

BurgerMan

Henri Isaacson

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Ritual sacrifice of the usual detritus, ⁵
engulfed with redemptive fire, ⁷
requires a detailed physical exam ¹⁰
& a conjure of reanimation. ¹¹

Witness the brave unfolding, ²⁰
the hypodermic sensation ²¹
of the big soul-suck ²²
& you care about the ? ²⁴

An original moment, an offering ³³
of the mind's germans ³⁵
commits them to gravity. ³⁷

The electricity of a snake, ⁴⁷
a spark of dark parts, ⁵⁰
gives the old shock shock. ⁵²

The albino niggaz ⁶²
blast-off, ⁶⁵
while we tune in. ⁶⁶

The infinite possibilities ¹
of quiet ruminations ²
from the wilds of suburbia. ³

The disembodied head of God ¹³
emerges from the depths, squished, ¹⁴
pushed, pulled this way & that. ¹⁹

White people like WonderBread ²⁵
in wide-eyed contemplation ²⁷
at the oracle of blackness, ²⁹
slip from their sleek skins. ³¹

With moby dick pallor, ⁴⁰
the still-born souls ⁴³
watch your television. ⁴⁴

Greed burns bright & life is short, ⁵³
an immolation to a new order ⁵⁵
from the center of the storm ⁵⁷
to the forbidden pulp. ⁵⁹

The wheel of quivering meat ⁶⁷
contraption gets wrenched ⁶⁸
headfirst into the barrel. ⁷⁰

Welcome the young lambs ⁷³
in a relic of the imperial age, ⁷⁴
up from the wilds of garbage. ⁷⁵

To cure a surgical disease ⁸¹
requires liberal Thick-It, ⁸³
a stigmata of sacrifice ⁸⁸
and a get away (plan). ⁹¹

The world spins down, ⁹⁶
half-starved and sun-burnt, ⁹⁷
strewing a halo of garbage. ⁹⁸

The beginning of the end, ¹⁰⁵
sacrifice by cab crash, ¹⁰⁶
we ohuuu aahhh. ¹⁰⁸

Behold, the new life ¹¹⁵
better than the old life ¹¹⁶
and the lies of the past. ¹¹⁷

At the end, repose ¹²⁶
& escape by baptism ¹²⁷
from the spiritual engine. ¹²⁸

The epilepsy of your design, ⁷⁷
a false icon to the future, ⁷⁸
vibrates in your inner ear. ⁸⁰

The official stoma adhesive ⁹²
of the last great fuck ⁹⁴
in this time of entropy. ⁹⁵

Buried in the deep recesses, ¹⁰⁰
our large unmoving eyes ¹⁰¹
anoint the consumptive souls. ¹⁰²

All that is evil ¹¹⁰
in the realm of terror ¹¹²
remains forever boring ¹¹³
unlike soul possession. ¹¹⁴

The stench, the liberating ¹¹⁸
catharsis of violence ¹²¹
in your autistic vision. ¹²³

A loss of control, ¹²⁹
the cleansing possibilities ¹³¹
of a natural order ¹³³
& the big combustion. ¹³⁵

The infinite possibilities

For my exorcism: I have split my head wide open and spread its demons on the page.

For my trepanation: I have a messiah who crafts the infinite possibilities:

He excises ribs to provide a portal for the exhibition of one's heart.

He fashions colostomies for punks who slam dance on the beach.

He avulses ears to make us insensate to the voices around us.

He will pluck your eyes free and with new openings

Irrigate the wellspring of your mind.

Behold the new tattoos.

of quiet ruminations

I am alit, aflame; I am abundant.
A milk carton provides a signpost of lambs,
a constant dredging,
an undertow of sacrifice.

Dr. Luke Peters, the grand arbiter of the hospital, takes in the television. This apparition of the outside world provides us with unfathomable nourishment. It is the sustenance for the lack of our lives, why else would we wither when snapped from its vine? Peters takes in the regional wars, the crunch of colliding machinery, the lunatic ravings of mass murderers, the toppling of our corrupt third world dictators, the quiet ruminations of serial killers as they dismember their victims, the mechanistic coupling of the genitals from a paunchy 46 year old democrat and a lost 15 year old girl. These acts are interrupted only by the repetitive rumblings of a dominant sect called consumption/production.

from the wilds of suburbia.

Luke Peters portends the future in his dreams like the reading of sacrificed entrails in the oracle of the what-will-happen. And I channel his visions into the television of my mind and by this satellite, I will tell you the dreams of Luke Peters, this latent messiah.

Hark! I am the prophet crying in your wilderness, the wilds of suburbia filled with your bored restless youth. Your children distill violence as an antidote to boredom. These minds, full of visceral violence encapsulated on a small screen (and at times it breaks free), are a testimony to the ruthlessness of your nation. And in the wellspring of these millennial days, lies the knowledge that I will communicate to you.

In the beginning was the truth. The truth is god who is truth incarnate in all of his guises. One of these guises is god coming forth as a mere man. This you may find hard to believe since billions of us are on this dusty planet and we perish by the boatload from the happenstance of tectonic shift and a man's whim. (And the dead are replenished by an assembly line of duplicated souls.) Against this world of boundless consumption, god sends his holy son who will proclaim, "I am the way, the truth, the light!" Listen to this holy truth, make way for the coming of the lord!

I will tell you what these end times will bring. This story is not for the faint-hearted. All beginnings are wrought in violence: the birth of a universe is heat and splendid energy, the birth of a child is hair and clotted blood, the birth of a nation is revolution and mob rule. And the birth of truth was made flesh in this son of god named Luke Peters. He will show skill in harnessing the beast of your wilding. And so this story will unfold with the cleansing violence of a spring thunderstorm. Trust me when I tell you this: the catalyst of change is god's arbitrary violence. He is the awful one.

I see the pain on the street, the condensation of failed hope from a million injustices and pray for a new world. It comes with a thunderclap, a baptism of lightning and water as god, the great nigga of the sky, screws open his heavenly fire hydrant. As the water pours forth for our cleansing, I contemplate a swim of escape in the burnt hydrogen. I stare at my reflection, see my head, muscle nerve skull brain encased in black skin ready to spring forth. I wear this skin and own the taunts that come from the mirror of my body. Behold, I am a living sacrifice for my lord.

I am a black man. My mother shed me from her womb and I arose—a harbinger. My beliefs were wired into me at an age that leaves no recollection. Such latent beliefs bind generation to generation through our disconnected bodies. They are hidden until called into play.

For awhile, I led a typical life. I did not yell or agitate. I lived in the richest country of the world and silently acquired my possessions. I had much more than the average botswanan, but I was less content than that negro. I consumed voraciously to the point of abuse. I ate when not hungry by force of habit. I was not happy.

So I began my rebellion. I escaped from the ghetto of my mind. It was a sweet break, like coltrane blowing in the early morning light. I was a fugitive free of all constraint from the mind. Is that not where we construct our prisons? I reshaped the world in my own dark image.

