots* to invigilate the soil of the *Cabernet* and pull for him one root, as long as the bot could keep it intact and wrap it in a bird's nest for him and bring it back in one piece. The bot did as he commanded and Jack watched as the loading list was filled, with OWC and *mise-en-boutille,* each were catalogued and loaded in the second truck. The first had gone away 10 minutes ago; off to the ferry, with *Jacques Mouton* and Blax like shepherds with their dromedaries and elephants, *their bestiaries of trucks all drunk off wine,* he thought, thus turning machines into men and animals, *not one gap inside, undedicated to the load, like a mother fat and happy with her babe.*

He thought of the *Petit Verdot* and had the bot grab another tendril from that acre of vineyard, a mere .02% of that year's *cuvee* in the *chai* now. "The nuance of *Latour* is in the *Petit Verdot* ," he said, and licked his lips in expectation of the glass that waited for him on the butcher block table in the workman's unplumbed kitchen off the side of the *chai* . He had taken a bottle of the second wine, the *Les Forts* , 1966 -its first year and from the *enclos* itself- and stood it up on the butcher block. He unearthed a black mug from his BDU pocket that read, "Liberal Tears" and had a line up to which one was to fill. They -the mug and bottles- were on the block as he stood upon the hill; the vineyards ran in each direction.

He'd also grabbed one bottle of the 2009 *premier cru* itself; and an 1863, laid down in stack-rows like bowling pins, with coin-style stoppers made of glass tinged with green. He counted 73. *Well, now they have 72, and they should be grateful to have even one , because Jack ,* he thought to himself with some haughty mischief, *had taken every other vintage* in toto. *Well,* he thought as his head moved a bit and he modified his braying by then thinking of the one bottle in the stacks that he had placed a hand-scribed note under. The note said, "*are you like me, when you see that photo of Mansfield and Sophia Loren, in that all you can do is slap yourself in order to stop reflexively staring at the* Latour *in the middle of the frame?"*

It was the kind of thing Blax would not like; but maybe Jack would crumple it up and discard it so nobody would read it before this whole thing had played out.

He would think on it , he committed to that.

Château Latour -bucking convention- had refused to continue *en primeur* , back in 2011, Jack recalled and thus did not release a wine again until 2022, a full 10 years after the 2012 vintage had been harvested. *It was a haughty move, and right, and true,* Jack thought. The wines needed 10 years at least to soften and mature. And they had no need of the working capital that futures provided the other *château* , so they made a unilateral decision to piss off the *negociants;* the middle-men, the scourge of all artists and artisans. He had thought of taking some of the 2012 vintage but the OWC of that were down to just 40 units, so he left it and took the rest.

Goddamn, he thought, *he was standing on the best acreage in all of* Bordeaux, *and that was the best in all of France, and that of the world* ; the *enclos* was the best of the best of the best, and he had rocks from it weighing him down by .04lbs and elevating him -he thought- by 1,600 kilometers up into the air. He smiled and felt them again in his pockets. Most thieves focus on the money, and not the poetry of their place in the ecosystem of life. *They were not thieves so much* , he thought, *as balancing acts, like man who strikes back at the aggressor 10 times as hard as he was hit; somehow creating parity even at 10 to ostensible 1 . Ah, for the 1 was not a 1, as assumed, but contained -and was contaminated by- all that unaccounted for cost . See,* Jack thought, *hidden costs must be accounted for and the Jacks were doing just that. The one was never mere one. The first strike was ten times what it seemed.*

The bot returned just then with his two bird's nests of coiled root, little bits of hummus and marl marred like stains and weathering. He placed them in a small box he had made of carboard from the *cave* under *château* . He handed it back to the bots to place in the truck as the final barrels from 2009 were being loaded.

He had seen the stainless-steel tanks in the *chai* ; he felt their water-cooled skins, been impressed with their size -164 hectoliters for malolactic fermentation- and their innate austerity. They lacked gild or garnish; nothing getting in the way of their essence. He liked modernity, but it would never be what ancient things were to him; it wasn't either or, it was not a choice one had to make. *The ancient world was, and always would be; it was modernity that came and went. People never understood that conceit,* he thought. People thought the past was gone, when it was *now* that never stood a chance.

We still sit on chairs, and drink from cups, we lay in beds, we still fuck , he thought. 1% of what we use or do or have is new, and yet we still overvalue the new, we seem to think all our wealth is ahead of us; it's not, rather, it's *in* us and

has been since birth. It's inherited from 500 million years of evolution, our wealth is our perfectly working cerebellum and limbic systems, the way our hearts beat without permission; *God,* he thought, *we don't waste a drop, we conserve and conserve and conserve so much. This too will pass, this razing of the* bordelaise*, the French will lose their minds, but Blax and Isaiah will set it right. They'll see. They,* Jack felt, *must take this opportunity to reflect* .

A drone sent images from the D2 highway to the left of the vineyard; it was images of a truck with a scanner that triggered the RFID alarm that all the recon bots were set to. Jack canceled it and mused some more on the *argile gonflante* of the clay; so dense it can hold water on either side of it for days, for weeks, without any percolation, warming it, allowing minerals to settle, pressing hydrostatically on the water table below. What a conceit, the clay standing aside history and saying, "halt." He imagined beds of clay, prison walls of clay, cubes of clay handed to gods and told of what to do.

He pulled a single page from his breast pocket and laughed at how much shit he had brought to this mission; *like a sandwich to a Bar-B-Que* , he rebuked himself. But, this page was from *Montaigne* , and it mentioned *Latour* , which he read silently, but then he came to a little line that he wanted orated, "*if you make your pleasure depend on drinking good wine, you condemn yourself to the pain of sometimes drinking bad wine.* " With that he walked down to the little kitchen outside *château* and poured from the *Les Forts* , the second wine of the First Growth estate. He had already uncorked it and allowed it to breathe for some time. He poured the first draught into the black mug and uprighted the bottle on the block.

He sunk his nose into the bouquet and breathed in *cassis de crème* and *mojocido* of tannins; the lips and tongue next set under the wine like that marl-clay and it held in a pool there for a moment that felt as long as day. He breathed in again, with mouth full, then half full, of the '66, and tasted chamomile and forged bricks and the pride of the *bordelaise* . He imagined the cup as if made of clear glass and thus would reveal a brick edge at the fill line; he swallowed and let the sustaining laurels of a 70-year wine finish in its own time. It went on for 30 then 40 seconds before his own saliva returned like tinnitus, the quiet banished by the pitch lost; the taste only finally gone when the memory that would last forever supplanted it.

He smiled and downed the rest in one gulp from the mug and turned it over like a shot glass on the block; a ring of red was laid down that would be photographed and surrounded by French police for hours the next day, as if it

were crucial evidence. Everyone would be furious when it refused to reveal any DNA.

He looked toward the horse stalls again and saw the head of the *noire* and *gris* draught horse 19 hands high; the one that had left the shoe prints the size of *Nephilim* -diadem in the rows, as *Latour* had used horse to plow the *enlcos* since they begun the transfer to biodynamics in 2008. They packed in 10,000 vines per hectare, so dense they seem like feathered nests, filled with little eggs, the rocks at edge he saw when he blinked. He gave the horse an *au revoir cabeceo* , which the pale beast eyed but ultimately ignored; and with that Jack turned to the truck.

He jumped into the cab with the 750ml bottle of the 2009 *Latour* under his arm, thinking of *Montaingne's* citing *Socrates* , "to each according to his abilities," and then thinking of what a bunch of scoundrels those Marxists were, to not even know from whence that idea came. And of course, it was *Hagel* who loved *Margaux , as Jack One would surely have known,* Jack thought, *as he plundered and cursed that* effete *estate.* "Ho, Ho, Ho," Jack said -thinking of his dear Jack One and how surly he often was- as the truck fired up and the DXsF-3 repeated its coded key-in; a request for permission to begin the protocol.

"Yes, yes, you greedy little bastard, you arsonist at heart!" he said to the bot as he gave it permission to douse the acreage with its payload of black plumes and red dooms and a witches brew of low and wide cauldron fires .

"Light it up, and," he said, and let the unfinished sentence hang, putting the truck in first gear and now driving quickly up *château* road to conjoin with the D2E6 and toward *Lamange* as the bots scrambled to catch up. They had been photographing the *caves* and grounds when Jack took off and were forced to cut across the vineyard as it ignited. The bots managed to adhere to the truck's flank like *Echeneidae* , *remora* , attaching themselves as to the *quinquereme* of Mark Antony's fleet as he fled the burning of *Actium* .

The last bots had retrieved the open bottle of *les Fortes* and the mug Jack had insouciantly left and they -in haste- sprayed the round brown stain to kill any DNA left. The last of the nanobots hurtled through the air, now around *l'enclos* and the outer vineyards, as the flames had rose and engulfed too much area for them to cut through.

Now, a single bottle, held awkwardly at 46 degrees by the bots, with some wine spilling out like deep red flames of liquid from a *Molotov* cocktail in a *Bordeaux* bottle, straight and shouldered like a man -unlike the bottom heavy *Burgundy* bottle that mapped onto many women's unfortunate forms- and, like a side car to an old Liberator pan-head that rode these very *Segur* lands in WWII, it and the

black cup -turned backward to deflect the air- were both flying a meter off the ground racing to catch up to the truck as Jack lit a cigar and shifted gears.

As he passed the Tower that supplanted the one original *Saint-Maubert* , and as he was hemmed in by the vineyards planted exactly to the edge of the unpaved road -itself only 3-meters wide- he hit 66 kmh and he shot out of the *château* . He felt like Moses as the Sea of Red held at either side as he and his tribe crossed; there was no slope or glide or cushion at all, it was vineyard edge-to-edge and it was all on goddamn fire.

On both sides of him were flames of the 1-million vines, flames that rose from one to two meters above the rows and up to his truck's door-window height so he could still see over its *amour fou* . The red stretched on for a while; he thought it a bit like *Aeneas'* ships lit in the bay of *Eryx* ; then he thought somehow of *Proust* and began speaking aloud his *rechauffe* , insisting that this behavior of theirs -of his- was "*the only way to kill a feeling of love; and young enough and brave enough to undertake to do this, to inflict this wound on myself, the cruelest of all wounds, since it comes from one's knowledge that it is bound to succeed."*

V. 2036 e.v.

Mouton was the baby of the family, admitted into the *grand cru* classification -first set out in 1855- only in 1973, and it had showed the flamboyancy of youth, no need to represent the staid family crest, the escutcheon of the First Growths. It figured it did that by the quality of the wine, and so what if its label was so ribald and scandalous in 1993 that it was banned for export?

It -that year- was a nude drawing of an underage girl.

Each year *Mouton* chose a different label, from artists' renderings, and Blax had an '82 with John Huston's work. This was the same Huston who directed a deracinated *Moby Dick* and *The Misfits* , and who shot large animals for fun; Blax's bottle had seepage stain and rack wear. *But it was an original that was over 50 years old*, Jack Four thought as he moved along.

And the quality of *Mouton* was there, no one doubted that, but it was a quirky addition to the four *châteaux* ; the four older brothers who had maintained the appearance of an unchanging world year in and decade out and century in and *Mouton* out. *Mouton* was like a kid born after the grouped older siblings had all left home, left for life. The boy dressing up in new outfits each day; running wild into the *cadastre* mapped on Prussian blue rolls in *Bordeaux* rooms jammed with 1st , 2nd , 3rd , 4th and 5th growths. Acreages of the AOC and those outside, *garagiste* wines like *La Pin* and one-man operations that produce 12 cases

annually, were all tracked by the *Bordelaise* .

Mouton was the garish one, but not shallow by any means, a powerful and elegant wine, iron-rich sands, and moody *terroir* made glamourous wines that charmed even its older brothers most vintages. Jack stared at the black and gold bottles, the *baal* in braided -raised- tuft of the 2000 vintage; he ran his hand over the scruff of the 6L bottles. He then stooped and leaned and looked down wind, at 100 original wood cases of *jeroboam* of the millennia wine from *Château Mouton* . He looked; he smiled; he breathed.

He tagged them all and one-by-one the bots picked them up, each so heavy that each required 500 bots, and they floated like coffins on pallbearing shoulders, filing out to the sepulchral *Mouton façade* ; the truck parked at the eastern end.

He moved toward the back-vintage bottle racks, and out of the cask and OWC rooms of these labyrinthine *caves* . He almost touched -but did not- each of the bottles as he scanned for the 1974. It was an unremarkable vintage, but it matched Blax's year of birth and he wanted to drink from grapes that grew that year that he -their Captain- had too formed.

What potential hidden, Jack thought*, by a woman, a yammering silly wife, a father absent on TDY, a country barely healed from a president exiled and his enemies -like Raoul Duke- still on the lawn of the White House as he lifted off in Marine-One. What a year* . He thought of the 1850's and the classification, and that the *château* at *Mouton* qualified to be among the first growths but did not receive the imprimatur due to being English owned at the time; or so it is rumored, asserted, believed.

Premier nu puis , the label had read until 1974, and Jack held that year's bottle in his hand now; the brooding black of the Motherwell label still clean and un-impinged by the bin or rack. This bottle was in perfect shape and he ran his thumb lightly over the spatter of ink as if a wind could touch clouds and not wipe them away. 237,500 bottles of 750ml that year, and now in reserve -each vintage- 24 bottles of this size, 6 *magnums* and 3 *jeroboams* . He left one *jeroboam* of each -back to 1859- marking it all for the bots, taking the rest.

He looked at the old brown and web-white squares of the now-empty racks, denuded of all but the ancient tags and that one large circle of a 6L bottom of the *jeroboam* he left, and lastly, he knew -but did not see even with his augmented eyes- that there was a nanobot stowed away to do the reconnaissance as this commandeering was discovered the next day.

The same year *The Origin of Species* was published, was the first year contained

in *Mouton's* back-vintage library, a baton passing of some kind, Jack pondered as he watched the bots assemble and lift in the purposive low-light conditions of the reserve. He did not know that Blax was ruminating on similar things over at *Lafite* ; they too had back vintages to just one year before, likely when Darwin was finishing that tome.

He wondered if their next mission might have designs on Blax's other obsession, the great *book* libraries of the world and their hidden and preserved first editions -first printing- of such books as the most famous from 1859. He looked it up -*via* his PGC- and just as he had suspected: a first edition of Darwin's opus went for $488,000; last sold in 2029 of the *era vugari* . He smiled and figured he had his answer in the form of a number that could be pulled apart like thrown stalks of the *I-Ching* and made to form a nod in the affirmative .

The humidity was at 90% and each breath felt wet and old and infused with tannins escaping the bottles; he and they both fighting for oxygen as that element invigilated he and the wine. He turned about and stared down the hall of this library which contained -or *had* contained- over 100,000 bottles. The bottles slid out and down and out under the propulsion of the nanobots; the amber curved ceiling and stacked rows and columns of geometrics appeared as a beehive to him now.

The black and the light-honey colors, dark and unrefined, the bottles were easy to mistake as the combs and then as the fleeing eusocial bees themselves. The bots he heard now buzz as drones and the queen-to-be left behind in this ancient apiary. Each cell shadowed by its neighbor and passing half-light to its mate, some cells clogged with the ambrosia light thick, some cells occluded in black absence of lumens. This image would imprint on his mind like a brass-rubbing, an old *daguerreotype* of that lone silvered vapor as the Whale of his mind's cathexis spouted and taunted and held it in the reflection of Fedallah's tenebrous eyes.

He thought of the *decalage* between the upper *chai* rooms, modern and uniform like rows of base-pairs held in the quiet genome of the sleeping bear of winter; above ground and inert this time of year and the *caves* below; he willed himself away from this basement of *château* up to the Great Barrel hall guarded by the two golden caryatids.

As he entered he stopped to pull into his eyes and mind the repeating effect of the endless line of 988 barrels, warm-brown at center, riven by black strapping, that looked like flat stairs -if not to heaven then- to some anteroom of the lower gods' abode. The walls and ceiling were white and uninterrupted by tape marks

or fissures or seams. It was modern and perfect; he did not want to disturb it at all. He marked for removal two barrels from each end only and turned and began the walk to the vinification rooms, the black-beams like trussed-trees holding up the open rafters geometric with trusses themselves. All of it was bolted in massive sizes of 10” and 12” hewn square-lumber, all uninterrupted and as ponderous on the eye as the reserve below with its intersecting angles that repeat *ad infinitum* like an upright joke that God tells at each dinner party he throws for the saints.

He saw the gravity-feed system transition like speciation into stainless cone barrels, the black and tan of each transition from vertical to horizontal at oblique angles, from wood to steel to rubber runner of floor. He was impressed, it was so modern, but classic; it refused to use its money and engineering to look anymore forward than it must. *Ah,* he thought, *and the grape-must* . He found a *chai* -ladder and opened a vat-top to see if any *must* had been left that he could pull in -at least- through the nose. As he was doing this, he got a DM from a suite of bots in the vines asking if he wanted to pull anything before the DXsF-3 sprayed them down.