It is a time of hope, everything is baptized in the storm of changing weather, wet surfaces carry a glimmer of the new like a freshly waxed cadillac. The lingering moisture makes the air hard to breathe. I expect breathlessness as I plunge into the water and lose the surface of my skin, a disembodied consciousness. But I am unable to escape the grasp of my lord. The conflagration of the barbecue pit sends up ashes of meat until quenched by rain. The cadillac gets dinged by hail but its shinny african chrome remains. I wore a flashy suit and people thought I was somebody. But fate dealt me a cruel blow, I am like the villain in a hong kong movie that gets kicked in the head. Like saul on the road to damascus, I have been knocked off my horse and have a new life.

It is the end of all things, how can I make you see that? It is a time of mystery, the somnambulation of a thousand african queens, the delight of cortez and his men stumbling into a field of disarticulated california cheerleaders and forgetting about the slave trade. This book is about the end of time, when events will culminate and change will be upon us. And since change is seen as cataclysmic, a fear of entropy will permeate this end time.

A “weather-proof” cover allows this book to be buried, kept underground for a very long time and safe from enemies. Do not let this book fall into misunderstanding hands. Beware the approach of the unlikely messiah.

Ritual sacrifice of the usual detritus,

If an act is interpolated, ritual sacrifice must exist to conserve entropy. Along with the usual detritus of discarded material goods and military hardware, is a trash-heap of humanity. This transubstantiation (of predominately children) occurs as necessary sacrifice. While I am losing my skin to the oracle of this new religion, Luke Peters is dreaming of future rebellion. He dreams of standing before the masses to tell them his mind and establish blame for all that is wrong.

He is standing on his soapbox in an urban park. In his dream, it is raining. The rain is unable to wash the streets clean of the scattered garbage from the ying/yang of consume/produce. He preaches to the multitude and some listen, some heckle.

“As in the theater of godzilla, a Clown towers above us, trampling on our petty existence. We are his cattle, drunk in the golden shower of his pacification.”

“And when hungry, the Clown bends earthward for our children. He eats our children (bones and all) and shits them out as sheepish adults. In this way, He deforms our lives into sullen servitude. He leads us down the path of complacency. He is more evil than a mere billionaire. He is the symbol of all that is wrong in our miserable lives.”

“And I will track Him down and kill Him.”

“I will waste the BurgerMan.”

“After which I will grind up his body and feed what is left to the sallow faced children of uzbekistan. Long live the revolution of v i lenin. We have nothing to lose but our own neglected appetites.”

“For a long time I sensed his presence, an evil just beyond the reach of my consciousness. But eventually even I, an insensate child of god, uncovered his true importance. Loved by children, he is the kind face of an inhuman system swallowed whole before maturity. His makeup hides his true soul. He is another of the so called ‘care-givers’ who is, in reality, an unrepentant child molester. This knowledge is mine and I share it with you now.”

“When I drive in my car and pass the gilded temples erected to him, my children yell from the backseat for me to stop and pay tribute. I ignore them. I would rather throw bombs, blast the temples from our midst.”

“So I’ve set a trap. A letter has been sent to BigBurgerInc, that great exploiter of the working class at subsistence wages. It reads: ‘Can BurgerMan please attend the annual meeting of the revolutionary youth brigade at an isolated field south of my city? Please send him by himself, free of the distraction of the other minor players (Meat Burgerlar, Grievous, etc.) who support him in the TV commercials.’ As marx says, they will sell the rope to hang themselves.”

“It will be a comic scene. The BurgerMan steps out of the limousine accompanied by his two goons. The man with the red hair and yellow pants wades through the grassy field. His elongated shoes desecrate the hard soil worked by exploited peasants. The soil of milk and honey will be the grave for the symbol of the plastic milkshake. (And who can forget the deep fat fried rectangular apple pie? It is an adequate symbol of our country. It tastes good, swallows easily and makes one sick.)”

“The assault gun, the proletariat tool of justice, feels cold in my hands and when I depress the trigger it feels like a jack hammer. I splatter the goons with bullets that explode on impact. As the blood pours from the crumpled suits that lie before him, the trembling BurgerMan raises his gloved hands.”

“I direct the BurgerMan to sit at a table around which are placed bright lights and several cameras on tripods. While the cameras document the what-will-happen, styrofoam plates of fried meat bits are offered to the deity. He has no choice but to eat them with all of their special sauces.”

“The cameras capture the terminal event, the plugging of the coronaries, which is the point of weakness in our modern physiology, our place of built-in obsolescence. The BurgerMan gasps his last laugh and, with a look that begs for final reprieve, dies. I replay the scene from all possible angles and only then do I understand the significance of the act.”

“I wish you could see this and believe as I do. I try to teach by example but catch myself preaching. I feel overwhelmed when I watch the images that capture your eyes. The screen lures your eyes like a scent the nose.”

Peters finishes his appeal to the lingering multitude and gets ready to depart. It is dusk and the streets are filled with cops criminals deviants who wish his movement harm. Most of his disciples have vanished into the night, are assumed sacrifices to the powers that lord over us. Even in dream, he is quaking with fear. He looks inwardly and prays for strength to accomplish his holy mission.

During this premessianic period, he has fabulous prophecies of his encounters with evil. Even though he is unaware of the imperative of his dreams, he still has much to teach us even in this unenlightened state.

engulfed with redemptive fire,

For instance, television teaches us that the value of a woman is equal to the price of her collective meat. Thus, women are devalued like the food we eat. Peters warns his children about this belief, but secretly he sees women as a variety of fast food. This hypocrisy was borne from the death of his wife.

Peters has a substitute for his departed wife, a Latest. Asleep in bed, his palms start to perspire in anticipation of the elasticity of her flesh. Her flesh is a small obsession. Peters can visualize a sacrifice made as an acceptable statistical cost to the god of automotive transport. The sacrifice is a Latest as a traffic accident. She lies in a hospital room with her body confined to a cast so she cannot talk, hear or see. An IV runs in, the appropriate genitorectal holes have been placed for output. Peters walks into the room and places his name in ownership on her cast in big letters. With the exposure of her perineum, his relationship with the Latest continues without change. This is only a small exaggeration.

Luke Peters stirs in bed. His brain is engulfed with the redemptive fire of dreams and hark! He has another vision: Peters, his three children and a Latest drive home in the van. Encased in the shell of this consumer product, they drive along the freeway past redundant overcast worlds proclaimed by plastic signs. (This repetition is a conspiracy to induce boredom and to open our minds for the inoculation of false ideas.)

Peters cannot feel significant in this duplicated universe. Peters figures that twenty types of people compose all of humanity, subsuming even himself. Today we worshiped at a shopping mall in the middle of a blighted field. Tonight we will have the same electronic information blasted into our nervous systems while we sit trance-like in front of flickering screens. (Somehow TV involves a subtle killing. How does it do this? How does it kill the spirit of investigation? Peters woke up from a dream and had the answer:

Human behavior is worthy only if exceptional,
for the rest of us—our lives are mediocre,
unworthy of nothing more than conventional living,
therefore why not tune in? Now, imagine

nothing

in your brain,
all memories broken,
you make a fresh start.

All this makes our minds ripe for control.
After all who here is gifted?
Who needs a unique voice?
Is there any other way to have fun?)

A snake of cars, three abreast, slithers around a hill. The van forms one cell in this organism. The heat and exhaust give the family headaches. The Latest is being numbingly boring, “Neoprene is back in fashion. Great stuff—loud and young looking. You like it, Luke?”

“No, can’t you think of anything more important?” says Peters as his mind turns over the miniature representations of violence gleamed from the radio. (In all casual crimes, a belief must be created in our minds about the unfathomable depth of humanity. This belief ensures our complacency and instills a fear of youthful abandon. It confirms our fear of things getting worse. The sacrificial killing of a family by a lone teenager keeps us together, feeds our fear of the destruction of the family by individualization.)

The Latest and the children start to argue. The yelling breaks Peters sense of isolation and he turns to glance disapprovingly at the Latest. When Peters looks at the Latest, he thinks NiceAss. Peters cannot wait to drop NiceAss off at her apartment to diffuse the tension.

(If Peters could stand for one thing, it would be against the corruption of children, a world where children are stolen for sacrifice before an oracle of tribute in every home. Where at home we see the end result of the violence we create abroad, the dissipation of violence by sacrifice. Our children are unfocused until they can create enemies of their own design.) NiceAss opens the door and Peters kisses her goodbye. Peters and his oldest child, Mike who is 17, watch the sensuous twitch of her legs hips ass as she mounts the steps of her building.

Back on the road, the family tolerates the oppression of the heat in silence. Peters swings the van onto the commercial boulevard. Paradox (the essential zen crux of all religion): sacrifice of something precious (like a human victim) makes life not precious, until the sacrifice of something not precious (the murderer) makes it precious once again.

Peters sees the yellow post-modern glam-sculpture that signifies, through years of operant conditioning forced unwilling into his mind, that a BigBurger stand is close at hand. Peters’ sensory organs prick up in heightened awareness. His children make excited comments behind him. In front of the restaurant, Peters sees a man with red hair and yellow pants. He has elongated shoes.

It is the BurgerMan.

Peters pulls his van onto the side street. He sets the brake. He turns to his children who huddle with wide eyes in the back. He says, “Kids, I have something very important to say.” He tells them the same things he told the multitude.

The BurgerMan is done holding forth on his cosmogonic beliefs to the congregation. He walks away from the gathering of children. It surprises Peters that BurgerMan doesn’t walk directly to the bathroom to change into cooler clothes. He would escape the heat. The BurgerMan pays close attention to detail. The spell he holds on the children is

not broken by the image of a disrobing actor. The job requires a slow march into the vibrant polluted sunset.

Luke Peters pulls the van into the lot to cut off the retreat of BurgerMan. Peters rolls down the window and comes face to face with his nemesis. Peters' mouth is a disembodied automaton with a life of its own, "BurgerMan, can you spare a few minutes (the rest of your god-forsaken life) for my children?"

"Wwwhhhyyy, sure!!!!" His voice is as Peters expected, this clown is not an appropriate role model for his children. His eyes cannot leave the contorted smile of BurgerMan. It is the grotesque smile of a simpleton.

Peters holds up his handgun and presses it against BurgerMan's forehead. He motions for Mike to open up the side door. The door opens and . . .

requires a detailed physical exam

Peters wakes up to focus his eyes on the dimly lit Latest sitting in his lap. Peters sets to work on the naked Latest, giving a detailed physical exam with special attention to the elasticity of her flesh. He brushes back her hair. He feels her vagina twitch convulsively around his penis. It pulls like a fisherman testing a bite. Peters prefers fast sex, so that orgasm comes on with the magnitude of a drug effect.

This night Peters dreams some more. He dreams that dogs are all around him. They brush up against him in woozy signs of affection, couple to each other and begin to copulate. Their interlocked genitalia make slurping sounds like life gasping for breath. Their fur feels like electricity against Peters' skin. They howl in ecstasy.

& a conjure of reanimation.

Peters dreams, he is dead. He is above his body as the Latest tries to save it. She removes his pulseless cock from her mouth and straddles her vibrant naked body above his pale one. Her pendulous breasts drape across the chest she should be pressing on. He figures she should be so typical in the end. No matter, he is up here now.

Sure enough, just like he has read in the tabloids—his vision constricts and he has a headlong rush through the Tunnel. He is not sure whether this vision is actuality or sensation. His scientifically trained mind weighs the probability that he is witnessing the hallucinations of dying brain. Or perhaps the Tunnel exists?

Does it matter? He is experiencing it either way. He thinks, wow I am whizzing along. He looks closely at the walls of the Tunnel, his life! The walls of the Tunnel are his life being played backwards like the scenery seen from a fast car at the end of time.

He sees himself spending the majority of his recent life toiling in the clinic. He travels from room to countless room with charts in hand seeing a blur of patients. He becomes less experienced and makes more mistakes. He performs vaginal exams that become more painful.

He performs more sex acts with a dizzying succession of Latests. The acts become more daring and frequent. He plumbs disembodied vaginas in the public domains of his fair city. Vaginas fasten themselves to his erect penis in glass elevators, the stalls of men's rooms, back alleys, pools and parks. The vaginas of Latests cling to him like the spectral lifeforms of an alien culture, once attached they are difficult for him to exorcise.

This goes on for a long time, it is very exhilarating but exhausting. He enters a deep depression and soon his three children join him. The family is in mourning. They divine the corpse of his wife and dig deeply in the dirt until she is found. Men in black suits take her to an undertaker where chain-smoking technicians remove a thick layer of makeup and leisurely transport her under a sheet to the basement of a hospital. In the hospital she warms and gets placed in bed. The sheet is pulled down and she is conjured into reanimation with a beating heart.

Once his dead wife has been revived, he forsakes sex and drugs. Instead of giving his children money, he actually spends time with them. He is part of a family. His life revolves around his family. He is on the ground, at the receiving end of a ferris wheel that deposits necessary activities in his lap in prescribed order. It is a boring existence, like being a monk in a cloistered order that services the child buddhas of a female deity.

Their children get smaller and wake them up at night. They are always tired. They are hard at work trying to stop the shrinking of the children which is scary. In an effort to stave off loss, they feed them by hand. Jane even resorts to suckling them at her breasts. It is of no use.

Jane gets stricken with a bleeding disease. Three horrible times, Jane lies wounded in a sterile blue room full of beeping equipment. He and the doctor wear ritual mask and gown. They stand in front of her outstretched legs and fight to heal her. The specific symptom is that her vagina bleeds profusely. Each time, the doctor heals her by taking the smallest child to place in the wound, first the child who is stricken the most severely, little baby Patricia (as usual, bad diseases attack nice people foremost) than his other daughter, the difficult Jenny, and lastly, his only son Mike. Peters suppresses a yell, he loves his children but loves his wife more. Jane loves her children and screams in agony, she cannot bear the loss.