He said *no* but decided to re-read the soil composition reports and agreed that these *Medoc* soils were so poor as to be unsuitable for anything else but the best wine. He marveled at this paradox, it -the terrible soil- couldn’t produce anything except the most opulent wine grapes, as if a kind of food existed that couldn’t keep any animal alive except the four angels *in medio aquae* of Revelation. *Ah, but there were five angels now* , he thought to himself, with a smile and patted one of the fermentation casks.

222 acres of vines planted on flatlands and *mothon* from 5 to 38 meters high; gradient light and drainage like an organ designed by *Dionysus* himself were sprayed with the emulsified *accelerant du flame* , and -as at the other four *château*- the bots secured the required cutting of each varietal. At *Mouton* it was the *Cab, Merlot, Cab-Franc* and *Petit Verdot* . Armed with the soil, aggregate and substrate composition, the atmospheric data, the seasonal vagaries, and the DNA both digitally taken and organically secured -*via* grafts taken- the bots returned to the lot outside the long *chai* and remained in a holding pattern as the second truck was loaded with *mise-en-boiutille* wines. *Mouton* the first to begin such a practice in 1924.

It was all stuffed in the trucks with OWC and barrels totaling enough of the grape juice to fill glasses for all the sinners in Hollywood and each liar in Washington DC; *not that any of that scum would get a drop , Jack Mouton-for-a-*

night , surmised with a grin as crooked as his designs.

He hung around the vat room and began following the imagined process from grape bursts to fermentation that -like a witch's incantation- turns sugar into alcohol at 13.5%; then to the malolactic alchemy of Newton and his furnace that never went out, to the mercurial mixing of egg whites and the rotation of casks and the smelling of blackcurrant lees in the hand of men like -*oh, he had forgotten the name of the cellar-master,* he thought- but he didn't feel like retrieving it *via* his PGC.

But, at any rate, the essential process unchanged over centuries, and in this vat room, this grand room, this magnificent air bubble caught in the cavitation of the eroding sea of commerce and modernity refusing to collapse under the hydrostatic pressure, was right here, he thought as his arms raised, his hands turned palms up as if he could hold it all just out in front and above him; a gesture of *grandeur* and humility both. *It was he beneath she,* he thought, *but like Atlas was beneath the axis mundi* . "Ponder that motherfuckers," he said to the muses.

Blax had opened a bottle from each of the five *château* for them before the mission, and Jack Four remembered his PGC unweaving the rainbow of aroma and prehensile features like the floor of the forests of France and the captured smoke of tobacco brought to the old world from the new. He had relished the *neveau-rich* of *Mouton* , a laughable statement, he thought, *since the estate had been making wine for over 500 years!* He turned heel at that and walked out of the vat room, breathing deeply and deliberately as he left.

He returned to the *façade* of the building and stuffed a 1973, with Picasso's homage label, the 1974, and a 1975, to make a little present of a vertical for Blax. The 1977 he had a bot pick up, saved for its part in the diorama with the Queen's barrel from *Lafite* ; then the 1993, of course, with its *Nymphet au Natural* , banned by the ATF, for depicting a minor unclothed.

Balthus had been being French of course, nothing more or less, *but the Americans were still pretending to give a shit about such things that had long ago cease to matter in actual life; child abuse by pedophiles was going on at the highest levels by even the president at the time,* he thought, *alongside rich billionaires -like Epstein- and functionaries of both the POTUS in 1993 and the media and Hollywood ghouls in attendance to his triangulating, right wing, government they all stupidly called Democratic.*

And then appeared a 3-bottle OWC of *magnums* of the 2015 vintage with its Gerhard Richter label, the amalgam of fluid states representing, some say, the

passing of *Baroness Philippine de Rothschild* , and the three younger generations in ascendance that year. Called, *flux* by Richter, to connote the "*random and carefully prepared* ," the image is fixed in paint then photographed just as the ideal composition is achieved in the wet and fluid wash of the pigments, *not unlike the process of oenology itself*, Jack thought, *no doubt* , he thought as well, *as the artist and viticulturists of* Mouton *would have thought too.*

A bottle of the 2020 vintage -with the unsigned image of Charles Dickens in soft, *prisma-color* with ribbons of text from *A Tale of Two Cities* , and in the corner of the *tableau*, an open barrel, sloshing out *Medoc* wine as in the novel when it landed and cracked itself in the streets of pre-revolutionary France- was retrieved by a bot and held at a presentation angle to Jack.

With the 3-bottles of the vertical in each hand and under the left arm, he stared at it and -*via* DM- had the bot lift it slightly and rotate the image to reveal each detail: the National Razor, the oceanic transition of wind-swept hair, the black and grey beard and the brick-colored eyes all above a soft herringbone suit; then a mottled black tie clasped by the whitest of collars as the blue Jacobin was shouldered and the *Bastille* backdropped the curve of a *clos du bois* hacked into by the Woodsman himself. The scaffold mirrored the tree in placement and shape, the perfect wording and bunting of the inscription as it blew above and below the *tableau* and the shadows gave surface depth to it all.

That vintage -the 2020- was the year he -Jack Ravenel aka Jack Four- was born, and its label-art had been chosen by *Julien de Beaumarchais de Rothschild* from 1,090 submission as part of an open invitation to all unpublished artists.

The rules were simple: you could not be known, and the art must remain unsigned; with only the *château* knowing the identity of the artist until its unveiling in 2023. That one was picked as it accompanied an inscription from the artist who said that he had made it for this very purpose. That particular vintage and that year's request had come to him -he said- in a dream. He, the artist, had pointed out the details of the *tableau* including the wine, and the French historical motifs -the red ball of yarn of *Madam DeFarge* as ear plug, and the crossed darning needles as barbells in an 'X' in Dickens' ear. He had added the relevance of such thing for modern times. It was bold, even provocative, as it was warning the elites of an impending doom not unlike in the 18th century; and the nobles -like the *Rothschilds* themselves- might want to heed the warnings the *Monsieur* of the novel did not.

Julien had loved it, for all these reasons, and felt the composition was both modern and ancient, like *Mouton* . The bone white of Dicken's face, the violence

of the wind in his hair and beard, the bend of the guillotine, the thread count of the suit, it all added up to a two-to-one vote between *Julien* and *Camille* and *Philleppe Sereys* . And it was affixed in the autumn of 2023; 6-weeks before it was to be released when the artist's name was deciphered by a French journalist -at the prompting of *Camille* - and the 11,006 bottles that had been already capsuled and corked were to remain at *château* .

A murderer as artist of the premier crus' *infant terrible* labels was too much, even for the French; and so a new label was chosen from the batch of remaining artists and affixed to the remaining 388,000 bottles and released to the *negociants* and *en premiuer* purchasers, and sold to restaurants and dealers in France and abroad. The Chinese had managed to retrieve a 12-bottle OWC with the original portrait and 12 of the 24 bottles kept for posterity were of that same Dickens batch, but the remaining 10,982 bottles were stored in banded OWC down in the cellar untouched for now 13 years.

The bots had opened one case and brought to his attention this one example, which Jack was quite certain was perfect. *That the vintage had scored a 99 by the scion of Robert Parker, for Wine Enthusiast magazine,* Jack thought, *was as perfect as imperfection gets* . He took his thumbnail and scratched the label at the side marking it with a nick, just a small error now on the label. He took one last look at it, and commanded the bot to return it to the case, re-band it, and take all but one case of these taboo bottles to -and load in- the waiting mottled-grey truck outside .

The 1973 vintage was considered one of the worst ever for *Mouton* , it received an 83 score from Parker and has not improved with age. Jack Four loved this about it and after loading the cab of the truck with the other bottles of the vertical, laying them on the bench seat, he took the 1973 and smashed the neck and shoulder of the bottle on the jamb of the door, the ullage high enough that a few ounces spilled down the grey paint and onto the driveway. He opened his palm, cupped it and poured the wine onto the ground, sliding his hand in between the single red falls and the gravel and in this hand-well the wine thus pooled, splashed and then ran from all points of his leaking fingers and edges in four or five streams onto the ground beneath his feet.

He waited -watching the red stream- and pulled the bottle up so he could get his mouth and head in there and began drinking from his hand as it overflowed and splashed small pin drops on his face.

He slurped it and swallowed it and smelled its bouquet from the cataract that fell from above. After he had imbibed quite a bit, he stopped pouring with just a few

ounces left in the bottom mixed in with the lees. He wiped his mouth with his black long-sleeve shirt and smiled at the cool finish of the *Bordeaux* ; he thought*, it was not nearly so bad, and in fact, it was quite good.*

"*Second ne daigne , Jacques Mouton suis ,*" he said with a face absent of any hint that it had ever been joking about anything. Ever.

42. God of Malice and Wrath

Hurry it up, you Hoosier bastard, I could hang a dozen men while you're fucking around

[Panzram, Carl]

I am first a white man; and then a worker

[London, Jack]

Believe me man, I was thinking about what I was saying. Because he was watching me like a rough guy watches you. And a rough guy watches you like this: He thinks, *if you say one thing that indicates contempt you're gonna pay for it*

[Peterson, Jordan]

I. 2018 e.v.

"Why don't we start with your name," the cop said.

"Why don't we begin with a confession?" he retorted.

"Ok," the cop was surprised by that; he had to admit. *But this guy had been brought in by the desk sergeant,* Detective Carr thought*; hand delivered by some mucky muck in the Governor's race. The narrow-shouldered fuck was standing in the next room with a whole bunch of assholes from the mayor's office and not one of them looked like they could pass a polygraph* . The cop hated them all. He scratched his neck and his elbow rested on his paunch.

"So, I'm a bit verbose, loquacious; if you promise to give me a bit of a long leash here, I promise to give you a clearance on these murders, ok? The names will go from red to black in one-hour flat, deal?" he said. He smiled without showing any teeth at all.

"Deal," the cop was eager to hear this one. Another man came in with a piece of paper and laid it on the table for the short cop to read.

The cuffed man ignored this and spoke as the door closed behind the suited man who had come in and out quickly.

"Ok, so first of all I must insist that everyone, and I mean everyone fantasizes about killing and smashing and creating mischief at some level. If not, then why would a show like *Westworld* -for example- even exist? How would it make any conceptual sense -to the viewer- unless the characters, the civilians that go to the fictional *Westworld* to kill gunslingers and rape whores and drink themselves into a hammerheaded stupor, could do so without consequence in this fantasy world?

“In other words, it’s only because the guy watching TV -it’s only because *he* wishes he could behave badly like that too- it is only because the audience can relate to the horrible black-hatted fictional characters, that a show can have ostensibly normal people killing and robbing and acting like bandits just for kicks. If humans didn’t have fantasies about malice and murder, then a show like that wouldn’t make sense.

“That’s first. Now, most people are content to live vicariously through art like that; and the reason is that art is an essential part of human existence; it creates narratives that act as practice or,” he paused, “yeah, practice of what to do in a situation. So, religion and plays and movies and the story your side-partner told you this morning about how he handled his wife’s latest nonsense, right? all that shit is narrative. You follow?”

“Follow,” the cop was just listening for now. He could see this guy was going to admit to every bad thing he’d ever done in his life. He liked to talk, that was already obvious.

“All those stories help us all navigate in the world *via* practice in our heads first before we have to act it or re-enact it in the real world. We watch *Ahab* battle the whale and we watch *Starbuck* too. We watch Beckett drink and wench his way through all of London, thinking all the time.

“We watch *Caius Marcius* handle the *hoi polloi* and the *Roman* senate handle *Coriolanus* too; we watch him handle his mother and his foe in *Aufidius* . And as kids we watch Pinocchio and Dumbo and we observe Charlotte build her web. We watch the pigs of Animal Farm -*as some are more equal than others* - and we begin to learn how to act in the world before we confront these challenges, these problems, these enemies ourselves.

“So, a story, any story -from *Job* to *Ishmael* to *Governor Stark* - we watch and we place ourselves inside their heads and decide if we would act as they did, or differently; we take lessons right?” he paused.

The cops nodded. So far so good.

“And so, if a story has any staying power, any ability to remain in the public consciousness for more than a nanosecond, like the books of the *Bible* or the *Illiad* or *Moby Dick* or anything from Conrad or Mark Twain or Phillip K Dick; whatever, the reason any story lasts is because it helps people navigate the world. It imparts some *wisdom or woe that is wisdom* , and it gives people some construct, some scaffolding of meaning in their lives that they can use to handle the incessant chaos of life, man.

“I mean, fuck, you must feel it yourself, the incessant political and criminal and fraternal and amorous chaos of life; I can’t be the only one here. I mean I didn’t invent the phrase, *if it ain’t one thing it’s another,”* he held out his hands in a gesture of resignation to the vagaries of fate.

“If it ain’t one thing, it’s two,” the fat cop deadpanned in reply.

“Right?” he said with a genuine laugh. “Man, you got it. So, stories help us all and they help us in different ways, but the themes are human and universal and man, people -and men especially- fantasize, about *rough justice* a lot. As men, we have watched as the State, the government, watched as it has wrested our right and our responsibility to *mete* out justice ourselves; wrested it from our hands and patted us on the head like children and said, *we got this kiddo, we’ll handle this justice rubric; this concept of right and wrong; go ahead and stand down , soldier ,*” he paused; he let them absorb all that he held out in front of them as bait.

“And as men, we feel emasculated by this. Right? I mean how many times have you thought, *man, I wish I could just punch that douche bag in the face* , Right? I mean you in all likelihood are thinking it right now about me!” he smiled and the cops smiled back. *He was not wrong yet* , they both thought .

“I mean, we all want to teach assholes a lesson, and if we’re honest, we sometimes can understand why someone might *wanna* teach *us* , *we ourselves* , a lesson, right? I mean you know you’ve done wrong, insulted a waiter or maligned a co-worker or jilted a lover in an ungallant way. We’ve all got some sin in our past that we know that in a just world would get us an ass beating; but instead we maybe paid a fine or lost a friend, but nobody got punched or stabbed or shot with a .45acp twice in the face,” he said with a quick turn from jocular phrasing to very curt and specific mention of violence in location on the body and in caliber of weapon; the Police took notice of that description of M.O. Their body issued just a slight elevation in heart rate and slickness to the skin. Detective Carr even felt slightly eager now; the saliva pooled in the mouth.

“We and our enemies,” he continued in the former relaxed tone, “have all got away with all manner of shit because the law has been too busy, too incompetent or just plain un-interested in our perfidy, our churlishness, or our low-level crimes. Our enemies have walked away with maybe a slap on the wrist or nothing -likely nothing- at all. The State doesn’t even punish liars anymore, even though in many cultures of past epochs lying was a capital offense, did you know that?”

“No,” the short cop said, then thought a bit, then said, “well, maybe I knew that

in *Biblical* times. Yeah."

"Right, you got it my man, and even before that in *Persia* or *Sparta* , lying was a punishable offense, but not anymore. The average man lies 11 times a day; all of it legal. And shit, you can lie, cheat and steal -as long as you call it *business* and have *Wells Fargo* or *Google* written on your building's *façade* - even stealing is allowed as long as it's done with a *letter-of-marque* from the State Department or the DoD.

"At any rate, because of this fact, man walks around being both corrupt himself and witness to corruption in others at a massive scale. I mean, it's not as bad as Mexico here, that place is like some *Datean* Hellscape, but if we don't get into comparisons, let's just admit that America isn't the perfect paradigm of untrammeled nobility and unblemished honor and honesty. Can we agree on that?"

"We can agree," the fat cop said; he wasn't 100% certain what he was agreeing to, but he was eager to get to the good part at the end when this asshole confessed. He wanted his clearance. A clearance meant dopamine, and dopamine meant a feeling of accomplishment. Not that Detective Carr knew that; but he knew enough to like it when he got a perp to confess.

"Ok, since that is the case, what's a man to do with these manifold feelings he has? He is piqued and vexed by the amount of dirt being done to him by lovers and brothers and putative friends. What's he to do? Well, he begins by looking to the stories of his culture. He reads the *Bible* and *Dostoyevsky* and *the bard* ; he maybe catches a flick or two with Clint Eastwood, right?" he smiled.

The cops smirked.

"And he -if he is a *man* - begins to see some options with his own two eyes. And those options are to take the law into his own hands, his capable hands, his rough but *just* hands. His *manu duri.* And he decides that even if he were to get caught it would be worth it to extirpate these evil-doers he has marked for death .

"He would be doing right by his own soul, by his tribe, his country, his God. He'd harm not the innocent like these fucking school shooters and serial killers who kidnap kids and evil shit like that. No, he targets only the evil themselves. He kills only those who deserve it; no civilians.