Each time, the stem of blood is stopped with the wedging of the smallest child. Peters has an ache of surprise each time this procedure is performed. Jane's belly grows with each insertion of a child. In less than a year, she digests the child and is healed. Though this occurs over and over again, one would think they would learn what to expect. The struggle of Jane with this peculiar disease is painful on Peters. Though the disease is racking her body, Jane contends with it better than him. He wonders whether he will see his digested children along with his wife. Suddenly, he is very confused.

The rest of the scenes play on with little analysis from Peters. He begins to pay more attention to the Blinding Light ahead. He sees the beginning of his medical training. At this time medicine is no longer a tedious job that consumes the hours of shorter days, it is a calling. Even now, being whizzed along at a fast speed to eternity, scared confused naked, he manages to utter a small nervous laugh.

The disembodied head of God

He stands before the towering disembodied head of God. God resembles the severed head of a greek statue except that God wears makeup and has red hair.

Peters stands blushing, he still has a partial erection.

God examines Peters' life. God does this by rolling his eyes in the sea of vast makeup and reading the inside of his head. The large painted lips pronounce Peters' life as not good, despite his life-long devotion to the health of others. It is the drugs and sex, God explains. And the lack of devotion to his family. And those moments when he chose to sleep through the crises of his patients. God, his expressions straining the field of makeup, pronounces judgement—an eternity in hell.

Peters' mind imagines a fate worse than death.

(He imagines he is a christ. He is forced by the hammering of fists and whips to carry a heavy cross up a hill as thousands watch and scoff. The heat of the sun raises sweat unto his stinging welt upon welt flesh. Before the milling crowd, he is nailed to the cross. The nails, splintering the bones in his hands as they are driven in, make a grisly

tap tap tap tap

sound.

He is borne up by the crowd and taken outstretched on the cross through the city. It hurts as he is jostled along and sags off the cross with his weight upon the nails. The crowd yells and screams in various contortions of anger as if possessed. Peters realizes in a moment of dimming inspiration that he represents for the crowd all their repressed dreams and hatred of fear. (We hate those who own traits that we dislike in ourselves.)

emerges from the depths, squished,

Peters wakes up. Sweat covers his body. He feels like a seal that has emerged from the watery depths of hell. His body glides alongside the Latest as he gets out of bed. His male sexual radar aligns his eyes along the line of her breast as he beats a retreat to the shower. He notes her carefully trimmed underarm hair. He thinks it is like ectopic pubic hair. This turns him on.

GreatTits is a relatively new Latest, older than the earlier ones, but still eight years younger than Peters. The shower dilutes his sweat as he tries to forget the portion of the dream he remembers. He examines his hands.

The musculature that Peters finds irresistible shimmies GreatTits across the bedroom and into the shower. With her nipples pressing against his back like the muzzles of two guns, Peters confesses his nightmare. She expresses concern. She desires to save him from himself.

Sometimes Peters feels like the shell of a moral man. He especially feels this way when he displays a Latest to his three children. The children are awake and seated with him at the kitchen table as the Latest serves them breakfast.

Mike looks up from his plate of eggs. Mike has a body that recently settled into adult form. Mike brushes back his long hair to display the face that serves as a reminder of Peters' dead wife and says,

“Dad?”

“Son?” Peters suppresses the urge to say hon.

Mike looks down and stirs his plate with a fork. Peters thinks it is amazing that the child has acquired his adult size and will now be forced to mature by change of mannerisms only. Mike asks a question with his mouth full of egg,

“You know Pam?”

“I know Pam. How can I forget her (hot teen body)?”

“You know she isn't happy living with her step father?”

“Teenagers often are not happy living with their parents—in fact, it's very common! You know that son?”

Mike ignores his father's sarcasm and says,

“You know she wants to leave home?”

“Son, but where is she going to live?”

“Pam and I were thinking—“

“Yes, son?”

“—that Pam could move over here and live with me—“

“Oh yeah Mike, like dad is going to buy this load of bull!” Jenny states her position emphatically while jabbing into space with her fork.

“I’m afraid Mike that (as strange as it seems) I have to agree with Jenny on this one. Do you honestly think Pam’s parents would approve of this scheme?”

“Does it matter what they think? You know what Mr. Ferguson does to Pam?”

“Son, remember your company.”

“Christ, this is not fair!” Mike is angry. He rarely got angry, so the other four look at him with detached emotion as if he is a caged animal.

“Son, this conversation is out of control (by suburban standards). Let’s talk about this rationally.” As a counter balance to the gratuitous stimuli of mass media, Peters believes in emphasizing dispassionate rationalization as a means to an end.

“No dad, what is there to be rational about? You know what Mr. Ferguson does to Pam?”

“Son, your sisters and (GreatTits),” says Peters while nodding in their direction.

“Dad!” Michael slams his hands on the table.

“Son, we can talk about this later.”

“Dad!”

“Son, later.”

“Dad, he TOUCHES her.”

“Son. Patricia does not need to hear this, so hold it for later.”

“Dad, Patricia can handle it better than the rest of us, she browses HyperText.”

“And that is the arbiter of what’s permissible to talk about in this home?”

“You’re trying to change the subject. You don’t want to hear my reasons?”

“Not true son. I just don’t want to hear them now.” Peters tells his children that all things are open for contemplation in the future.

Jenny chimes in matter-of-factly, “Dad, Mike is right. We’ve heard it all before. Besides, everyone knows Mr. Ferguson fondles her.”

“Well great kids, now that it is out in the open, what’s the point?”

“Can she move in with me?”

“No son, the Fergusons already think I’m crazy. They would not let Pam live here without some sort of legal fight. You think any judge would let a daughter leave her rightful family to live with her boyfriend and his crazy father?”

“Can she sleep over like my other friends?”

“That is a tough question son, let me think about it.” The eyes of his family stare at Peters as he takes a sip of coffee. Peters pans the multiple sets of eyes in turn and ends by giving a knowing look into the Latest’s eyes. Above all, one must emphasize consistency of action.

“What do you take me for son, a hypocrite?”

“Never.” Mike says this to placate the old man. Jenny makes a face of disgust. She is the next oldest at fifteen, but has a heart of sarcasm that can cut to the bone of existence.

“She can be treated like your other friends.” Peters says this with the air of solomon. He vows to never again be a hypocrite. The verdict sparks Mike’s brain and the muscles of his face mold a cheshire cat grin.

He says, “Yes, thank you!” He swings his hands in the air. Amazing how he looks like a child—

“Fuck you both. This is an absolute load of crap!” Jenny has voiced her displeasure. She has had adult form and action for some time now. “What is so god-damned different about this and Tommy and me?”

Peters stares at her nicotine stained fingers. He thinks they are the fingers of a potential junkie. He recently kicked her junkie boyfriend, Tommy, out of the house.

It was three in the morning and Peters had arrived home from a night out with a prospective Latest. His mind all shut down around him as his Ecstasy wore off, he trudged up the steps to the second floor and thought of sleep.

As usual, he checked on his oldest daughter. He found Tommy in her bed. Jenny was not to be seen. Tommy had the strangest grin twitching across his acne scarred face as he clutched the sheets.

Peters left the room without saying a word to find his daughter. Jennifer was in the bathroom, either performing the act of post-coital douching or inserting her junior sized diaphragm. Peters never asked.

Peters walked back to the bedroom. Tommy refused to leave.

“Hey mother-fucker, this is a free country, I can do what ever I want.”

“So can I, that is why I’m calling the cops.” Peters turned and left. You never know when one of these kids has a gun and Peters was in no mood to press a point.

Thus, the little screaming shit was coaxed out and down the stairs. Peters, smelling fear, followed in close pursuit and laid out the harangue he usually reserved for disobeying nurses. Jenny followed behind Peters, her mouth laying out a near identical stream of words. Mike and little baby Patricia awoke and trudged out of their rooms with eyes blinking. They saw the commotion from the head of the stairs. They gave Peters a point in the battle between father and daughter. The score was thirteen to fifteen.

Now at the kitchen table, Peters makes a mental note to get his daughter an EstroDermaInSert as soon as possible. Just one EDIS under her skin and his daughter would be sterile for five years. It would protect her through college (if she ever goes). The thought enters his head of jabbing the implant into her while she is asleep. He would have to talk to his gynecology friend. The same one who set him up with the younger Latests with the textbook perfect vaginas.

“Don’t just sit there dad, say SOMETHing,” says Jenny to bring her father back from the great beyond.

“It’s different, Jenny.”

“How, dad?”

“You’re younger.” He gulps some coffee.

“Not much younger, DAD.” The words are distinctly formed by a mouth that is clamped bloodily around his ankle.

Peters remembers his vow to never be a hypocrite. It is time for brutal honesty. He lets loose with the real reason,

“Tommy is an idiot, he has no future.”

“No, dad. You mean to say you don’t like Tommy.”

“Well, that is not true. . .” Out of the corner of his eye, he catches the pained expression of his dead wife in Michael’s face.

Jenny rebuts, “It is true, dad, oh god, it is too true.” She starts to cry.

Peters remembers, never be a hypocrite, so he replies,

“Jenny dear, it is true—I don’t like him.”

Jenny howls. Barely audible now, she squeezes out, “Well, I don’t shit on you dad, even if I don’t like your company.” She says this while glaring at the Latest. She storms out and the family listens in silence to the succession of footsteps that lead up to her bedroom. Her bedroom door slams shut.

The Latest walks out with tears trailing down her face. The family martyr, baby Patricia who is 13 and recently joined the other family members in postpubescence, sits with a furrowed expression. She says,

“What exactly does the word fondle mean?”

“Don’t do this to Patricia and (GreatTits), Jenny!” yells Peters. He notices the return of a grin on Mike’s face. “Mike, I neglected to mention that Pam can stay over only if it is OK with her parents as well.”

Mike winces. Luke Peters, unlike other parents, means what he says. He will undoubtedly call Pam’s parents. Pam’s parents cannot stand Peters. Pam will probably get into trouble. “Alright dad, we’ll check.”

“You better.” Peters is pleased with himself in this sea of bad feeling. He realizes he has a thorough mind. Despite all the emotion running amuck, he didn’t forget the part about Pam’s parents. He picks up his napkin and wipes his mouth clean with the nonchalance of cleaning a gun. He leaves to find GreatTits, she didn’t need this hassle.

“Mike and Patricia, clean up. Then you are free to go.”

pushed, pulled this way & that.

After a talk with the Latest, Dr. Peters leaves home for weekend rounds at the hospital. This is his job, he takes care of patients and consequently what he sees gets him thinking.

Medicine has its challenges. Peters makes many decisions in his job. Though most are not dramatic, they are made under great pretense and with much discussion. During these discussions, patients and families cling to Peters' most trite comments. They remember and repeat them to him months or years later. Though the statements are never quite right (medical words can be so difficult to say), Peters is amazed by these verbal ghosts that get reflected back to himself.

Unlike his colleagues, Peters feels no unfathomable moat of self-importance between himself and his patients. Furthermore, Peters has always felt inappropriate in his role as physician. Peters does not believe he is a doctor. He merely attempts to act like one. And as a result, he is readily identifiable as "the doctor."

Sometimes in lonely moments, Peters wanders through less traveled hallways in the hospital and is amazed by the number of rooms that are filled with equipment supplies records secretaries that support his work as an imposter. These things form an integral part of the machine that chomp chomp chomps up sick people. Peters does not see a hospital as a place where sick people receive care but more as a machine that prospers from disease. Peters imagines his patients being digested in a cavernous colon being squished pushed pulled this way and that by the undulating pink walls. Thus, hopeless people are turned into sacrifice.

Witness the brave unfolding,

Every example of human imperfection bolsters him. Every contorted cry limp tremor death eases his plight momentarily. He does not know why he feeds on the misery of others but it is like a fine hit, a euphoric drug.

Dibgel, a dementia patient, stands up at the foot of his bed when Peters walks into the hospital room. Peters remembers the moment when he stood before Mrs. Dibgel and said, "Don't worry Sally, we'll just bring him in and do some tests. Everything will be fine." Now he stands face to face with this shell of a living soul. It is painful for Peters to spend much time with Dibgel, especially when Dr. Dibgel tries to ask questions.

Peters musters the stamina to listen to Dibgel's halting mind. Dibgel will repeat exactly what he said yesterday. Peters knows it is coming, yet hides the urge to interrupt. Peters thinks, poor man, he forgets. Peters tries in vain to sense the depth of this man's frustration, a former professor who is now easily outwitted by nurses, sick children and staff. If in the same position, Peters would kill himself by overdose. Chalk it up to simple insecurity, thinks Peters. He is not strong enough to imagine an existence without a well-functioning mind. He forces himself to listen to this man. Peters prides himself on his ability to listen. He hears a question.

Dibgel says, "Oh, I remememmbbber now. What are we going to do today?"

"Brainwaves. Today you are going to get that special test. Electrodes are going to be placed on your scalp and the brain electricity recorded. Before this happens though, your head is going to get shaved."

"Oh." Dibgel almost looks thoughtful. He continues, "Wwwhat's it going to show?"

Luckily, Peters will not have to answer this question. Dibgel would soon forget the answer and besides, it is difficult to explain. What Peters is presiding over with this poor man is not the waste of a useless test, but the unfolding of ritual. The test is going to come back negative, it always comes back negative. But this man and his family need this test. It will help them (and us) to adjust to his illness. It is not the life of a single man at stake here. Like the brave unfolding of a flower against the constant of gravity, it is the battle of technology against death that is being put on display here.

Peters really thinks these thoughts. He has had these thoughts so many times that they emerge connected en masse when Peters is in a situation like this one. So many times in fact, that the thoughts come out as a peculiar wordless sensation that makes his feet perspire.

Peters feels his feet perspire, knows what this means and tries to explain the concept to his patients. It helps them relax. It would be useless in Dibgel's case, so he skips it. As Peters leaves the scattered Dibgel, he is aware that his hands are sweating. He grabs the chart and makes the necessary plans for the brain biopsy.

the hypodermic sensation

Patricia plays with the house pet, an automated cat that needs no food, no means to dispose of waste. It harbors no infectious disease. It plugs into the wall, can be washed down without holding or fighting by a garden hose directed against its metal skin.