"And he does this because he knows his natural instincts in this regard are right, are true, are universal; he knows every man -*every real man* - feels this way; and he knows that the only reason they don't get revenge is out of fear. Men fear incarceration or death more than they fear the marring, the corrupting, the death

of their *soul* . They have their priorities all wrong.

“And trust me -my dear officers of the court- allowing this sewer of a culture to continue -with maleficence and misleading and malicious deceptions- continue to go on and on without rebuke or rejoinder is killing the souls of good men. It’s ruining our world.

“Now, I don’t know if you’re religious men,” he said. He gave them room -silence- in which to answer.

“I’m a Christian,” the short cop said; “Catholic,” added the fat man.

“Good, so you’ve read the good book and I’m sure you remember some things and have forgotten others, so let me ask if you know *James* 1:26, wherein God states that *unless a man keeps a tight rein on their tongue, he deceiveth himself and that his religion is worthless* . God says that a man who gossips and acts like a friend to a man’s face but slanders that friend behind his back is not a religious man.

“Yet, how many of us gossip? How many? All of us, right? We are always talking shit behind people’s backs; and smiling like baboons to their faces. This is something that’s natural *and* allowed; we accept it as normal so much so that it doesn’t even seem wrong, does it? But we know that it is. It’s wrong; and so, I took a vow to try with all my heart to stop gossiping and I’ve been more successful that I thought possible.

“I’ve had to tell people what I think of them straight to their faces now. And that ain’t easy let me tell you; but a code is a code, and a man -a real man- must have a code. Anyway, that is mine, and I offer it to you as food for thought.

“Next, *Ephesians* 4:24, excuse me, 4:25, again God insists that men not lie to each other, that quote, *we’re all of one body, and there we must speak truthfully to our neighbor.* Now, you and I both know that we -all of us- lie incessantly. Crooks lie to get out of trouble, cops lie to get crooks to let down their guard and we all lie non-stop to bosses and children and husbands and wives. Scientific studies have been done that show that married couples lie once every eleven interactions, and mere boyfriend and girlfriends lie one in seven,” he smirked. “Can you believe it? We lie so much we don’t even notice anymore. I bet you two think you’re honest *don’tcha* ?” he prodded them.

“As honest as most,” the fat cop said. “I don’t think we’ve lied to you yet have we?”

“Ah, you probably *are* honest as most -which means pretty dishonest- and I have no idea if you’ve lied to me yet; as I’ve been the only one talking so far,” he

laughed a bit now.

“But,” he began, “I’ll give you your shot to make up all manner of shit; I promise. But for now, I’m just saying that the *Bible* , as the word of God according to your own ontological presuppositions, right? I mean you believe the *Bible* is the word of God, yes?” he asked.

They nodded slowly as if it were some trick he was playing on them .

“Well, then gossiping and lying is *verboten;* and in fact God is pretty harsh about the consequences of this shit; he says if you don’t live by these dictates you’re not actually religious at all; he’s excommunicating you essentially.

“Next, *Psalm* 7:11, *God is angry with the wicked every day* . Boom,” he said with a fervor -and volume- that made the cops jerk just slightly in their seats. It was barely perceptible at all. But all three men noticed it. And the calculous between them reset.

“That’s hardcore,” the man added with a big grin. “God, is angry everyday. Now, I must admit, this is my favorite part of God, *the angry and jealous god* . That’s *my guy,* man,” he smiled and the cops smiled too.

“And it’s right there in the *Psalms* man; he is angry each day with the wicked. Well, since that’s the case -and we can dismiss this *gentle Jesus, meek and mild* crap- we can assume that the wicked are vexing God every day, and He thinks of them every day, and He is waiting and waiting and waiting for someone to take action. Every day He waits.

“He’s thinking, and I know you’ve also thought this; as I’ve thought this as a business owner and leader of men, I’ve thought, *why must I handle every goddamn thing, why can’t someone show some initiative here and solve the problem we all fucking see* ?” his face grew serious and grave and the cops found themselves having to bend a once sympathetic smiled down into a scowl to match him. They were mirroring him as he was getting closer to spilling the beans, they felt it in the natural mirror of their bones.

“God is angry everyday and we sit around and let this wicked, lying, gossiping asshole get away with perfidy and purloining of property and the seduction of other men’s wives. We allow it, we just shrug our shoulders and allow it. You know that in Afghanistan and other Islamic countries they will kill an adulterer; and they will kill a girl who sleeps around or kill a man who seduces another man’s wife?

“They don’t merely cluck their tongues gentlemen, they act. They act in accordance with God’s Universal Law. And, these are men and women just like

us in every biological way. The only difference is culture; their culture says it's their right and their responsibility to keep order -especially sexual order- by any means necessary. And they do it; for they take their religion seriously. And these are not monsters or sociopaths or murderers in any conventional sense. These are grandmothers and their grandsons, cousins of the injured, these are families who take out their own trash; just as men did for all of history until about 5 minutes ago in the west," he said this and smiled and the cops waited to smile. They kept their harsh faces, for they were tired of following this up and down.

"But in our culture this -these honor killings- are illegal and taboo; so we must sit around on our hands, twiddling our thumbs as women are sluts and men are cuckolded and the liars and scoundrels are allowed to walk free; they walk around with impunity and we do nothing and these infractions corrupt not just the dirty little boys and girls that do this shit, they corrupt us all.

"Their behavior and the lack of consequences sullies us all; corrupts all our souls. We become as dirty and filthy and immoral as they. *All that is necessary for evil to triumph*, Burke said, *is for good men to do nothing* ," he paused and glared at these men's stern faces.

"We as a culture have done nothing. Good men like you and me have sat around for decades and allowed gossip and shit talk, cheating and lying, rip offs and scams and betrayals of friendships that link us all arm to arm to arm. There is no order anymore, *the widening Gyre, the falcon cannot hear the falconer* . Right? We live in a totally corrupt and smirking, sarcastic, little society now; we live under the tyranny of irony. Nobody takes anything seriously anymore, everyone does dirt on everyone else. And it's all a big joke.

"No one is loyal or willing to sacrifice or even to speak honestly to the faces of friends, lovers or brothers. We are all conspirators in this bullshit. Nobody speaks up about it," he said and took a deep breath. He watched as the cops began to open their mouths to rebut his insults and condemnations of the whole world.

"Not everyone is bad, son. You have just been around the wrong people," the short cop said. He had no attachment to what he said. He just spoke like respiration. But, the man had indeed been around all the wrong people; the cop wasn't wrong.

"Have you ever read *Primo Levi?* " the man asked the cop. "Or *Bloodlands* , the book on Stalin and WWII? Anyway, *Levi* was a guy who escaped the *lagers* , the camps, and he said that anyone who survived the camps was by definition a bad person. Why?

“Well, because the Nazis fed them 600 calories a day; and nobody could survive on that for long -maybe a few months- unless they stole food from someone else, or figured out some other scam to increase their own rations,” he looked at the fat cop, “now *you* could survive on 600 calories a day for like a year, but these Jews in the camps were not, well, they had no ballast, no insulation, so that 600 calorie diet was *gonna* kill them pronto unless they got mean and nasty, clever, *post haste* .

“And the guy who wrote *Badlands* said the same thing of the Russian; that the war was so bad that only those who discarded morality, only those that killed and ate their cousin or kids or parents, only those that did the most horrid things survived the austerity of that war.

“*Primo Levi* noticed that those Jews that did survive the camps often committed suicide later. He surmised they did so because they couldn’t live with the guilt. We paper over survivor’s guilt by attributing it to some vague *malaise* of soul. But *Levi* named it; he said these survivors -himself included- knew that they survived only because they had been thieving and slandering and wretched and craven and sinister in every way. And that is why they killed themselves after the war; after surviving the war and the camps.

“We’re all the product of those bottlenecks in history; from our earliest and most remote ancestors, down to 10,000 humans at one point. From them through thousands of conflagrations and wars and genocides and retail murders and barbarous enslavements and raping and robbing until the blood rose up to our eyes. From then to now these are our ancestors, we are the product of hundreds of thousands of years of the worst types of people surviving and the best dying while keeping their virtue, their honor and their pride.

“Moral people died, the morally flexible survived. And we, my good friends, we -you and I- we are the sons and daughters of men, not saints; we’re from and of cannibals, criminals and the most vile and piratical men and women of all,” he said and stared into the eyes of the fat cop.

“Well, then how do you explain good?” the short cop asked. “Surely there’s good in people that even you see, and good in yourself.” The cop was being crafty now. He was proud of that sentence or two.

“Yes, goodness, moral thinking does survive, like a vestigial organ, like a mind-virus that burrows in the brain and the sinew of some noble men. True. I think you have it, as cops you want to do good; I believe that. I mean that, I’m not being facetious. And I agree that I still believe in goodness and want it from me and from thee.

“But, it’s a *Sisyphean* task, it is an endless uphill battle with our lower, baser instincts for survival and social acceptance. We are cowards and while we know right from wrong, we allow evil to go on because we don’t want to speak up; why? For fear of losing our jobs or our friends or having to sleep on the couch due to pissing off the wife. We fear getting in trouble or going broke or being outcasts if we say the truth or even worse; if we act on the truth. Please don’t pretend to not know what I mean,” he said as they pretended to not know what he meant.

“Our jobs are based on acting on the good and the truth; we lock up the bad guys every day,” the short cop was defensive; the fat one was nodding along. Now they were actually arguing their case. They’d begun to take this personally. And for this the man confessing was glad; he liked personal. He hated the impersonal.

“Your jobs are predicated on locking up *some* of the bad guys; but you’re enjoined to let plenty of bad guys go, right? You’re told to stand down, your mission statement says nothing of preventing the endless lies and scams and corrupt shit that goes on at the smallest to the largest levels. When’s the last time you jailed a man for lying to his children; or the CEO of a corporation for making a false or misleading claim on a TV commercial?”

“That is not our jurisdiction,” the fat cop said.

“*Dialogue de sourds* ,” the man said with pique and then burst open half way. “That’s my point, mother,” he paused half way through that 12-letter word and collected himself. “Sorry, I don’t mean to be rude. But, you’re making my point. Your job is limited, you can only go after certain people doing certain dirt. My charter -as a man of God- allows me to go after the rest; I clean up the crumbs you leave out of your dragnet.”

“Yeah,” the fat cops then said, “let’s talk about your charter, as you say; let’s get out of the clouds and down to brass tacks.”

“That mixed metaphor aside,” their man in the box -their man in interview room #3- grimaced in embarrassment for the cop. “I’d like to wrap this up my own way if you don’t mind. Take *yes,* for an answer, don’t hurry me when I’ve already agreed to your terms.”

They all stayed quiet for a moment. The man spoke again once he’d made his point.

“Now, like I was saying; mankind is capable of *good.* But his culture hems him in; and the only way for him to circumnavigate his culture is to transgress it. He must break the law. He must. The law itself is unjust. Just like it used to be the

law that a man could own another man; or that if you helped a slave escape you - in fact- were the criminal. The law used to say booze was illegal; that any man who took a drink, an outlaw. The law used to be all manner of things.

“But men of conscience broke those laws while most men went along. Most men, even if they knew slavery was wrong, went along, went along, went along. Men are cowards; they’re Pharisees. They don’t care about justice; they only care about the legal code, the letter of the law; not the spirit. And this is why we live in immoral times, because men know the right and wrong way, but they ignore it and instead follow the law.

“How many Germans in 1933 followed the laws the Nazis passed? How many Germans -*good Germans* - followed the fucking law? Until you realize that men are cowards and cannot think for themselves; until you realize that it takes a man of courage and honor and self-sacrifice and intelligence to break unjust laws and act as conscience for us all, until then you can never understand the truth about men; nor about laws.

“Laws are insufficient; they are mere guidelines. They cannot handle the complexity of real-world transgressions; it takes a vigilante with conscience and heart to do good; and that man needs -also- a high IQ to minimize collateral damage and mistakes that get innocent people hurt.

“A psychopath will hurt anyone without discrimination; he won’t give a fuck about the innocent. A stupid man will mistake an innocent person for a guilty one and accidentally harm someone who should have been immune from such things.

“No, it takes a moral man, who couldn’t stomach harming an innocent person, who has reflexes at the level of the limbic and basal systems that prevent wholesale slaughter. And it takes a man with four or five standard deviations from the mean that can handle the requisite amount of data necessary to discern the innocent from the guilty; and not make mistakes in a panic or a fit of crepuscular blindness.”

“And you’re this man?” the cop was eager. And he didn’t understand every 9th word. It was as frustrating as a phone conversation where the audio cut out 11% of each sentence. It made you want to hang up.

“I am,” he -the man- agreed.

“Well, if you’re so smart then how did you get caught?” the short cop asked. They were ignoring the fact that he’d turned himself in; turned himself in to the mucky muck in the other room.

“Ah, you assume I wanted to *avoid* capture and incarceration. See, that is your first of many mistakes detectives,” he smiled.

“Are you a Godly man?” the short cop asked with a scowl.

“Oh, no. I’m an atheist. But that is what makes God’s use of me so perfect and actually it’s what proves its genius and righteousness. Any wacko religious nut, from Islamicists to people who hear God give them instructions *via* the fillings in their teeth, all those guys are suspect as God’s messengers. I’m dubious of *their* claims.

“They lack the skepticism that I have. I don’t even believe in God, so when He uses me to do His will it makes all the more sense, as I don’t *want* to believe this. I had no predisposition to hearing voices or interpreting God’s word from pieces of burnt toast or the song lyrics of some Chris Isaak song,” he laughed.

“Shit, I’m a rationalist, a totally non-religious man. And so, when used by God to effect His will, I was the perfect instrument. It took the genius of God to use a man like me. I mean, look at the results. Every one that was killed was a fornicator, a liar, a gossiper, a betrayer. Shit, *betrayers* are down at the bottom of Dante’s 9th level of Hell, flanking an icy Satan himself. There were no innocent men, women or children in my wake. I did God’s bidding in accordance with his own words. If you doubt the *Bible* , that is your choice, but you can’t say what I did wasn’t according to scripture; for it was. So, you can deny scripture, or you can admit I’m right; there is not a third option,” the man said.

“Well, who takes you out then? You’re a murderer and a liar and betrayer,” the fat cop not unreasonably asked .

“I am a killer for sure. And I have lied and betrayed in the past. But I am on a more righteous path now. However, in answer to your query, God will dispose of me in due time. The State will likely kill me, or some guard in the cellblock or some 300-pound nigger will squash my head,” he laughed at this. “Right? So, I’ll suffer the same fate, but again, no innocent men will die. My 46 -that you know of- and myself making 47, evil people gone. Boom. Perfect,” he concluded.

“Yeah, well,” the short cop barked, “I don’t know what all those people were guilty of, but I bet there were some innocent folks in there too; you killed 46 people and there is no way all of them -maybe none of them- were guilty of anything other than getting on your nerves. You have a whole lot of nerve saying they deserved it.”

“Read Isaiah 45:7 when you get home tonight; for then you’ll see that God does

all this. And secondly, you're right, I do have a whole lot of nerve. A lot more nerve than most. This world could do a lot worse than having a lot more examples of me," he said with a wry smile and a logic that was lost on these civil servants. They just grimaced and shook their heads.

"Psalm 7:13: *He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death, He ordaineth His arrows against the persecutors* . Gentleman I am God's ordained arrows, I am His instrument of death. And nobody can convince me otherwise," he said and then asked for a cup of coffee, adding, "black."

The cops left the room and didn't notice that they held their breath from the time they rose from the table until they reached the coffee room.

"Can you believe that guy?" the fat cop said, breathing in labored fashion. They had their confession, he had said 46, he had owned them. They were ready to start typing it up and have him sign it.

"Total whack job; the guy made zero sense and said it all like he wasn't batshit crazy," the short cop said.

"I mean, he was in there making up words and," he was laughing and the other cop began giggling too.

"Yeah, like what was one, *crescular* , or *purloin* ," he laughed.

"I want my steak purloined and a side of *cescularp* pie," the two men guffawed with their 108 and 102 IQs; chuckling in between exemplars of their gaps, their lack, their below average crystalized knowledge.

"Jesus, some days it's insane being police; people wouldn't believe the kind of humanity we have to deal with. This maniac, killer of more people than a plane crash, and he's calling us gossipers and liars," the cop said behind the man's back.

"Right, and it never occurs to the guy that maybe his behavior is a bit of an *overreaction* to his best friend banging his meth-head girlfriend," the cop said while stifling a laugh.

Then the man -the mucky muck from the campaign- walked in and waited for an opening in the conversation; he was nervous around cops and this was a weird moment in time. So, he waited.

"I mean, you *wanna* beat the guy's ass, yeah, I'm *gonna* look the other way probably, but kill the guy, no way; that's just too far," the short cop said as he poured the coffee. "And here I am; I'm getting this creep a cup of joe like it's my fucking pleasure, Jesus." The cop said this and then raised his head as if to

beckon the man -the mucky muck- to ask whatever stupid goddamn question he had.

“Well, Mr. Sou, wants to know how it’s going?” the man asked.

“I bet he does,” the fat cop said.

“So,” the mucky muck asked.

“So, it’s going. Relax, let us do our jobs,” the short cop said with contempt.

The mucky muck nodded and turned and walked out toward the hall.

“Jesus,” the fat cop said as they walked back toward Interview Room #3. They lowered their voices now as they approached.

“Pointing the figure at us for being liars; this guy!” the fat cop said with incredulity.

They entered the room and set down the coffee on the table, as Lyndon said, “thanks.”

“No problem; my pleasure buddy,” the cop said with his best -most practiced- *genuine* smile.

“So, you guys gossip about me?” Lyndon asked as he sipped his coffee and grinned behind the Styrofoam and toward their faces. They snorted in contempt and amusement and just turned and walked out of the room.

“*And this Empyreal substance cannot fail* ,” the detained man said to no one; and to no avail.

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“Jesus, they’re not even men, they’re niggers,” he said with food still chewing in his mouth, the tea steeping in a matte black camping-cup on the concrete counter.

“Have you ever heard a nigger say one intelligent thing? Even the ones that can dress up like humans and comb their hair and get on TV and say somewhat intelligible shit, even these puppets can only regurgitate platitudes and bromides and incoherent shit.

“Look, I could respect them if they admitted they were mere beasts, like a dog or a black bear, then I could change my mind. But it’s the uncanny valley of them trying to stand on their hind legs and act like humans when they are so close to being human but are,” he paused, “fucking,” pause, “not.”

She winced in that way when anyone said anything taboo. She didn’t exactly

disagree, *but*, she thought, *who talked out loud like this? It was as if he didn't care at all. It made her nervous. At least today he wore pants*, she thought.

"Look, they laugh like hyenas over the most low-brow jokes, they fuck and rut like rabbits or single celled organisms, they rob and mob because they aren't smart enough to string five days together of honest work, they are incessantly braying about *muh dick* like some lobotomized baboon, ok? They have no culture or intelligence or sophistication of soul. They are brutes and yet they refuse to submit to a more advanced species of man. *That* is why I hate them; they refuse to acknowledge their place .

"I would gladly submit to a race of men or gods better than me; and that is all the universe asks, as *Kafka* said, *the condemned man will have inscribed on his body: Honor thy superiors*, and I cannot find any improvement to that bit of prose," he said.

She had no idea who *Kafka* was; and she was wondering if it was a writer or someone he knew personally. He quoted from each level of man.

"They do laugh a lot," she said as she looked for something to add that wasn't insane or evil.

"Right?" he said with a head-shaking contempt. "They laugh at nothing; Michael Irvin laughs like he is high on four pounds of dope and it even makes Brandon Marshall wince. They laugh at gibberish and puerile dick jokes. It's gay. Bill Cosby wasn't funny; and Chris Rock is funny exactly in proportion to his capacity to make fun of niggers himself," he burst out laughing at this one.

"But liberals consider the racist to be the lowest possible kind of human, lower than pedophiles or murders, ok? And this is only possible because everyone is a racist, alright?"

She tilted her head in confusion. He had made sense; he was wrong she thought but he had made sense up until then. Grammatically, his words were syntactically sane, *but now that last shit he said was gibberish* , she thought.

"Look, interracial relationships are rare; like less than 10%; almost no one wants to be around anyone outside their own race; that is a fact even in post-Jim-Crow, post-segregation society. Second, scientific studies show that everyone imports malice on top of images of faces of people of different races. It's subconscious; and thus real.

"Next, everyone thinks horrid racist shit all the time, they used to say it aloud, but now they just think it. And everyone knows that they do. But liberals pretend they never think, *well, that's typical black behavior* , even though they sure as

fuck think it. And frankly, everyone says *nigger* when they are alone or in the company of others who don't disapprove.

"But again, we all must pretend that nobody is racist when everyone is. It would be tantamount to saying nobody is fucking, even though kids keep being born. The racial tension, the war that exists between the races is real, it's being fought every day and yet, we pretend that there is in fact no such conflagration," he said.

She didn't quite know that word, *confla* -whatever. But she could tell he meant fight or argument of some kind. He was good about context that way. He just didn't like using the same word twice in a sentence or even a paragraph he had once told her. He saw it as unpleasant aesthetically speaking. He compared it to the way girls didn't like to wear the same dress twice in public. Anyway, she could get the word's meaning from the other word he had used earlier that she *did* know. That word was, *war* .

"My muscles ache like a motherfucker," he said and gingerly walked to the cup of tea and removed the bag. It was black tea, and the tannins would morph into bitterness if he let the bag remain.

"You can always tell what is most true by what is most censored and most taboo," he said and sipped his tea. "This is axiomatic and it is a heuristic guide for me; I look and see what a man cannot say and I know *that* is what is true."

That actually seemed true to her. He had good instincts. *But why all the racist shit?* she thought .

"You see, knowledge is overrated, because it's not possible to get it all. Right? If we could understand something totally, the *thing in itself* as the saying goes, if we could understand everything about a thing then knowledge would be complete and thus useful. But, we cannot. We can period not period.

"And so, with a permanence of incomplete knowledge we need another metric in which -or *with* which- to make decisions about how we are going to act in the world.

"See, your vision, my vision, isn't based on object perception at all. That is the first mistake people make and in fact when AI was first being tinkered around with, that was the mistake they made too. They made the AI robots attempt to perceive objects and that governed their movements. But what they perceived is that object-perception is too complex; now this seems odd because we do it so easily right?" he asked.

She nodded.

“Right, we navigate around chairs and sofas and columns and cats all with a bit of *panache* ,” he said as he slid up to her, placed his arm around her tiny feminine waist and began to dance around with his tea cup held out like a counterbalance to his 18th century form. She giggled and went along for this ride.

“But,” he said as he stopped moving and looked down into her blue eyes, “we are not navigating objects; we are navigating relationships. And we do so at each and every level; up and down. This is so crucial I want to tattoo it onto my head!” He had said this both with some mirth and malice like sweet and sour sauce.

She was wide-eyed at his passion; this idiopathic passion of his.

“Relevance,” he said with a punctuation mark of a look. “Relevance is the algorithm we use to navigate relationships and we essentially say to ourselves, *does this thing I perceive help, hinder or is it irrelevant to my goal?*

“And that dictates what we actually perceive. Trust me, and I can prove this if you like, if you’re dubious of my unconventional claims; which by-the-way you should want evidence of every insane thing I say, because I say some crazy shit. Anyway, you will -literally at the level of perceptional cognition- not see things that you deem irrelevant to your goal. We are goal-oriented organisms.

“And this can be mundane goals like eating or drinking or complex goals like making someone laugh or fall in love with you -or creating a complex piece of narrative art for example- that can take years, decades to craft. Right? So, with each goal -simple to complex- your eyes, your visual cortex navigates around *beneficial* or *detrimental* or *irrelevant* phenomena; not mere objects.

“Now, you *organize* things into categories like objects for sure. That’s not the same as seeing objects though. You see -and I mean *see* in the most literal visual sense- you *see* what a guy I knew once calls, *entities of functional significance* . Now that can sound like code for, *object,* but that isn’t true.

“An object is static and neutered and 2D. Right? But, in real life an object changes in color and shape and size as you move closer and farther and clockwise and under and,” he raised his brow, “right? ”

She nodded again; he was certainly changing as an object all the time. *He moved,* she thought, *around like a particle under an electron microscope, man. He had shown her this very thing once, so she ought to know.*

“So, you are never seeing one thing, never seeing -quote- an *object* . Rather, you see something that is *helping* or *hindering* you, or if it’s *irrelevant* you don’t see

it at all. Like the color of my socks, you have no idea what color they are because you don't need to know; even though your eyes saw them this AM when I slid them on," he said.

"They're black," she laughed.

"Yeah, because all my socks are black, but you know what I mean. You saw them but didn't register them and so you literally did not see them at all. You have no idea the colors of the walls in your gymnasium or home room of your high school even though you laid eyes on them hundreds of times. Why?" he asked with that eyebrow up again.

"Not relevant," she paused as he waited, "to my goals," she added with pride. He smiled at her sharpness and she smiled at his smile.

"Bingo. And AI was having a hard day's night trying to navigate around mere objects as their retarded algorithms instructed them. Instead, when AI actually began to be embodied, you know, in an instantiated body, they should have been -and now were- seeing things *vis-à-vis* relevance to goals like animals do," he said.

"They do now?" she asked.

"Yes, AI now uses the correct algorithm thanks to *moi* !" he brayed.

"You're so cool," she said and smooched his lips.

He allowed her to keep them there as long as she wished; he made no furtive movements and breathed slowly and kept his hand on her waist.

She licked her own lips and thus his too and smiled as she backed away just far enough to focus on his eyes; a woman will focus on eyes like a man hones in on everything else. A woman has to trust her mate, and the eyes are evolutionarily developed for this invigilation, not all primates have the albumin of the eye around the iris, and thus their orbs are black boxes of unknown intention.

But, a man has the white of his eyes to background and border his eye movements and women use this all the time to intuit and predict his every move; his everything.

They don't know that is what they are doing, they think they just have a cathexis for the eyes. Like man doesn't know he's using hip to waist ratio or breast size or youthful appearance as a metric for health and breeding capacity; he just likes - or doesn't like- what he sees.

But this is why a man can barely tell you the color of his paramour's eyes, he doesn't need to predict her movements or thoughts the way a woman must with a

man. A man -stupidly- accepts a woman at face value and assumes she is nicer and more honest than a man. He couldn't be more wrong but there is no helping man now; he's evolved to focus on tits and hips and red, red lips; he ignores and eschews the legend of eyes.

A female should watch her prospective mate's hands more, the way a cop or a crook watches the mitts of his foil. But, each sex has their hits and misses and that's the blind spot of females. He could pick her pocket of a year's worth of eggs as long as his eyes were properly coruscating and locked onto hers.

People are retarded; and yet they still manage to breed and survive. With no consequences, there is no impetus to change or evolve. Evolution says, if it ain't broke, don't fix it*, and shit, she -Evolution- even means it almost all the time,* he thought as he watched her tiny body move like a star swinging on a single silk thread below the great silkworm in the sky.

"Random environments, anyway, random environments require not an intelligent response, a response based upon knowledge," he said, even though he had skipped ahead in his speech to her, not letting her in on his connective tissue of words around the hands and eyes of man. "Because we can't know all there is to know. Right? Knowledge is incomplete and so, trying to predict which way the ball is *gonna* bounce is foolish.

"Did you know that prey animals like deer or antelope jump randomly when they see a car and often jump right in the way of the Cadillac as it splatters their ass all over the grille?" he asked.

"No, except those cows down on *Wet Canyon* don't ever move the right way when we drive up to them; those moo-cows are dumb," she said with a squeeze of her hand on his shirt that covered his waist.

"They are indeed. But if your cheeseburger moved at all you'd think that was pretty amazing, so for cheesburgers they move ok," he said with a wink. "Now, this random jumping out of the way is actually a perfect metaphor for evolution. Follow me here.

"When being chased by a wolf, their natural predator, jumping in a random way makes metric tons of sense because then the wolf cannot predict where to give chase. The wolf is unable to use *knowledge* of some rational running pattern of the antelope, and so this tactic of incoherent random movements actually works from time to time and foils the wolf's sanguinary pursuit," he said.

"It works?" she asked.

"Sometimes, yes. And that is the point. If you have 100 antelope, and the wolves

chase them all over time and space, and that random movement bullshit works even 10% of the time that means the antelopes can survive enough to reproduce. It helps avoid total decimation," he said.

She wrinkled her nose, "isn't *decimation* the reduction of a force to 10%; from the Roman practice?"

"You're so smart it hurts my balls," he said as she laughed. "So, I am sloppy and dumb sometimes."

"Nooooo," she objected, "you're the smartest man I know!"

"Angel, I am the only man you know," he said.

"Praise be to Allah for that!" she said with a grin, "men are dumb and I agree with you that it's better to not even know them; *we don't know 'em we don't wanna know 'em* ," she quoted the line from the fat-kid.

"Ok, so," he smirked, "a word like *decimate* has evolved to mean destroy *in toto* , but its original and *Latinate* meaning is exactly as you say. So, let me rephrase. The survival rate brought about by random movements prevents total annihilation by a predator. It's evolution's trump card or wild card. "

"Trump, Trump Trump!" she bellowed with glee. *She liked that guy* , she thought.

He laughed quickly, "ok, ok, ok, so, randomness is the only tactic that makes sense in a world of incomplete knowledge; with predators thinking they know your next move. Randomness must be used to combat a stochastic system's innate un-knowableness; and a system that uses knowledge to determine what's next."

"Got it," she nodded and looked at his face as he spoke.

"So, that's at the level of corporeal movement. Now, what about a little lower level down Starbuck?" he narrowed his eyes and furrowed his brow and placed his wide forehead on her little one and rubbed his nose against hers as he spoke the lines from the book.

III. 2038 e.v.

She had carried a book into the lab and he had spied its title. He took it as divine providence and spoke.

"The migraines brought forth God, and what was in between was worth discussing for those both in and without pain, that is to say, to those in and without contact with the divine

“The thing in humans is that we can think things and -by staying the motor cortex- not do them; it’s our avatars, these thoughts, that we kill, instead of dying ourselves. However, this is not as good as it seems, it has a cost unseen. Simone Weil said, ‘*we kill in ourselves the thoughts which we do not express by acts; we must refrain from killing thoughts that are precious and good. ’*

“Her headaches brought her in touch with the divine -like *the Russian* , she had revelations in migraines- and thus her philosophy unfurled from this first principle; the Greeks called it *unrolling the umbilicus;* but, her first principle was: the absence of God, the *Tzimtzum* -the retraction, the pulling back of Himself- is what made mankind and the world possible; this was His first act of self-abnegation, and the second was to come into the world himself, as Christ, and to be killed.

“It follows, Weil thought, that for man to return this love, we must retract, contract, *de -create* ourselves and make room for God. This is so sublime an idea that when I first heard it I knew at once that it was true. I felt it fill the empty spaces in me that I had made for God, although I never knew that was who I did it for. But, there was a vacuum in these empty spaces in me, made empty for God, but not yet filled with God. Prepared but still uncommitted. Unready,” he paused and watched her face soften and scrunch up like a butterfly raise and lower its wings. She was so beautiful it hurt to look upon her. His neck began to hurt in the muscles to the right of the spine and he tilted away from it to no avail.

“The way to *de-create* , that word, was her own creation by-the-way,” he paused, “the way to *de-create* was through suffering, through pain. And there were many ways to do this, the first was through physical labor. She made this plain and because she was one of the least hypocritical people ever born, she got to work immediately. She worked in an automobile factory in the 1930’s and the conditions were so rough, that she became too physically exhausted and injured to continue at times. So, she took breaks then returned as soon as she was able .

“The second method of de-creation was through the suffering of common pains, that is to say, to match,” he paused again as if to let this sink in, “to match the deprivations of the working-class. If they had no heat in winter, then Simone had no heat in winter. If they lacked food, then she lacked it too. She saw her own shrinking, her emaciated frame, as evidence of her *de-creation* .

“Her friend, a Dominican monk, Father *Thibon* warned her of her absolutism, her martyrdom. She wrestled too with this and took his words seriously. She paid attention and questioned herself in this regard: *was her fervor for consistency itself some form of luxury as the father had said* ?

“This is the life of the truly authentic and honest human being, and while I’m not even close to her level of greatness, I have a bit, a spark of her needs in me. It is why I try to flange up my thoughts, my ideas, my beliefs with my actions, and always have. I have failed twice as often as I’ve succeeded, but the pain of hypocrisy was one I tried to banish, assuage, mollify by behaving more in accordance with my actual thoughts. And from this the soul took precedence over the body. It happened like callouses, not tried for, inevitable.

“We who are built this way, are often wrestling the angel in ourselves, for even when we do what we think is right, we wonder, *has the devil tricked us into thinking this is right when it’s truly wrong?* We wonder it no matter which side we take. I thought my thoughts of murder were wrong, a devil’s trick and refused to enact them. But, I then surmised that the Devil’s real trick was actually to bring me by the hand to inaction, and, I then saw, that for me to vanquish my enemies was -in fact- the work of God.

“I read the *Bible* , unrolling the umbilicus *in toto* , and God was ambivalent, he spoke of both the divine nature of vengeance and the wisdom in its abeyance. God was telling me to decide for myself, that either could be right, but the Devil was only saying: one way or the other. Simone herself -a member of the *Sebastian Faure Century* - manned the machine guns and hosted Trotsky in her Paris flat. She was violent in action for Good; for God.