Patricia throws the rubber mouse, which the cat pursues with single-minded relish and pierces with metallic fangs and claws. It turns around and grasping the mouse in its mouth, takes in Patricia with its dome eyes. It makes an internal whirl.

Mike is playing a game on the television. He maneuvers a narcotics officer with a rocket launcher and blows up low life—drug dealing urban punks. The punks explode in dismemberment. The reflection of the screen is carried in Mike's eyes. The object of the game is to rescue the battered white girl in the bikini.

Jenny sneaks up behind Mike and swings a pillow against Mike's head at a critical juncture of the game. Mike, taken by surprise, misfires and accidentally sublimates the trunk of the bruised girl, leaving her limbs.

“God-damn you, Jen. I could have gotten high score.” Mike takes a wild swing at Jenny as he tries to get up, but misses and stumbles.

Jenny hits him again with the pillow and knocks him down. “Daddy's little favorite, aren't you? You are always getting your way. You say anything and dad just jumps. Oh daddy, can Pamela come over so I can be just like you—fuck a Latest?”

“Bitch.” Mike grabs Jenny's ankle. She tries to twist it free and falls to the carpet. They wrestle on the floor. Using the palm of her hand, Jenny gives Mike a bloody nose, while Mike succeeds in pinning Jenny.

Little baby Patricia throws the mechanical cat on Mike. It shrieks while landing on the small of his back and sinks its fangs into his buttocks. Mike feels the hypodermic sensation and rolls onto his back in an attempt to squash the cat while yelling, “Patricia, get this thing off of me or I'm going to break it.”

“No, you aren't,” says an unusual voice.

Patricia and Mike look up and see Tommy at the foot of the stairs. He must have emerged from Jenny's bedroom. Patricia and Mike are both terrified of the teenage boy even though he is younger than Mike. Patricia gently removes the cat from Mike's back and they stand side by side and muster the courage to face the boyfriend.

“Come on Jen-babe, let's get out of here.” Jenny stands up and straightens her clothes. Jenny walks past Tommy and out the door. Tommy lingers behind and fingers the bulge in his pants. He gives a threatening look at Patricia and Mike and then leaves with a slamming of the door. Patricia and Mike stand in silence without saying a word.

of the big soul-suck

A siren blares and Peters starts. The whoop of the code buzzer drives his heart into scraping up and down the back of his throat. Somewhere deep in the soul of the machine, it is aware that someone is pulseless and dying. That a hospitalization is to be ended prematurely. This is not allowed.

Peters recognizes the room number, it is Mrs. Slezinski, an elderly well-insured-somewhat-demented (WISD) widow in a private room. Peters walks behind the running nurses and follows them into the room. In a glance, Peters sees Slezinski laid out peacefully in her bed. She appears to have no problem, she is perhaps a bit pale.

Nurses move as if the floor is searing hot. One wheels in a cart that serves as an altar upon which lay drugs tubes shocker chalice bread-of-hosts. Another starts an intravenous line. What the others are doing, Peters does not know. He does know that no one is breathing for the patient, no one is pressing on the sternum—breaking ribs.

Peters assumes the classical position, described precisely in the ancient texts, and places his fingers on the neck that is still warm.

He feels no pulse.

He asks, “Was the code witnessed (did anyone see her die)?”

A practical nurse says in reply, “Just a few minutes ago—taking her pulse—I lost it—then her mouth opened—“

The ritual begins with a thought that lodges in Peters’ mind. The thought is wordless and needs no explanation. Peters knows he has spent much time torturing dying patients in his short life.

Peters explodes in rage, “Well, do we just stand here or do we start CPR (breathing for the patient and breaking ribs)?” Nurses start breathing for the patient and breaking ribs.

In a flash, Peters grabs the holy paddles, moves the rib-breaking nurse aside and lays them in supplication on the withered breasts that have been drained of life. He checks the rhythm of the patient’s heart on the little screen and pronouncing it not good, chants the mystical incantation

“everyone stand clear” and

shocks her.

Mrs. Slezinski convulses as the wave passes through her chest heart brain legs arms. The wave flails her arms up as it passes out of her fingertips and she falls back

still dead.

The anesthetist arrives and scrapes the back of her aged throat with a blade to clear the tongue so a tube can get shoved into her windpipe. A nurse jabs a needle into the groin to take blood.

Peters shocks again. The skin clad skeleton rattles and falls into a heap.

Peters places the paddles to check the rhythm, though he doesn't need to because he can tell the body has been reanimated. The soul of Mrs. Slezinski has gotten sucked back into her body. The pain of broken ribs, seared chest and gagging throat makes Slezinski try to sit bolt upright, pull the breathing tube out and make for the door.

But they hold her down.

Peters stares at the bucking of Mrs. Slezinski. Peters gave her up for dead and now her eyes roll, arms grope and face contorts. Peters thinks, am I mad for she doesn't look real; this naked very-white very-skinny very-old woman looks like a special effect out of a movie.

Peters congratulates the team as Mrs. Slezinski is restrained and packaged in the silex transportation tube. The tube will be whooshed to the intensive care unit where she will continue to receive diligent care (or rather, be punished for the crime of trying to die in the presence of all this technology). Peters disengages himself to tell the ICU physician about Mrs. Slezinski's arrival.

& you care about the ?

The question of 'when does life begin?' bounces off of Peters' mind: Can thinking be possible with a language as messy as this one?

An egg, examine it with the eye: Like a bacterium, can it be anything but alive?

Take a sperm under glass and train the eye: It wiggles and therefore is alive.

Therefore, life begins before conception.

The more relevant question is 'what constitutes human life?' I can tell you that as a physician, Peters has seen people long born who are no longer human. Peters thinks about how much pain these inhuman vessels can hold, their capacity in the inability to die.

White people like WonderBread

Peters is done for the day and the machine releases him from its orchestration, jettisons him and his flashy car from underground parking like a drone released from the confines of the hive for random motion on an overcast day.

Peters rolls over in his mind the sum he made in service to the machine. The machine kicks back a portion of the profit to support Peters and his indulgences.

He thinks about the pain he inflicted on Mrs. Slezinski that brought her back from the great beyond. Ignore the priests of organized religion with their kabalistic muttering for the superior demonstration of technology has been made.

Technology is a symptom of our fear of death. A lot of it is thrown away in the effort to stave off death and the battle is futile. Society forgets this in grand deception. But the important thing is that technology forestalls death. Death is inevitable, but the darkness is pushed back a little, nudged slapped pushed one final time before we shoot down that Tunnel. Peters asks if the prayers of organized religion can do the same. He (and I) think the answer is no.

The mass media, the chief propaganda organ for the powers that lord over us, blast into our ears eyes minds gonads the religion of technology. Peters is a high priest for the new religion even as it sucks the marrow out of his life. He has given himself over to the new religion. Nothing is left of him, he is amalgamated, packed patted into some compact whole (of which he should want no part).

The price for his life long devotion to acquiring the skills of the new religion: He does not value life. (I pity him.)