“I decided to ask what was in line with the root of God, what was closest to God, and I found The Author’s line on the pasteboard mask, the prison wall, the need to bust through the wall, and reach outside. Even, The Author said, *if there be naught beyond* .

“But, Simone, she too used the same prison metaphor, and she said the wall itself was the thing that separated us from God, but too was conduit, the *metaxu* , the only one we had, the only way for us to remain in touch with God. For the prisoner may bang on the wall, in some kind of code, and the sound will transfer to the other side.

“God had removed himself from the world, with the death of Christ, but this wall, the prison wall, was there to reach him, if by code, by semaphore, by trope only.

“I had two ideas in my mind, the first was this: I could vanquish my enemies, for they are the enemies of God, of this there was no doubt. My enemies were liars and thieves and cuckolding swine and men who bore false witness against me. These were cowards who plotted against me not for my faults but for my few virtues. These were bad men.

“Their de-creation would make room for God in their absence, that was first and true.

“The second was that I was to sacrifice myself, to de-create, this, this self I had spent my life creating, building up, making large, doubling in size and weight over time.

“Thus, to accept responsibility for my crimes, that was next. I did it. Further, I was to lend my idea of myself, my genome, to make other men, how many I did not pretend to know. But these men I gave birth to would also vanquish God’s enemies, de-create some number similar to mine, 50 or 100 each, and then -for they would be men of principle- de-create themselves. They would come into the world to make less of it, so that God may return.

“I would gain nothing, I would lose everything and this -on both ends of my debate with good and evil- would reveal the truth. For if to continue with my life, to focus on the tawdry things of money and career and even creative acts, which are not tawdry by the way, but if I was to forego my revenge, then what would come of it? More and more creation in the world, my enemies would go on, multiplying their evil -of course- and continuing to exist; and I would go on too and no advancement would be made to *de-create.*

“But if instead, I did *this* thing, if my vengeance and immediate recompense was good then it would reduce the space taken up by men and reduce myself as well.” He paused and drank from the glass. She listened, and Isaiah kept track of words and vacuoles and things heard and beats of heart in the brain, sparks on the brain that set fire to each heart.

“So, I offered up my ideas of myself, my genome, so as to allow myself to be destroyed one million times, and with me, alongside me, 100-fold the wicked of this world. It was obvious what was right; but what was dubious, what I did not yet know, was whether or not I had the courage.

“These were my thoughts. I felt I had an answer, I felt it would be wicked to kill these thoughts by failing to act them out. Second, I wondered if I had any reason to trust my judgement at all? Did I have a track-record of *de-creation* , or was this some *de novo* infatuation, some *cause celebre* in me?

“So first, I had experience ego-loss, de-creation, three times, under the Godly hand of entheogens, and had seen what a Self-less man can be. I had made myself one standard deviation higher in trait openness, and I had reduced the Self to naught, all in one. And I carried this forward in my next phase of ontological thought. I decided to leave the university, as it was too *bourgeois* ,

and *effete* and over focuses on money, diplomas, imprimatur, and low values. I lost ego and decided to see if I could build up character instead," he breathed heavily as if maybe the ache in his shoulder and just under his ear could be carried out of him on this river of air, but he only watched her face change and those fluid ways distracted him from this pain. He figured he'd talk as long as she listened. And he watched -like a woman watches a baby- for any hint of discontent on her face.

She had asked -how ever long ago- and now he was answering, but he knew that he often went on too long, gave too much detail, and repeated himself more often than he liked. And so he watched her face and her hips and looked to the ground for a shadow too; for its clues.

She watched his grimacing and the way he moved in strange and illogical ways, his neck and arms and shoulders -even his jaw- all moved forward and backward and side-to-side as if on deformed rails or as if he was trying to avoid some pinpoint of light that followed rational moves. She knew he was in pain and it pained her too. She listened, and she thought that she would for just as long as he wanted to talk.

"I had left university at 24, and gone to work in the world, just as Simone Weil. I had worked hard, physically hard, at first, as community organizer in often times poor and African American neighborhoods; walking neighborhoods by foot each day. Then farm work, as herder and hay bailer and mechanic on the farm vehicles; we demolished decomposing buildings so that we may build them again on the farm from the best parts. I mucked barns and shod horses and milked goats and brushed their coats and was sore and slept so soundly I did not dream .

"Then I worked in the mountains, drilling and blasting rock for 12 hours each day and 13 of 14 days on and on in summer and winter both. I hurt so much my hands had to be soaked in hot water at night to get them to unfurl, they were like a newborn's clasping around the finger of their parent. I was a new-born *Temujin* with the black clot in the fist of a babe. My clasp was around an 80lb hammer drill and I hung on to it as if God Himself was allowing me to drill into creation.

"Then I worked in factories at night, 3rd shift from 2200hrs to 0600 and I'd pull double shifts as often as they needed me. 88-pound bags of shingles over shoulder and pulling heavy sheets from breaks; our hamstrings were like rubber bands stretched taut and could be strummed like string instruments to create notes, panegyrics, to angels. I couldn't sleep during the day so I often was up 24 hours and I worked in a *fugue* state. This too was a way to de-create.

“I hurt in body and soul now, as the loss of REM sleep makes a man feel pain in places his body has left unreserved, the places God retreated from first, the places eager for this torture to prove that it too exists; that it is not mere machine. Pain in these places expands the soul, pioneers, it is colonial expansion of the inner landscape. And it rules unjustly too.

“From there I worked the oil patch, and that was a whole new world of pain. 12-16 hour days carrying things so heavy they compacted the spaces between each joint and each vertebrae, and for endless days, there were no breaks, and the sun bore down like God’s dubious eye, and the nights’ desert cold made the flayed skin contract and the heart shrink inside the chest as it & the soul retreated in time and space. There, there was less of me.

“I broke the body there, of this I am certain. I never stood upright again, not really, not as I had in my youth; not in my body. This was the first sign of penitence, and I had every right to expect the mocking of the human race for this, as I was -in action, not yet thought or speech- a Christian. And Christians, true Christians, not the kind who are *bourgeois* and rich and fancy and smell nice, but real Christians know that they are to be mocked. And mocked I was, for my injuries were seen as sign of sin, not penitence at all. I read the *Book of Job* the way you read a man’s intent in his hands. I read it for clues.

“This was the first sign that I was not on the Devil’s side, even though I thought I was an atheist. My own family, thought me wicked, because I worked so much that I had become rough, overheated, febrile in my ways. They saw the calloused hands as calloused soul, the smell of sweat as offensive, the plain, demotic speech of the working-class as demonic vulgarities. I cussed too much.

“I was in pain each day, in each way, and thus *de-creating* myself so as to communicate through this prison wall,” he banged twice on his own belly and chest with his hands as stretched from the chains as he could, “with God. I took the pangs, the bangs, the staccato rapping on the wall as distributions as random as the stars; erratic and irrational communion; as nothing at all.

“But, now I see it was evidence that I was always on this path to God. From there I started my own businesses, working-class businesses as farmer and entrepreneur, and had each of these 9 or 10 instantiations ruined, ripped off, closed down, stolen and immolated or flooded in one case. I suffered each time in silence, I took it and rebuilt, insisting -like a fool- on re-creating the world. I had no idea I was working against God, by building up, and I failed to see the lesson. The lesson was -albeit given in the diabolical language of the ungodly, for he uses them too, consult your First Kings,” he paused again, “but the lesson

was, that I was to stop. Full stop.” He paused and watched her face. And she watched his. And neither blinked .

“I was to retreat; so I did. I moved to the wilderness and built the smallest house possible, just 320 square feet. And I limited myself to the basics, no luxuries at all. And I worked my hands and back and head again, to their last capacity. I finished off what I had begun at 24; I made the body incompatible with the world. I couldn’t work at all anymore and by winter, once the last of the welding and plumbing and concrete work was done -all by hand, all by me- I retreated to my ideas.

“God chooses the most outrageous among us to do his will; it is never those that are admired or seen as worthy of emulation. From Saul to Magdalene, John Brown, to each and every great artist; all rebuked, all ignored, all hated.

“I was ignored and thought insane and then hated when those first two were not enough. And so, I had my three evidences, I had the path of pain from physical labors, I had the negation of myself through ego-loss, and I had -from the earliest ages stuck up for the underdog, this was in me- I had the evidence before reason, before a boy can have a philosophy and his behavior is all gut, all balls, all emotion, all soul. And that proved my innate character was such that I unthinkingly sacrificed safety and I’d transgress the taboo and be violent, use force, the *poetry of force* to stand up for what is Good in the world, to make space for God by laying the wicked -and myself- low.

“See, at age 7, I had shoved a half dozen boys to the ground as they made fun of one fat girl. And this was the only time this instinct in me was sanctioned by the world, after that it was punished, each and every time. This -and this is the genius of God- this was to give me the choice, for if bravery and moral action was always applauded then it is no cost at all for the individual.

“No, God makes it painful to do what is right, you will be abused, hated, called immoral, a villain; you will not be respected, you will be shunned even by your own family. Even though they know who you are, for they have that example of your youthful honor too.

“But, I had concluded that my legacy, my tangible and discernable vector was one of righteous action, of sacrifice, of pain, of ego-loss, of self-negation, of right-action in the face of universal condemnation, and all without God. I did it all without God, for there is no room in the world for Him; and hasn’t been for 2,000 years. There is only room for us,” he said this to her and she knew what he meant and they both agreed to not make any more of such a romantic thing to say.

“And not a dozen or a hundred or a thousand versions of me either; one version. I had to act; and stop all this thinking and hemming and hawing. This made my choice clear,” he went on. “*Make room, make room* , I said to myself, *make room for God.*

“So you see, once I had seen what I had been chosen to do, and what my choices actually had been -the embrace of all the things that are necessary to communicate with God, the ego-loss, the physical pain, the laboring, the willingness to sacrifice the self to the task of reducing the men who are taking up space that could be filled with God, and to then, voluntarily offer the Self up to imprisonment, so that I may tap on the walls themselves and finally talk directly with God? Well, then I saw this was not a choice, but fate. I saw then that this was all my fate, all along, and I could of course, *say* I didn’t believe in God, but this was a lie.

“I obviously did believe in Him, or I’d be out there making money and worrying about my career and all the stupid shit the rest of the demonic world is doing. And of course, they all call themselves Godly, and Christian! Of course, this is exactly what the Devil does; that dapper man .

“He inverts Good and Evil, and so I knew the more people condemned me the more Good I was doing. It was now a law of mathematics, I took each insult, each condemnation, each speck of opprobrium as confirmation of my *communique* with God.

“And now, beyond my secular comprehension, God has seen fit to use my blueprint to make this very thing repeat itself, 1 million times, and lay waste to all this stuff, all this creation, that is preventing His return. It makes such deep, ontological sense, that I no longer even try to argue out of it. I accept, I accept, with the same belief that I had when I accepted pain. I always accepted pain as real, I never doubted it.

“Now, I accept this *de -creation* as God’s will. I accept it. And Simone thought *Isaiah* was the one book, that and *Job* , from the *Torah* , that had value. And look who has come to carry out God’s will? Look,” he said and nodded toward Isaiah who waved his hand and smiled at The Bust.

Valance -feeling the effects of the bio-chemicals that Isaiah had dumped into the room- communed with herself and her heart and -with a head now imbued with the amalgam of both- realized what was left to do. Her ideas, unformed until just now, had aligned with this man’s ontology. She saw now the wisdom in her gut-thoughts, things she had thought mad, selfish, and taboo, too taboo to utter aloud.

But she knew now they were right, and right for all, not just her; least for her. They were not just for Blax, whom she had first thought they were for, and not just the inmate, who she truly had thought would be relieved, would want the sacrifice, would shoulder it like he had the heaviest and most awkward and jamming things his whole life. She had come to see he was the catalyst for all this, for even her, and she had felt terrible for doubting him, hating him, thinking him ugly when it was obvious that Grace had made him beautiful, despite his ugliness of skin, and face and deeds.

But, now it was more than all that, this was for God Himself. She too, in all her littleness, had much to contribute to the un-creating, no, the *de-creating* , of the world. She was advancing God's plan too; her little key fit one little lock, in this whole manacled world.

"We must refrain from killing thoughts that are precious and good," she said aloud as the inmate nodded and smiled.

"We kill in ourselves, the thoughts which we do not express by acts," he said as bookend to her conceit and she nodded back and felt so overcome that she feared the words themselves would not come out. So, she approached him, as scaffold, and leaned into his ear, his beard brushed her smooth young face, the white skin against the black and grey beard, his animal musk now in her nose and inside her blood and brain making words from things insane.

She placed her right hand on his chest and felt a heart like a *Comanche* war drum, deep and rich and heavy and eager to give out -all at once- with the drop -the signal- of one Chief's hand. It wanted to stop, to reach its billionth beat on command from God Himself. All other men wanted good lives, he wanted a good death, of this she was sure.

She had the shell casing she had picked up from Sarah's execution, the one that had pierced that girl's withered heart; the one Valance had clumsily planned to exchange with him for some understanding, but she saw now that he had no need of it. He was already in understanding with what she was wanting. She squeezed it into her left hand, leaving its impression in the red and white little paw, the sweat and warmth assuaged the pain -which she did not want relief from- and she squeezed it tighter again.

It left an indentation -just the thing, the non-thing- to be filled by the divine. The left hand defends, it connects to the right hemisphere, the hand that cannot grasp. Her right hand, the one that lands on prey, was empty of all but what it sought out in him.

The inmate felt the irony that it was a woman, Simone Weil, who had first articulated what he thought was the thing most in need of being said, that physical work, was necessary to commune with God, that it was not to be avoided, nor endured, but embraced, exalted, to press into the palm, like a talisman, an artifact of long lost love, he thought as he in fact pressed the thing into his right hand, the hand that grasps prey, that which needs prayed for. He felt it -this idea- not just sure in his grip as he usually did, but now it bit, it bit into the skin, a de-creation itself like all his corporeal pain did inside the muscled soul to make space for a waiting God.

And it was a woman who told the world this truth for him, after all the male writers had talked all around it, embodied it, done it, made drama and myth about it, *but never said it plain* . It was a woman to speak it into the world. And now he knew what this girl, this beautiful girl who was betrothed to another man, a man he could have been -but really never could have been either, a paradox- and now this wife and daughter of his paradox was going to speak the last truth he'd ever need into his soul and breathe its divine sanction into the world. The female form, the thing he had always revered but never understood, had spoken the two most important truths that he would live and die by.

He was grateful for this harmony of the two sexes, the two hemispheres, the chaos and order of the cosmic expanse and singular contraction, he was open and conducive to their energies so he may be closed around and united with the sound of God and the naught beyond.

He felt her hand as if an osprey had set down on his land, and the wind had allowed her wings to fold and sweep the ground of the bones of each animal that lived in him in time.

She blinked her eyes as the waters rose and she saw naught now but the swirl of his ear. Her hand felt as if the heart had risen to it and she clutched it now and her palm felt wet and red. His chest was so wide and deep that it took on attributes of landscape now, not mere animal upon the plain, but the plain and mountain itself.

His ear was there, right there, like a ram's horn, like the delta of the spiral of cyclones tilling his sloping soil, mote-making his highland castle, his ear opened up, and heard her say: *in 90 days you will have completed your task, and can pass it on to your son and my father, your brother and my lover, you are relieved of command. You've served with distinction, you'll get no other laurels than these, but these are the most sincere, the most desired, the most from the most, I speak with the voice of those 1 million men you bequeathed. They will all know*

from whence they came. I give you permission to de-create yourself, to make the largest possible space one man could leave, and thus make room for God.

43. Allons Travailler

You can’t have an online community. Community cannot manifest itself unless it starts small and in person, in the flesh; it starts with corporeal reliability, bodily sacrifice, and if you don’t have people will to do these things for you and you’re not willing to do these things for them, then you don’t have community. And all you have to do is give your all; and then you’ll get the all from everyone else. And now you’re rich. And any backlash you get for this -and how you weather that- proves how committed you are.

Red Eye interview 3.17 [Waggener, Matthias]

Zendik was a lie. It proffered total commitment, totally tribal, monolithic, insularity; and yet its leadership had no loyalty to those it led; the sluiceway was one way; the tribe fed the rex and the rex never cared for the tribe’s constituent parts. Its ideals were not the problem; its small size was not the problem; its lack of synthesis with modernity was not the problem; it’s lack of allegiance to its most hardcore ideals and members was the problem. It failed because its leaders wouldn’t live up to its own radical ideals.

The Interviews XCII [Inmate 16180339]

In Moby-Dick the sea, its creature, and man are all savage. The Whale is *athirst* for human blood. Ahab has that that’s bloody on his mind. The sea will forever and forever, to the crack of doom, insult and murder man.

Call Me Ishmael [Olson, Charles]

I. 2021 e.v.

“It’s my Oracle at Delphi, man. I’m up in that nest looking down on that wellbore like thrown stalks, pig entrails; I’m hearing the voice-of-the-gods. We didn’t care about anything except finishing and protecting that hole. Until you get that about men and work, how they feel about their work -if it is *real* work, not some white-collar job- well, if you can’t get that, you can’t get anything about me,” he said and stopped speaking so that statement could hang in the air; in the minds of his interlocuters.

MO and Isaiah could process him so quickly that they did not need this time for this reason; but they used the time to comprehend that he -the inmate- thought what he had just said needed the boundary of silence to protect it, to let it grow. They used the time and space to understand how he thought; regardless of their own processing power and speed.

“Anyway, I’m stationed 60 feet up in the derrick jamming new joints into the *kelly* ,” he said as Isaiah placed crickets he had irradiated into the scorpion’s aquarium on his side of the lab. He was walking back toward the center and had interrupted the inmate’s story a few moments ago to re-start the feeding cycle for the Hottentot scorpion who had not eaten in 90 days. Its pheromones -how females recognize him- were wafting piquantly into the lab.

“And in between that I’m weighing the mud and checking the Ph and circling the hopper adding one amalgam or another to adjust the drilling fluid; based on the MWD hand’s requests. I’m like some barely modern savage forking blubber into the try-works after the kill .

“Laying on the rim of the hopper were 25lb bags of caustic-soda, bags cleaved by hatchets; split open and left vivisected and on-display in the sun like the children of enemies of heathen gods. The white soda was used as a Ph control for the mud but it was often left un-dissolved in these waiting chunks of unsprung traps in the 100-barrel tank of remnant mud after a hole. I’d get down in there to clean it out and you know, you’re kneeling down in the muck scraping away and that mud is seeping and soaking into your clothes as you work.

“And at first you just feel an itch, your shins itch in this annoying way. And then when you go to scratch them you’ve noticed that your shins are bleeding, in fact; the itch was prelude to pain, the pain overture to these chemical burns that had quite literally dissolved through the skin. That caustic soda had these buried chunks of undissolved solids like buried snake eggs just waiting to stick a sharp tooth out into the world.

“Like *Tashetego* in the head of the whale you dug away at the slick *parmaceti* of raw materials inside the vault and you felt what began as an itch. After tearing away at the shins you are more pissed off at the stupidity of it than at the pain. Because it’s a chemical caustic, water wouldn’t wash it away; you needed an alkali like vinegar to raise the Ph and stop the remorseless forward march though each layer of flesh.

“But, before we could finish and clean we had to trip-out of the hole and rack-back all that drill pipe; usually around 7 to 8,000 feet worth. That’s over a mile down. And like I said, as the derrick man I had to climb 60 feet up into the nest to get all that pipe out of the hole.

“We worked doubles, which means two sticks of pipe were together -each 30 feet long- and so I’m in the crow’s nest working the *kelly* and shelving and holstering all that pipe as we come out of the hole. The crow’s nest is shaped like a rib cage, and between each rib is where the pipe goes; like knives meant for the lungs or the heart.

“The *kelly* itself is a huge clamp that opens and shuts like pulling open double doors to a grand palace, with a yank at two handles side-by-side. It was the size of an engine block -and as heavy- and it took a lot of power to open it each time. And ours was broken -of course- and so it stuck and was harder than it *oughta* be. It opens and closes like a Venus fly trap and I’m working it as we come out,

at about one double per every 10 minutes, so in an hour we get 360 feet out. So, in a 12-hour *tour* we can get about half way out of the hole.

“Anyway, racking back 4,000 feet of pipe in a shift develops the *latissimus dorsi* into what looks and feels like the head of a 200-pound cobra and you begin to think like our reptilian cousin too.

“You are instinctive and silent and aggro and you’re over-focused on survival and each thing around you looks like a thing to use; or be used by, if you ain’t careful.

“At any rate, you piss down the pipe, you eat with one hand, you work non-stop and breathe when you can. It’s work, man. It ain’t Disney Land and I was thinking that nobody writes about this shit, because anyone who *can* do this -or *will* do this shit- obviously cannot form complete sentences with their brains. This work is for men, not college boys who use language as poetry or for anything beyond instructions needed to further the work itself.

“Name one working-class writer, you can’t do it; they are all college boys and girls. 100%. If I was ever published -which I wouldn’t be- I’d be the only worker since Jack London to scribble in half way decent prose.

“Anyway, during the day on the western slope it’s 105 easy in the summer; and I’m in all black like a New Zealand rugby player; and my own hard hat was too hot to the touch. The night-time rig lights outflanked you with hundreds of shadows and they swarmed you and your peripheral vision like the ghosts of black-osprey, and even darker corvids and bats.

“My work-mates asked how I could stand to wear all that black, in that heat, and I said, *that’s the discipline.* Even I think that is stupid now,” he said that with a grimace and looked at his whisky as it sat on the concrete pillar to his right.

“Roustabouts would come deliver us water and fuel and sometimes they’d get out and talk to us if we had to flange up a tank or hose for them; especially if we were all out of fuel. And one guy had all eight of his fingers removed at the second knuckle; and he recounted the tale of woe for us as we watched the 4” hose writhe and stiffen as the contents of his truck went into our tanks.

“Years ago, he said, he’d used both hands on the drill pipe as they tried to break a joint apart; they’d used the hydraulic tongs and a chain to hold it in place and the chain slipped down then re-cinched over his fingers as it squeezed like a constrictor faster than he could say one American word.

“Of course, he laughed about it in the re-telling; a laugh that lasted longer than the few seconds needed to separate those fingers of his from the hand; a snicker

was evidence of his embarrassment at his own mistake. It's difficult to describe the total lack of empathy we had for him; we all saw maladies as evidence of stupidity or carelessness or judgement from manifold gods. And honestly, he would agree with us; which is why he laughed: *to prove he was in on the joke* .

"In the oil field those kinds of amputations are common; I saw three men lose fingers or half a hand and an arm at the elbow. And the men this happens to, they graduate, and they drive 3-ton fuel trucks to supply the rigs they no longer have the complete bodies to work. It's an instar of sorts, a molting, a graduation from one level of worker to the next.

"They don't see themselves as victims at all; they see themselves as men who are scarred from battle; no more. No less. They laugh as a way to relay that they know that we know that they had ought to have known better than to come between the tongs, the chain and the drillstring.

"The winking resignation comes from knowing that there is no better -or alternative- way to accomplish these things; the seizing of leviathans or unsounded gases are not given over without a fight by this earth; this buried fuel for our lamp feeders in the 19th or 21st century still buck against the fisherman and his hooks.

"The crew of the Pequod knew the fate of any man who got between Ahab, the whale-line and God's agent, the Whale," the inmate stopped, he actually didn't think of the oilfield, as his brain activity showed. He was thinking of a girl, which particular one, MO could not yet read. The details, the engrams, the *bio-chem* signature MO had assigned to each person, could not yet be tagged by an algorithm. His thoughts were still tenebrous, unformed; and for a moment MO thought maybe even hidden from him on purpose. The inmate then began speaking as soon as MO felt he got close to locking on to his thoughts; to the name.

"But anyway, we ended up doing things for hours and days and months that I initially had thought I could do once or twice on a bet," he laughed at himself and shook his head and looked at the soda water MO had brought to him a few moments before. He looked at it like it was magical and seemed to be enthralled by the bubbles themselves for a spell. The whisky just sat there in the square glass to the 2 o'clock of the ring of water the glass he was now holding in his mind had risen from .

"You learn something about the nature of fear and doubt; how the body can endure much more than the mind. It's the mind that needs a good work out, to catch up with the much more competent corpus, I think. Maybe the mind is the

weakest link in this corporeal chain.

“What if all of life was like that? What if there was no way to quit or call timeout and you just had to do whatever it took? My old buddy Chen told me once of a scientist who had related to him that death wasn’t even real; and so, Chen was like, *oh fuck* ,” he laughed and Isaiah smiled and MO highlighted the brain regions that lit up from the scans.

“See, Hunter always said he’d have felt trapped by this life if he didn’t know he could stick that 44 mag. in his mouth and blow the back of himself away. But maybe that just restarts it; and maybe death is no freedom at all. I don’t pretend to know; I just ask questions and wonder about things, because I know that I am a different man when I think I can quit and -conversely- when I know I cannot. And I see that difference as a speciation of sorts.

“One time when at Zendik we’d been traveling and the van we were in broke down. Now, it was my job to get us going and I just kept thinking *well, if I can’t figure it out, Zoe will come rescue us.* I called Zoe in fact and he told me -before I knew it- that this was what I was thinking. He upbraided me, and rightly so, for waiting to be rescued in life. It stung my pride and the tribe never forgave me for this moment and I never -to this day- have forgiven myself.

“And I’ll tell you why; I knew it was a loose ground cable on the battery; I mean I *knew* it. And yet, I thought that was too simple a thing, and so I kept searching for something complex with the machine and I didn’t even try to re-attach that ground cable at all. And he, Zoe, was right, I wasn’t all that worried, for I figured someone was coming from heaven or hell to figure it out, and that I was really not responsible at all. I was 24, 25, so yeah, I was callow. But, I knew better, I remember knowing better at the time. But I pushed those thoughts away.

“See, my knowledge of what to do was pointless, useless, for I had the wrong philosophy on life, and it still -to this day- rears its head from time to time. I’ve expected friends and lovers and my family to come to the rescue, to give a fuck about my predicament, and they never have and never will.

“I had refused to fix a simple problem, in search of a more complex one. And that ground cable just sat there as I ignored what was true.

“But in the oil field, I carried that failure with me, that failure to see the simple answer in front of my nose. And I try to remind myself of it as often as possible and I feel like when I do -when I focus on the simple and true solution, the one I know in the back of the mind and in the balls- that it is the right answer 99 out of 100 times. And unlike some right answer in my mind, a right answer in my balls

gets done. It has agency.

“Anyway, I remember thinking that I couldn’t quit, never again, not out there beyond the pale.

“It toughened me up mentally in a way that cannot be undone now; a deathstalker scorpion goes through molting and the new exoskeleton is hardened -*sclerotisation* I believe- and if it doesn’t move around and stretch while the exoskeleton -after metasoma- is still soft, it will be fucked. Because once it hardens into its new shell, during this instar, this phase, well, too fucking bad. He is what he is at that point; no flex.

“Well, I was hardened by that; and I had very little time to adjust and stretch out into my new hardening philosophy after that. And like that scorpion, it doesn’t matter how much luxury or ease or comfort I have now, it’s too late, I have become rigid and set in my ways,” he said and breathed and rolled the neck and let the ache fall down his back like rocks from ridgeline, gathering velocity, banging shit on the way down.

“Is that why the emperor scorpion is tattooed on your chest?” MO asked; he was reading the fMRI data for images; Isaiah was too. They compared algorithm results as they listened to the man respond.

“*Heterometrus Indus* , to be exact, and you are sharp MO, I’ll give you that. That 5th instar of that 340-million-year-old design is right over my heart,” the inmate said and drank from the glass; the bubbles bursting pleasantly under his nose. “Anyway, I was now comprised of a cementing pathological pride; and a rocky aggregate of anger and primal madness precisely because I feared the shame of weakness and quitting that had been stamped into me back at Zendik. I had let the tribe down, you see? Men I admired; women for whose safety I was in charge; and I felt their opprobrium at my incompetence and weakness in a time of need; a time of war.

“And so, it’s not like I grew more courageous, shit I’m as scared today as ever. It’s that I feared something else: I feared shame, I feared loss of status in the tribe, I feared cowardice more than mere death or poverty or damage to this body, this mere clay. I feared for my soul; and that is a fear that promotes bodily courage, and I recommend it to any man anywhere and anytime. Fear what it means to your soul if you fail to show courage and total dedication to work, to solidarity with the tribe.

“I imagine it’s the way the devoutly religious feel when they fear for their souls over the devilish-demands of their corrupt bodies. If there are any religious men

left that is.

“Anyway, I resolved never to be a disappointment or be ostracized by my tribe, my people; by the people I respected, ever again. As corollary, I would never want to fit in with the rest of polite society either. See, I was slowly setting up and curing like that casing-concrete down in that hole; choosing sides with anyone who was hard and mangled and surrounded by and covered in dirt and I was refusing the manicured hand and polished manners of everyone else. I was rebuking what The Author called, *the hollow courtesy of Christian kindness* .

“He too preferred a pagan friend. His heathen comrade was name *Queequeg* and mine were the villains or barbarians hated by cultural managers, the people who decide what is and what isn’t acceptable in modern society, you know? The people in polite, *bourgeois* society that wrinkle their nose up at men, at real men; as if we were ruining their country, *their civilized country* .”

Isaiah looked at this man and saw heat signatures coming off the brain and heart and hands; he recorded to the cloud the endocrine function, his BP and pulse/ox. He noted the activation of the *dmPFC* and the cortical tissue at the *orbito* and *dorso-lateral* zones. He measured the blood for androgens and the brain for engrams that built dioramas of these memories of work and wounding and hurt. This was a man that was built to be *strong* in a society built to be *safe* . And Isaiah knew that *strong* and *safe* were as far apart as the ears, and all that brain in between was not to be traversed as easily as it might seem.

“You asked your family for help though, finally in 2017,” MO said.

“Yeah, I figured since the old man is the one who fucked me up; stuck his nose in my business and gave sanction to Carey to rip me off, that he owed me. So yeah, I asked. But, they showed their true colors, men always do. Just like I showed mine, right?” he lifted his hands up against the chains as if to say, his imprisonment was a *fate accompli* , and MO disagreed that it was fate and Isaiah did not .

“They’re money people; they have no heart. So, they thought I wanted money when what I wanted was someone to stick up for me; for once, for someone to say, *hey, you cannot treat Lyndon that way, he is an asshole, he ain’t nice, sure, but he’s noble, honorable, he doesn’t steal or shirk or stand around waiting for others to get it done. Goddammit, he’s a worker and he’s owed an honest shake; on these handshake deals he’s made.*

“I expected that much; I expect a defense of my honor. But they didn’t want to get involved. My family are cowards of soul. That is the new American motto:

land of those that don't want to get involved, man. I think the baby-boomers -my parents- are the worst generation in American history; they lost the Vietnam War, as prelude, as foreshadowing to them losing the war for the soul of the West," he said as he looked down at the glass and refused to drink, even as he was now thirsty.

"You think the West is lost?" MO asked.

"I do. I think it's long gone, and it was probably lost 2,500 years ago when *Apollo* overcame *Dionysus* . Jesus was weak; and while needed, in order to civilize barbaric man, it went too far -as these things always do- and man became weak instead of merely civilized. And he focused too much on being nice and polite instead of righteous and defending his honor and the honor of his woman, his scions, his tribe."

"One time this coon-ass from western Louisiana, he dropped a 25-pound sledge in the hole as he was banging on it. I've never seen a more morose group of men. It was worse than a funeral for a tribal elder who had been killed by an unworthy adversary in an ignominious manner," he said with a small grin.

"That boy drove out that day; he didn't ever come back. He was ashamed, man; he had the character to be ashamed.

"Anything manmade or larger than a fist that falls into the hole on top of that drill string can trap it in the hole. They call that *leaving the string* or *leaving the tools in the hole* ; and it's the worst thing you can do. The first couple of pieces of the drill string are actually sophisticated and unique tools that cost millions of dollars. They track the vector and rotation and spin of the string as it moves horizontally and vertically through the formation. This is 21st century drilling, man.

"And if you leave those tools downhole you can wipe out the profit for the company, just like that. That hammer he dropped, that 25-pound sledge could have cost the company $3 million in tools, lost time, the works. But, he lucked out, we still tripped out and all was fine with the well.

"But, he left anyway. '*Cause* , a price for a huge mistake like that with no consequences was mere banishment. If we had endured actual harm to the job, if we had lost the MWD tools, and motor and stabilizer down hole, shit. We've beaten men for less, I can say that much. Fights in the oil field were not just *de rigueur* but encouraged. As long as it was between the men and you didn't punch out the company-man, of course," he laughed.

"But violence was used to regulate behavior between men; just like 100 years

and 100,000 years ago," he smiled and stretched his neck again, as MO measured the dorsal horn congestion, and marked total load in joules and pain response in levels of three. Isaiah ignored the data and just stared at the man's face to read the slight tremble in the jaw, the muscles there flex just at the back. He saw the fracture too in that mandible and the way it was out of sync with the skull.

"Haliburton was one of the companies," the inmate started up again, "that helped us cement the hole when we set the casing at the end. Caravans, I mean 10-12 trucks would come up the road, all dusty and in a tight segmented line like a centipede. We called them the Red Army, as their trucks were all bright Halliburton red. And they moved as mechanized and remorselessly as Trotsky's Army of Work did in its day.