There is just too much of it. Life flows through the doors of his clinic like a river. The life is merged into a few distinct personalities: the grey faces that blur into one composite that spouts platitudes; the overweight factory worker with the bad back; the nervous teenager who shows up for her first birth control device.

And so on.

Everyday, Peters sees multiple white people in separate stalls packaged like WonderBread. It is an eclectic mix of the blender, nerve vessel bone brain pureed together into the possibilities of disease. Peters listens. He prescribes. He orders. He moves the product along.

The idea of the patient as a disposable product is a concept that was invented in Peters' lifetime. He tries to remember when he first became aware of the idea. He toils through his mind and upends that root into view.

He was driving home one night along a highway in the rural midwest. He was returning from an exhausting conference on some nuance of his practice. Ahead of him were many cars going in the same direction. In retrospect, it must have been the start of hunting season to explain the number of cars on this usually deserted country road.

A pair of red lights, like bloodshot eyes, flashed ahead of him. His introspection broken, he noted his approach on taillights. The taillights were part of a long chain. Peters joined a line of cars in a traffic jam.

The frustrating part was that he and the others were strung out along a narrow slab of pavement despite an open surrounding plain of farmland under stars. Peters saw the black silhouettes of silos and barns against the darkness. He wondered about the accessibility of pornography from rural satellite dishes. He waited. He desired.

Up ahead, people were out of their cars and wandering around with the excitement of moviegoers. Suddenly, bright lights appeared and rotated along the shoulder of the road. The lights were a police car and ambulance, which passed to stop six cars in front of Peters. The lights helicoptered red white red white in imitation of televised intervention.

The cops and technicians wrestled a middle aged male dressed in a neon orange jumpsuit from the pickup and deposited him on a gurney. The gurney bearing the man like Jesus-on-the-cross was taken to the back of the ambulance. The man's young son hurried alongside. It was a late night sacrifice to the god that we all innately feel must watch over hypervigilant collections of people.

Peters remembers his relief and his thoughts: move the car aside, usher the family away, let me get on with my life on this line, my time is not yet up. He thought about the services that need to be provided for our inevitable dying and how he stood to profit from our need of sacrifice. The memory of the feeling percolates in the juices that bath his brain.

in wide-eyed contemplation

Luke Peters pulls into the driveway and passes Mike on his skateboard. Mike's clothes and skateboard are decorated with various sundry images of violence in solidarity (or duplication) of protest against the sterility of his environment. Mike waves to the old man with a modicum of decorum.

The home senses the approach of Peters in his consumer product and opens the door to reclaim them. Peters lets himself out from the harness of his car as the door closes. The home identifies Peters and lets him inside.

Inside the home, he looks for Jenny so he can tell the clone of himself that he loves her. Since it is a saturday, she is gone. As usual their timing is poor, their wavelengths dissonant. Instead, he finds the little baby Patricia and will she provide a sensation of family?

Little baby Patricia is in wide-eyed contemplation of the television screen. She sits lotus style on the floor. She is watching spasms of violence as depicted in cartoons, that essential element of our early construction.

Patricia is one of the many quiet children that take in everything. Lately Peters has been thinking about what goes on inside her head. He thinks about what this impenetrable mind is thinking about him and his family, but she refuses to yield up her secrets.

“Patricia, want to take a walk with dad?”

“How about later?” Patricia is enthralled by the little screen. Patricia watches the stylized decapitation of a human rabbit and then a message from the sponsor.

Peters lays the idea to rest and walks upstairs. He had taken many walks with his children after the death of his wife. These walks relieved the monotony of mourning and made them feel like a family for a short time. Luke and Jane often took turns tending the children while the other spouse had precious time alone. The walks allowed Peters and his children the brief fiction that Jane was alive and waiting at home.

The children braved ahead as Peters contemplated what to tell them about everything and anything. Peters often felt he was floating in a vacuum of belief while his children batted him back and forth using questions as sticks.

It was a fall day. They tramped through the amber hued world. Dry leaves crunched under foot. The naked trees with their claw like limbs brought animist tendencies out of Peters:

Crisp arthritic fingers
fail in grasping
held outstretched by witches
and you should know
these secret purveyors of
our unconsciousness, they
stand in silent sentinel
and
listen.

So among an audience of listening trees, Peters struggled to keep up with his children. It was a Sunday after church. For a short time after the death of his wife, he took his children to church. It was a ritual that marked off time, a chronometer that marked off the stages of his children's grief and his disillusionment. He would never know why adults hide their agonizing self-doubts from their children. He was feeding them a ready-made diet of flesh and blood contained in rote prayers that he did not believe in. It made little sense to Peters. He thinks we do this to hide our children from our confusion and to allow the subterfuge that childhood is perfect and wondrous.

(At least, this is the middle class (white) view of things:

As I get older
the amazing thing
(the crux of it all)
is that our ideals live
in a shallow grave
and we don't see
the most obvious
thing. We live as
animals.

It is not a just world. The world I see does not match the one my mother told me existed and a part of me was formed that revolts (endlessly at what I see.)

Peters saw little that was clearly etched as the truth. While he stood devastated, his children were fine. He remembers their horseplay, the time Michael pushed Jennifer to the ground and sprained her ankle.

Peters used a walking stick to help carry himself and the limping Jenny along.

at the oracle of blackness,

Peters goes to his study and sits at the desk. He turns on the computer and works on his self help book about television addiction. Outside the window, he is aware of gentle rain.

His train of thought is interrupted by the sound of Mike's footsteps coming up the stairs. He hears his son place his skateboard up against the wall and then brief silence until Mike turns on his stereo. Peters listens to the blistering music and attempts to decipher the lyrics. He needs to pass judgement on its content since little baby Patricia can hear it as well.

The singer is screaming as if in pain and no words are forthcoming.

His train of thought interrupted, Peters turns on the television. It is in the shape of a small robot and stands like an interloper on his desk. Irritated, he clicks from channel to channel to whatever catches his brief attention. He finds the music channel.

Television is the circumscription of violence and depravity. It is the antidote to our world of repetition and control. Television is the reservoir of unspeakable acts that intrigue us. It is the wellspring of our bad feeling, the oracle of all those necessary thoughts that we do not want to take on credit. It makes us sane and we watch it commensurate with our depth of dissatisfaction.

Peters cannot help but watch the gang of angry black men wearing hoods as they congregate with clubs around the gutted wreck of a tenement. They are outside of control, nothing but a vacuum exists between their skins. Their jackets bear forth identical brightly colored ideograms of organized violence. The camera takes each man in turn and focuses on each inscrutable rapping face. Between this punctuation, there is nothing but a world of shadows.

(All things are possible
in your mind's ghetto,
a rapture to freedom
by me, your mind's negro,
a specter of redemption,
when time will wash over all
things, open up & flood.)

Peters wonders about the meaning of this and his need to watch it. He wonders about the infatuation of television with psychopaths, manmade disaster and regional conflict. He wonders what people could have done to fill the space of their time before the invention of television.

(Rome 327 AD, the essence of television would have been the pursuit of christians by lions in the pit of the stadium, but the technology was not sufficiently evolved to provide roving cameras, close-ups and slow motion.