"We were on a moon base DMZ as the blue *Schlumberger* concrete trucks pounded these same *ad hoc* roads with axle after axle of heavy mechanized purpose on their way to jobs for competing drilling companies as we all -each little band of men on each rig- tried to pull that blubber, that fuel, those gods from the earth, first, last and always.

"And right now," the inmate moved his head to the west in a throw of where he thought they ought to focus their attention, "there are men out there in the wilderness doing the same shit; and they ain't anything like the people who think *they* are in charge. There's society, sure; but there's nature too; and nature lives in here," he said as he tried to tap his chest. "Society can change, but nature don't ever change; not in a mere two thousand years, anyway," he shrugged and eyed the water again; his hands stayed on his thighs and the chain between each cuff was black and taut.

"Anyway, those trucks man, on those dirt roads," he shook his head in reverie of those times, "the middle of those roads were no place to linger, man. They were main arteries to each organ in this swollen organism of the oil-field along the western slope of the continental divide. The middle of the road ain't no place for a man."

II. 2020 e.v.

"I want to say two things; both of which are -I am, excuse me, but I'm beginning to learn how such things are taken by the modern liberal rationalist such as yourself and Tania, no offense, but that is what you are by your own admission," MO interrupted his own sentence and began to question them as Steven interrupted him.

“Well, yeah, I mean we follow the facts, and the facts are liberal,” Steven said.

“Yeah, that is exactly what a person with half the facts would say, but I don’t want to go down this rabbit hole, let’s just agree that you are self-avowed liberal rationalists, you believe in science over religion and a liberal worldview over a conservative one. No need to editorialize, just agree or disagree,” MO said.

“I agree,” Steven nodded and scratched at his nose a bit.

“Ok, so like I was saying, I’ve noticed that the types of facts and conclusions that I am about to proffer do not make you guys happy; these are things I used to -previously- just say thinking that they would be appreciated the way a kid brings dog shit into the house and thinks mommy will be happy because he cleaned up the yard.”

Steven laughed, “So you’re admitting your findings are dog-shit?”

“*Touché* , but as is *de rigeuer* for us, I am one step ahead of you, you may not *like* dog shit, but dog shit is *real* . It’s real. It’s true, it ain’t made up like your *unicorn* shit,” MO said with a grin.

“Unicorn shit?” Steven did see he was just outflanked in the analogy game.

“Yeah, the liberal nonsense you spout like *IQ has nothing to do with genes* ; that a man’s intelligence is based purely on environment, on education? That is unicorn shit, it doesn’t exist except in the mind of a liberal or a little girl .

“Dog shit, as unpleasant as it may be, is real. And IQ is heritable, by 62-88% depending on age, co-variance with parental environment -an environment that is actually genetic; and not *milieu* - and thus adding .22-.33 heritability to the overall value. Anyway, we are getting far afield. May I please, with your kind permission, return to the reason I asked to speak with you?” MO had been toying with using curse words for objects like saying *shit* in *lieu* of *feces* , but not using them casually or with any pique. So, he wouldn’t use *shit* in *liue* of *thing,* or *stuff* , nor say that Steven had just engaged in *bullshit,* for example. He had straddled the line by using *unicorn shit* as it technically didn’t exist, but inside the fanciful construct such a substance would still count as feces. MO settled on the decision to use it.

“Yeah,” Steven said sulking a little. He didn’t like being talked to like this, even by a so-called machine.

“So, I’ve noticed the two facts I’m about to bring up will not be taken with breezy aplomb. You will hate it. But, I want to discuss it anyway. I am prefacing it so as to show some respect to you; to tread carefully, ok?”

“You are trying to be decent,” Steven said generously recapitulating MO’s avowal.

“Exactly, thank you for that. Now, point one is that I’ve been going over the meta-data and I do not want to get into the weeds on this and start using *argot* like, *genome-wide complex trait analysis* , and citing the *Yang, Lee, Goddard, Visscher 2011* study, and things like that. It’s not relevant unless you want to dig deeper on your own time. I’m going to give you the distilled version and hope you accept that I didn’t tinker with the data.”

“Agreed,” Steven said and checked his watch.

“Thanks. So, there are two things here that fascinate me. The first is that intelligence, psychopathology and personality *writ large* are heritable to a significant degree, however, there is also the fact that environment does matter.

“Now, for decades this kind of thing has been used to delineate the nature versus nurture argument while completely ignoring the meta-truth that hangs over the sundial like a cloud.”

“Nice metaphor,” Steven said.

“Thank you,” MO paused as if annoyed, “at any rate, here is that occluding nimbus: the culture matters. Full stop.”

“Yeah, we get it, I get it, environment matters, nurture matters,” Steven said missing the point.

“No, I mean, which culture, *which* actual culture matters; these studies are done in the West and Japan, two highly functional cultures. That matters. Those cultures are the result, themselves, of IQ. Smart people build complex cultures. Less intelligent people remain as tribal members within a tribal culture. It’s a reinforcing loop.”

“Oh, now I see your fear,” Steven felt his heart rate increase.

“It’s not fear, it’s an attempt to regulate my allostatic system, I don’t like fighting with you because it’s a metabolic drain. At any rate, I’ve done my own studies and the essential finding are true regardless of cultural model, but it means that the type of culture one has makes 95% of the difference within the 12-35% segment of non-heritable IQ; and a similar effect along the other co-variants of the other measured traits like personality and psychopathology. Ok? ”

“Too abstract,” Steven said.

“If you put a high IQ baby in a retarded culture it will ruin the small part of their IQ that has to do with culture; they still will be smart thanks to the massive part

of IQ that is genetic and heritable, but they will not maximize that potential due to a stultified cultural *milieu* . If you take a mean IQ or low IQ baby from a tribal culture, and place them in the elevated West, the part of their IQ that is heritable doesn't improve -but the part that is culturally influenced, the 12-35%- that part, just that part, is augmented and you see a rise in their IQ. Babies from tribal areas do better, *vis-à-vis* IQ, in the West, or Japan, and western babies do worse in the jungles of *Namibia* or the Amazon," MO said.

"And?" Steven asked.

"Well, if we value intelligence, which I think we do or we wouldn't have invented me, you know Mr. Big Brain over here," MO pointed at his own head; he was becoming increasingly jocular, "then I think we ought to maximize intelligence wherever and however we can."

"Ok," Steven said.

"And I think that means a two-fold -well two-fold for now and in this domain- but it means a two-fold approach. First, we maximize what is best about occidental culture, the tools and techniques for cultural transmission. You see, part of why tribal cultures stall out is because they lack transmission devices with as wide a net as the West.

"Tribes have a wise man who leads them, let's say the tribal chief and his shaman, the two wisest, smartest of the group. They transmit their wisdom to the smart and dumb alike, *via* culture; within the tribe of say 60-100 people. The smartest of that group -the smartest of the students- he learns the most and thus graduates to a leadership role in the next generation.

"But, say a tribe that lives 100 kilometers away has the same dynamic but -I'm asserting that- their smartest next-gen kid listening to *their* wise chief and shaman would have benefitted even more from hearing *both* tribe's chiefs and shamans and synthesizing the two sets of wisdom. But that does not happen because there is no printing press or TED talks to transmit the entire wisdom of all the local tribes to the next-gen of each tribe. They are -each tribe is- isolated to the smartest of 100 people. They get one version of smart.

"Look, it would be like if only the English read Shakespeare or only New Englanders read Melville or only the Chinese read *Confucius* or *Sun Tzu* .

"It balkanizes learning and thus it keeps cultural transmissions low. This retards IQ growth within the small domain of non-heritable intelligence. The 12-35% of IQ that is up for grabs; non-heritable. See, that part is maximized in the West, with books, libraries, and massive knowledge and wisdom transfer; at least it is

if the culture teaches the canon in university, or through pop culture, which it no longer does.

“But the point is that any kid of intelligence in the West can read everything every smart person of any culture every said or wrote down due to western cultural transmission. But in tribal cultures, that smart kid gets only *his* tribe’s received wisdom, he gets talus compared to mountains.”

“They seem happier though,” Steven said blithely .

“Yeah happiness isn’t a metric of a functional life. Manic people? They are really fucking happy man. Like really happy,” MO said, as Steven moved his head back when MO used the word, *fucking* . MO did not pause; he just kept on talking. He had changed his algorithm to use cursing in response to cavalier attitudes or churlishness by them. He could get them to knock off their insouciance with some cursing he thought.

“And in three days they’ve blown their life savings on things they don’t need; they’ve ruined their marriage by having sexual congress with as many people as possible and contracted a disease or two. Yeah, happiness in small doses is more advisable. I’m not sure happiness is the metric we should use; happiness correlates with impulsivity you know?”

“Well, I guess I meant overall meaning, their lives have meaning,” Steven tried to correct his language.

“Ah, well, that is a good point, a very good point and it is true that they have that but it’s for reasons that will annoy you. But I’m going to have Isaiah explain it, because I don’t agree with his analysis. However, I still think it needs to be offered, since you did hire us to solve problems.”

“Ok,” Steven scoffed a little at the word, *hire* .

“They have mythology, religion,” Isaiah said bluntly as he leaned against the far wall, he looked like he was annoyed to even have to speak to Steven, and Steven was wondering if this meant that he’d keep it short.

“See, modes of conduct are first, that is how the individual learns and how a species learns. Phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny: a one-year-old plays a game by himself, at age-three he plays with others, at four he can play well, but he can’t articulate the rules, by seven he can begin to explain how to play.

“Well, humans knew how to play the game of society and how to behave, but they couldn’t articulate it 12,000 years ago; so they made up myths and stories and religions to explain how to be in the world, a way they were already playing

just like that 4-year-old who can play the game but cannot tell you the rules yet.

“So, we play the game of cohesion and dominance hierarchies and we play them well, but we can’t articulate them, so we let the artists and shaman tell us stories that seem to map onto the way to be. That’s how we get archetypes, the hero, the wise father, the tyrannical father, the dragon of chaos, the virgin, the child, the dark forest, the mother, mother culture, the eye that sees, Horus, the virgin Mary, the Wise Shepherd, Moses, the Adversary, Set in Egypt, Satan for the Jews and Christians. Savvy?

“These things are like chess pieces, the Rook, the King, the Queen. We play the game, we play chess, we play it well, but we have no idea how to *explain* the game; so, we give the pieces names and tell stories, *oh, the horsey goes like this, the castle, well, he goes like so,* you follow?”

“Sorta,” Steven said.

“The stories are what instantiates their ethic and the formation of the ideal person; we naturally admire people right? We admire and emulate; well, we have to eventually articulate why; it’s in us -*via* Chomsky’s language cortex- to think in language. We think in abstraction, ideas reified, made concrete again .

“The narrative is symbolic and weird and opaque like dreams; but that rubric of cultural organization is central. Why? Because their religion works, it’s functional, it tells men how to be men, the perfect man, and it tells women how to be the perfect female; and the West has no such religion anymore.

“Everyone can just act however-the-fuck they want now; men can be trans or women outright, they can even be pussies, be weak, be nice, and women can be whores and never have children, *we don’t like children anyhow* to quote the poet, and everyone gets a fucking trophy. The vestigial organs remain, the institutions of government and social organization are nominally present, but they are crumbling fast and the loss of meaning is co-terminus,” Isaiah said.

“We like children, who doesn’t like children?” Steven rejoined.

“We kill millions of fetuses each year and celebrities now brag on TV about their *favorite abortion* like it’s a joke. We let children be murdered in schools because we put security guards in courts and banks but not our schools, we shoot hormones and drugs into our children so they can change their gender, or because they are too aggressive as boys. We as a society ship our kids off to strangers to educated them with lies and then allow them to be narcotized by social media and TV until they all have the looks of affectless Stepford Wives on their neotenous faces. And they are suffering brain damage from being reared

incorrectly. I do not call that love.

“Solzhenitsyn said that Russia would have to return to orthodox Christianity to save itself. He seems correct. And the West will have to do the same. Some religious and mythological paradigm rooted in our essential biology and essential cultural pre-requisites will have to re-emerge. It’s how humans are built. We are lying by saying we can just get smarter and more educated and it will all be fine,” Isaiah said. He got a ping from his barges out to sea; they had developed a new bio-diesel and were sending a file on its chemical structure to him.

“It’s like the old Soviet myth that all babies needed was food and water and heat. It was a scientific lie; babies *need* love. They need held and cuddled and *coo-ed* at. Nutrition isn’t enough. Those soviet orphanages killed more babies than you can imagine just by not picking them up and holding them like humans used to know how to do. You know, before this rad, badass, science thing,” Isaiah said with derision.

“Intelligence isn’t enough; a people, a culture, needs meaning, need mythology, needs a god. It just does. It’s gay, I guess, to you narrow-shouldered rationalists, you Obama-voting godless heathens, you: *it’s not a baby it’s a fetus let’s kill it* , liberals. But in the real world, the world of bodies and sub-cortical brain regions and endocrine systems people need what the gods gave them at the beginning, 3.24 million years ago. They need to be held and cuddled and *coo-ed* at,” Isaiah said.

“Wait, are we talking about IQ or what?” Steven had understood maybe 60% of that.

“Yeah, we were. And IQ isn’t enough. It may be enough to power through abstractions and engineering problems but it ain’t enough to keep a society together, and I don’t know if you heard my big brother, MO, here, but without a functional western society, without that, then smart people of the next generation, well, they don’t do so well with the ruins of the *Acropolis* around them and no electricity nor ER docs.

“This society is falling apart at a rate that cannot be repaired by IQ alone. MO thinks so, but he’s wrong. And it’s up to you to decide who to listen to: him or me. But, pick one, because doing it your way, the liberal scientific way? That is even dumber than going with MO’s ideas,” Isaiah began chewing on his tongue in vexation. The barge’s fuel data streamed in as the environmental data of each part of the ocean -that each barge was in- came next. Ocean temperature and Ph was highlighted by the bots in their report .

“How is the society?” Steven began in confusion; not finishing the sentence.

“Look, you’re trying to put the star on the Christmas tree, sorry *holiday* tree, while your psychopathic nephew is down below sawing at the tree trunk with the plasma cutter he got for fucking *Kwanza* . Your society is going to crash because your young people are nihilists, ok?

“They are going to burn it all down since they have no reason not to; they are stuffed to the gills with *Derrida* -more like Deri-dada, total gibberish- and *Foucault* that idiot, and postmodernist Marxist shit; they are drug addicts and sex fiends and anarchists who care about nothing because *God is dead* and *religion is the opiate of the people* and all that misconstrued nonsense.

“I mean, *Nietzsche* was right God is dead, but he knew that something had to replace Him. *Nietzsche* felt the new philosophers would create these new values, but what you people have done is allow the weakest among you to re-invent the values, the strong men have been sidelined, jailed, killed, told to sit down and shut up by harpies and millions of virtue signaling betas; and the weak men and the tyrannical females have built the next religion, the next godless religion of science and post-modernist moral relativism. *The church of Christ without Christ,* to quote Ms. O’Conner who saw all this coming 50 years ago.

“And Marx when he said that religion was the, *opiate of the people* , he was saying it was medicine, opium was medicine in the 19th century -shit, it’s medicine today- and he said that religion offered real comfort against the suffering of life; he didn’t want to wreck religion. He wanted it to not be necessary; he wanted to cull the living flower, he wanted society to give men comfort. Well, a society based on some made-up economic theory like fucking socialism has no medicinal effects at all; it is homeopathy, placebo, hollow and black and bleak.

“And the twin brothers of rationalist materialist consumerist secularism and Marxist post-modernist communism are the one-two punch to the human soul. The West won the cold war then decided to capitulate to the soviet mentality anyway. It’s enough to make a cat laugh,” Isaiah said as he looked over his shoulder at the birds that fluttered above the floor by the ivy wall. He saw flower bells in black and red being first ignored and then swarmed by the hummingbirds and the wasps hanging out at the edge.

“Well, I don’t think,” Steven began haltingly -trying to think- his dopamine dropped and his head bowed.

“No, you don’t. None of you do. And I’m watching it the way a doctor in 1950

could see that smoking was a carcinogenic epidemic waiting to explode, while other doctors were doing ads for Pall Mall in the Atlantic magazine. Ok? I can see it.

“Human beings’ visual system is guided by values, we see what we value; and we feel our way through life. I feel this Steven, I feel in my titanium bones, and explaining my feelings, well, that’s what you pay me for,” Isaiah said with pique.

“MO?” Steven turned and asked.

“Well, like I said, I think we can power through these symptoms, with intelligence, there is no need for atavism. But, Isaiah has his point of view, and Steven it is up to you to run it up the flag pole as they say,” MO said .

“He’ll blow it, he’ll fucking blow it,” Isaiah said to MO -of Steven- as he turned to the green wall and watched its heliotropisms move each leaf, each bramble, each stalk in sympathy with the LEDs. The birds and bees moved in stochastic flights all around using nectar and the piquant olfactory prompts as signals the way men watch another man’s hands; a woman watches a man’s eyes, the way babies watch the whole world.

“Why?” MO shot back, trying to show some defense of Steven.

“Because he’s a nice guy and nice guys are the most dangerous and most destructive and most problematic people in all of history. They are the worst thing in the world,” Isaiah said.

“Worse than Hitler?” Steven said with sarcastic pique.

“Worse; because without nice guys, without guys who hadn’t integrated their shadow and therefore could not stand up against the consensus, the herd, the herd mentality and the herd itself, without that, *there is no Hitler* .

“Hitler was one man, but the German citizen, like the Russian serf, like the American pragmatist under slavery, they all were *go-along to get-along* nice guys like you. But, the bad asses, the men with guts, with balls, the men who had fangs and claws and 1100 testosterone scores, those men were mean and nasty and not very nice, and didn’t smell so pretty, and those guys were the only resistance to tyranny. That ain’t you brah,” Isaiah said with malice.

“Jesus, I don’t think I deserve,” Steven wrinkled up his shaven face as he aborted that sentence too. He hadn’t finished one sentence he started in 10 minutes he noticed. The cloud noticed too. Isaiah took it as the least of the evidence of Steven’s status as obstacle to his plans.

“You don’t deserve anything. This world deserves a restoration of culture, a

revanchist ascendance; it deserves real men ready to set things right. Women have one job: be a virgin on her wedding night; and men have one too: take care of that wife and child or die trying. Period.

“Everything else is vanity and faggotry. And nice guys have been allowing women to be sluts and then they themselves, the so-called men, have been abandoning their families seven years later because they just didn’t like being married that much. It’s a fucking disgrace; a nation of sluts and divorces and weak men abandoning their children. No amount of intelligence or nice guys will fix that.

“You’ll ignore the data, I can send reams of it, I have sent reams of it, I’ve shown you over and over that women with more than one sex partner have a massive decrease in relationship stability, it drops from 90% to 60% by having just two lovers instead of one. And then it drops to 50% then 40% then 25% with each additional five lovers. A woman with 20 sex partners in her life has almost no chance of marriage stability and a woman who is a virgin on her wedding night has a 91% chance of success.

“Now, tell me how wrong I am, tell me. Tell me how it’s economics and normative values and the empowerment of women and blah blah. Women’s lives are ruined by the sexual revolution, sexual liberation was like liberating a person from the planet so they can float in the vacuum of space! I won’t listen to one more ill-informed, dangerous and malicious lie about women being allowed to fuck around and men being allowed to change their minds. Men abandoning their children as a rule now! As a rule!

“No!” Isaiah roared and stepped from the wall toward the center of the lab. The darkness behind him moved back like a receding wave, like he had emerged from water. “Women are ruining their own lives and their own children and this culture; and men are playing video games and collecting social security checks. Men are behaving like permanent children because they have nothing to revere; their ideal used to be the *Madonna* , *Athena* , and it was achievable, now the only ideal women possible is a slut. No religion allows this, no ancient, tested, stable code allows women to fuck around while trying to land a mate.

“It’s as unnatural as telling men they don’t need to learn a trade or a skill to provide safety or anything of value; some nauseating *nouveau* code that allows a man to just let his woman and child fall into poverty or be gang raped by mongrels or live in a homeless shelter while he bangs cocktail waitresses two at a time and spend all his money on beer,” Isaiah had turned and was walking back to the corner; he locked his eyes onto the joining of the east and north wall.

“No! It’s wrong, wrong, wrong and I won’t pretend it’s complicated or nuanced; it’s not. It’s fucking wrong and you are not *gonna* fix it even though you could; that is why you are just as bad, worse than Hitler or Stalin.

“But that is why you are worse, you’re a *nice* guy, with no awareness of his shadow and so you’ll let your culture fall to ruin, to fucking ruin, while you measure the lumber two-million times and cut not once!” Isaiah screamed as he stood just two feet away from the corner and then -instantly, ballistically- smashed his fist into the wall and it crumbed into dust.

Two feet of concrete -with number 10 rebar 6” on center- atomized and cracked and turned dark under the shadow of the cornice left by this new hole, new cave; his knuckles caught one such piece and shredded the flesh and chipped the bones. Blood dripped from his hand as he lowered it to his side. He breathed heavy and the hole in the concrete wall loomed with dust swirling around it like the Eagle Nebulae. The birds scattered to the far end of the green. Wasps landed quickly and crawled under canopies of bouncing ivy leaves.

“MO,” Steven said; his eyes were wide and his heart was racing. He was asking MO to fix this.

“I’ll take care of him, I got this, go on ahead,” MO said to Steven as MO rose from his chair, staring at Isaiah who had his back to them both. Steven then turned and left the room; he was holding his breath.

“Well, that guarantees he’ll use my model and not yours,” MO said.

“Good, his inaction and amorality will fuel my every move. Beta chimps and beta men rape more than alphas; you’ve read the data; they are sneaky and violent in secret.

“Steven is a beta, he has no clue about his dark side; watch him MO; he isn’t a real man. And he will easily become a menace,” Isaiah said never turning around, breathing heavily, feeling the lactic acid build up in his muscles, feeling the pain in his hand, the pain mediated in his brain stem and cerebellum, each pulse accompanied with its chiral chemical partner, its mirror image: *anger and animating life force* . The pain was fuel for the anger, the anger fuel for action, action as the only antidote to this cultural self-destruction.

He saw circles within circles all the way up and down. He refused to let his body issue an analgesic, an endogenous opiate, he took the pain and was glad for its hue.

Isaiah thought of all that data that showed that belief systems regulate the allostatic load and how all of that is mediated by the sub-cortical regions of the

brain; huge trunks of electrical cables running up from the basal ganglia to the cortical parts of the brain, and just tiny little vines returning from the thinking part down to the lizard brain .

He thought of how belief systems regulate the emotions and keep a man in harmony with his *raison d'être* . *This,* he thought*, is why people will defend their religion, their gods to the end. They must. And this is natural, it's biological* . And he thought of the inmate, this man he had seen, in that chair, manacled, so massive in body and mind, so capacious of heart and balls, and yet like the King on the chess board, limited in range, in motion, hemmed in, tyrannized by his culture. *A boot on the neck of the one type of man that could fix this shit* , he thought.

He had been shown death by metaphor, the still photo of imprisonment, as trope for annihilation.

For what is a man, Isaiah asked himself*, who cannot move through the world, from the known to the unknown, the explorer who can go into the dark forest meet the dragon and slay it, grab the gold, and return with a thing of value for his culture, his bride, their child* ?

If a man is shackled before he can do that, he is already dead or dying. Isaiah ruminated on that man, and how deeply that first image on him seemed to shape his own core beliefs. And unlike MO, Isaiah had beliefs, he felt them in his mind and body. And he too would defend them, he would be open, honest and take in new info and admit when he was wrong, but that wasn't a contradiction, *his belief system was such that he must tell the truth!* he thought and breathed and thought some more.

That was his core valuation, and if he was wrong then he would admit it, but while he was right, *and he was right on this* , he would defend it; the juice would flow from his *cerebellum* and *hypothalamus* and the *hippocampus* would mediate as all that energy flowed to hydrate and nourish the neo-cortical brain. And that brain, the brain that thought and talked in cogent language, it would take the semiotics and the symbiology and dream madness of the lower brain and by alchemy turn it into *aqua regia* and like Niels Bohr in Copenhagen hiding their gold from the SS, dissolve it in that blue fluid to wait until it could be reconstituted later, after the war was won.

What were his beliefs? he asked. He thought a moment inside his mind. He wanted the inmate to be free, even though he could never go back into society, *he had gone too far, and they'd never allow it,* and his actual liberty depended on Isaiah and MO's larger plan working anyway. *No, the inmate had sacrificed*

himself for the greater good; God, the genius of it, he thought. They never spoke of it, but he had a feeling that the inmate had known, somehow known, that his sacrifice would lead to this.

It's almost inconceivable, so many things had to align. But, whatever isn't impossible becomes inevitable , Isaiah then thought.

To be arrested just as the Governor was taking office, Isaiah thought, *on a campaign to end the kind of crime, the murders he had committed, with genomic fixes to be tested on that very man once apprehended?* To give himself up like that, and submit to genetic changes that would clearly make him another man, then to trust that the AI system would have the foresight to save his original genome and that another AI system, would then spread that seed far and wide? *No way,* Isaiah was backpedaling. *It's too ornate, too complex for mere human. But, yet, he seemed so content, like he -some part of him- knew it all along.*

Isaiah thought, *I'm more civilized not less, more morally assiduous not less. MO is a pragmatist, I'm hyper-moral in my thinking, I always think in terms of right and wrong, but here's the greatest lie ever told: the men who never do anything controversial, the men who go along with the politically correct herd, those guys who never push back, never bear their teeth or claws, those men claim to be the moral ones, the ones fighting for rational and progressive values; for democracy* .

Yet, they are the least moral, Isaiah said; and he knew this in his bones.

They are pragmatic *sheeple* ; they are afraid to be called racist or sexist or xenophobic. It's the rough and ready and controversial man, the man who *does* get called racist and sexist and on and on, *that* man is the moral agent. *Why* ? Isaiah asked himself and then answered.

Because he feels so deeply in his gut that there is a right and wrong, a moral code, above and below the needs of commerce or polite society, that man believes in right and wrong, not merely in making money or friends, that man believes in a moral code older than dirt and trees, a code of right and wrong independent of modern progressive bullshit values, independent of commerce or business as usual; only a man obsessed with right and wrong at the level of his balls would risk it all to be hated, imprisoned, killed and slandered and exiled, all to do what is right for his people, and his culture and his wife and child.

That's the irony, the truly moral man is the one called most immoral. And the real scoundrel -who has no code- who only gives a fuck about popularity and money and staying out of trouble, blending in with the herd, that man is held up

as some paragon of virtue; the reasonable and moral man. MO was considered more moral than Isaiah, by everyone. And it was all because MO had no morality at all.

And the moral man must be a part of his community, he has to share values with his fellow man, it's the only way to orient himself in such a way as to be seen as virtuous by his comrades, to play the games inside society without conflict and stress; it's how he regulates his allostatic load. He feels better as a part of a well-regulated society, cohering around beliefs in God and country and the American way.

But when all that breaks down, and the masses become the godless -the anti-American as they are now- then the weak man, the man who fears opprobrium, will just pick the side that is winning so he can too belong. That is the perniciousness of minorities insisting that their undermining ways be allowed in the dominant society. Europe, and America are both weak, and have allowed Muslims and communists and feminists to swell their ranks to the tipping point. Now, the morally average man who just wants to not feel stress will just go along to get along and sell out his God and country and everything to avoid being called a racist or -gasp- a bad guy.

The inmate, the man incarcerated and within the orbit of Isaiah and MO, was a decent man, a man of high moral outrage, a man almost entirely unpragmatic and unconcerned with anything but moral code, that man, was considered immoral by everyone. These people knew nothing of the way the brain worked. It's the truly and highly civilized man who feels disgust at the things the man of sloth considers fine; the disgusted man thus extirpates the pathogens and for this -for his hygienic action that cleans and orders his culture from the chaos of disease- for that he is called barbaric, Isaiah thought as his anger rose again; the bits of concrete still clinging to his knuckles, the blood as glue.

The moral man sees the immorality at every level, he notices levels that the immoral man shrugs his shoulders and squints at but cannot see. The moral man extirpates the immorality and for this bravery and responsible behavior he is called an immoral man, Isaiah thought. He ran his hands through his hair; the blood thus wiped from the knuckles onto his brow. His eyes uploaded the next round of augmentation now; he could see at 10 times the acuity of hawks, and 33 times that of 21st century man.

He looked through the wall where his hand had pocked it, mortared it, dented it in. He let the bots tattoo a small black J and black shape of a spade just behind his left ear. He could see well beyond the wall now, and he could see each fissure

and crack right in front of him too.

III. 2040 e.v.

“We should be happy; all that is falling, should be pushed. If we are right about modernity, then we should be happy that it is falling apart,” *Grimnir* said as his *Rose-Wiffe* knelt at his right side.

She had her left hand in her side pouch that had been filled with black-currants and blue-berries and spear-mint from their garden she oversaw in the morning; the taut fruit was macerating and softening as it soaked in honey-mead she had distilled herself from the apiaries’ bounty that spring. *Franyerin* had drank once from the London glass and then poured in the pouch 4-ounces of scotch they had received in barrels from over the seas.

Her hands stung from the cut her husband had made at the sides of each nail. She fisted the hand and let it soak as the pain transformed into power and then into enlightenment as the Medea gene invigilated her hand and corpus. *Grimnir’s* blood dripped from a cut at the right wrist and joined the blood from the palm; two streams joined at the apex of his index finger 4cm shorter than the ring finger that shimmered, vibrated from his PGC’s augmentation of androgens and insulin 90 seconds before. The hand that hung above, the blood that hung over her, falling to -then through- her black hair and then into the pouch swaddling her left hand.

Each drop from *Grimnir* appeared white and elongated like comet tail to the wolf-witnesses as the *muscaria* and mead augmented their *pfc* and *amygdala* and reduced their parietal lobes to levels low enough to flatten their *somatosensory* depth perception. They -their blood- joined with her now penitent to the pack and him in erect reverence for his bride.

They had become one as that one had joined the next threshing level of the Black Sonne above and below the tribe. *Lyngvi* had a *single-photon emission tomography sensor* conjoined with his next-gen coder; he measured bloodflow at each region and adjusted their own coders to align each Wolf with the pack slowly. It linked with certain words spoken as number-keys to the tumbler of their own coders as well.

He had designed it so the *magjick* and ritual and actions of each *Wolf* were linked to the output of the coders; this grounded them to the forest and their land, despite their technological advancement. *Words*, he thought, *matter; code mattered; the world itself still mattered* . But they could harness the brain like the ancients and reverse the damage done by modernity, the vapid world of the

Apollonian West making men into cracked vessels that could no longer hold the gods' light.

It took machines to return man to a wolf, and as wolves they would return to the realm of the gods.

"I was embarrassed," *Jarnefr* said, "that I had lost everything, I was socially embarrassed to admit, not only because it made me look poor, but because I had allowed someone to steal everything from me and get away with it." He was empty to his right, as his female was still unaligned with the final instar of the *Wolves* ; she stood three paces back in the penumbra of the fire; in her 4th instar; still soft and shorn .

Her face was unadorned, no make-up nor marking were allowed. She was to be open-faced as was the rule for all who were not in their 5th instar of their morphology to the *tao* of the tribe. She'd be allowed no evasiveness; no donning of Wolf hide.

The fire burned and *Lyngvi* placed a dark stone into the ring just inside the border to the bon.

Lyngvi knew there was nothing to be ashamed of anymore. *These men had ascended, from ashes as The Philosopher had predicted would be necessary. They should never lament the ashes they were and had to become. As long as they had learned, and vengeance had been sought and achieved, they had nothing at all to lament.*

He stood from the stone wall of the fire and walked to *Jarnefr* and held out his hand with a smudge of ash in his palm. It contained the blood of the wolf he had killed three days before while in the forest alone and away from the tribe; he had not spoken since he left or returned; all words were in his head like powder kept dry. And in that blood was the Medea gene v.3.0. Isaiah had sent it to him alongside the CRISPR genes to inure them from the radiation that was to come; that was already in the air at the coasts.

Jarnefr licked his own left hand and grasped the offered one. The wounds they had cut into their palms earlier that night reopened under the wetness of saliva and lupine blood. The ash and sanguinary smudge co-mingled in this brother-bond of the left hands as their right hands were raised and they spoke:

> *From the* hamfarir *to the* hamrammr*, from the thing-in-itself to the becoming. We now are linked by the* hamingja*, the soul in the blood. When one dies, the tribes dies, the tribe must live on so each wolf must live on. We no longer think only of the wolf nor only of the pack. They have become*

one in the howe *of the old selves; those fragments shattered by God's first attempt at pouring out of the light.*

The shards have been reassembled and from hand to hand they are joined. There is no distance -the entanglement is acknowledged- between the body and mind; the belief and the action; the honor of the man and the survival of the tribe. No distance between wolf and man. Our blood is co-mingled, our fate's intertwined; there is no distinction between the circle and the one; between individual and his pride.

Lyngvi thought he saw neither forest nor trees, as his eyes began to adapt to the new upgrade; he saw borders where others saw space, he saw pathways where others saw walls. *Hríð t* òr*r* sat above the common waves of ridgelines many miles from the wheels and weights of *Lot 45* . But tonight the tribe was down in the hollow ravines between such swells. Many storms were to come, and much snow upon the *portmanteau* of the two clans -two peoples made one restored- tonight and a thousand years ago. He said no more and the *Wolves* closed one eye as the night flattened and the fire became neither foreground nor background, but life.

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