Spain 1638 AD, television was provided by the burning of heretics, though the efficiency of presentation was poor. Large numbers of heretics were needed because of the limitation of small audiences.

Salem 1736 AD, the inability to provide parallel representation was realized. The puritans opted for the solution of moving the presentations from the confines of walls to the outdoor arena, which allowed more viewers. In this solution they were not original but merely duplicated the technique of the romans. Their original contribution was in the variety of exhibitions provided. They expanded from burnings to provide such crowd-pleasing presentations as witch dunk which added an element of suspense (though at an absence of the spectacle of fire).

Europe and Asia 1900s, television evolved into audience participation with two world wars. Though television had previously been confinable, it became evident that because of boredom television could only occur with ever increasing destruction of vast areas of property.

Auschwitz 1940, the nazis experimented extensively with the psychic separation of participant-viewers from their events.

Western theater 1941, using experimental arrays the allies were able to capture small portions of war activity on small curvilinear screens. The problem was representation, one blip of light for an aircraft meant that only the most imaginative could use the device for catharsis.

America 1951, television was perfected by constructing huge arrays that transmitted parallel representations of complex phenomenon.)

These revolts against convention give us our daily catharsis, our momentary release of freedom. They are our sustenance.

slip from their sleek skins.

Peters is taking the Latest out tonight. The Latest is dressed in a sleek skin and slips seductively from Peters' playful grasp. He is an approximation of happiness. The Latest is glowing with her man. They are walking in the rain under an umbrella.

"The only name more beautiful than (GreatTits) would be (GreatTits) Peters," says Peters. He is very high.

"Don't give me that crap, you'll never propose."

"I will," he rebuts.

"I know you, Luke. How many (Latests) have you used and disposed of like picked over bones?"

"Like picked over bones? Is this another meat analogy you are alluding to?"

"Yes, like the performance artist that made the meat dress to show how men confine women."

"Jesus."

She bites her lip and thinks. She reaches out and touches his hand.

As Peters slows down, sex is less exciting, as are drugs. He knows what to expect as the pills tumble down the dark cavern of his throat. Every gesture, attitude, beat of his heart, comes from a drug taken into or secreted within his body. He is disemboweled from the belly of reason by the drug of carelessness; he thinks there may be room in his life for another marriage.

Tonight they are out to please the Latest. He is taking her to a french restaurant. It is imbued with a pretentiousness he tolerates in wry drug induced amusement. The magnitude of the check expresses his love for her.

Later he shows his love by tolerating a play. The drug changes the dialogue on stage to some sort of a code. Peter releases his mind from the confines of his brain to wander free for awhile.

Perhaps that was a mistake.

Later in her bedroom, the hips of the Latest undulate under his own. As Peters screws the fear of death rides his backside. He cannot relax. He imagines himself watching from a corner of the room. The fear rushes his head, stiffens his muscles, until the stillborn spasm of a climax as mechanical as a drug effect explodes the fear into relief that his parts still function.

He falls into her. As soon as she falls asleep, he moves away from the heat of her body to the cool of the outlying bed. He listens to the pattering of the rain. He watches the rise and fall of her breasts.

It was different with his wife. Peters' sexual psyche lies stretched out between those two polar opposites, his murdered wife and the generic Latest. A Latest is some sort of techno-cunt, her sexuality all set off by miniskirt pumps plastic-surgery. She is a recreational opportunity, a companion piece to Peters' car. Peters' feeling for a Latest can swing from the extremes of lust to hate in the same time his car can do zero to sixty.

An original moment, an offing

Jenny watches the ritual offing of oversexed teens by an amnesiac serial killer in one of a series of numbered films. This represents her pornography, her means of exorcising herself from her frustrations. She is not happy if others are more fortunate than she. She is not living up to the standards set forth on the little screen.

She turns off the television feeling somewhat better. She takes a drink from her glass of coca cola. She thinks about the relationship she has with her father. Her brother will soon leave for college. What out does she have?

She takes another swig from the glass, the rum burns the back of her throat. She is becoming very intoxicated. Thoughts come tumbling forth in combinations not normally realized. She is afraid of not losing control. She takes another drink for her nerves. She is glad her father is away at this moment of her life. She has no need for him. He would only get in the way of things.

This moment represents her calling. This is her original moment, that one time in her life when she has a truly original thought that will serve as her impetuous for a unique life.

She raids her brother's bedroom and finds his dope. She packs the bowl of his pipe. She clumsily lights it and breathes it in. The smoke is like vulcanized rubber. It makes her aware of every bronchiole, warms her chest. Her vulva is also warming up. She wishes Tommy was around. She picks up the oblong handle of the telephone and touches a sequence of numbers.

"Hello." It is Tommy's stepmother.

"Mrs. Koshiol, is Tommy around?"

"Hi Jenny, just a second, let me check."

Jenny hears a muffled yell for Tommy, after a moment he is on the line.

"Hey Jen-girl, what's up?"

"Hey lover-boy, what are you up to this evening?"

"Not much when you're not around."

"Wanna come over? My father and brother are gone."

"Little-baby-Patricia too?"

"You know that doesn't matter."

“I’ll try. Wait a second.”

Jenny hears a muffled request for mom’s car to study at a friend’s house.

“Jen, it’s OK, I’ll be right over, bye-now.” Tommy hangs up before Jenny can respond.

Jenny hangs up the phone and raids her father’s medicine cabinet. She takes some pills as a party cap and waits for Tommy.

Thirty minutes later, Tommy has navigated the repetitive dark causeways of suburbia and arrives at a near identical home to the one he left. Jenny, slightly groggy, lets him in at the front door and forgets to lock it as her father requests. Her effluence of booze turns on Tommy. While waiting she made him a tall glass of rum and coca cola on ice which he gladly downs.

Jenny is really excited. They put on jungle music, stagger up the stairs to Jenny’s bedroom, madly remove their clothes, jump into bed, interconnect their genitals. Jenny pistons them apart, but soon they get into sync with the rhythm. Their brains are having little seizures of ecstasy. Their blood gets shunted to the genitals and rushes back to talk to their brains. Now the pleasure centers are turned on and as the couple sighs, Jenny’s breathing center is turned off. For Tommy the spell is broken. His memory conjures forth a technique learned from a health class. He pinches off Jenny’s nose and breathes in her mouth. He keeps this up for awhile but is torn between doing this or calling 911.

He stops breathing for Jenny and jumps off the bed naked to find a telephone. He finds one in Peters’ bedroom and dials 911. When the operator answers, he is very excited and starts to yell into the phone. It occurs to him that he cannot remember the address. He tells the operator to wait. He runs into the master bathroom and finds a magazine. He breathlessly tells the operator the address off the magazine. The operator tells him to wait, that help is on the way. He hangs up.

He runs back to the bedroom and Jenny is still not breathing and blue. He resumes breathing but it doesn't seem to be working. He checks the pulse on the body. He puts on his clothes and runs out the front door into the wet world as the sound of approaching sirens provides a chimera of what is to come.

of the mind's germans

Peters had been able to avoid calamity in his first thirty-five years. He had been blessed with a good prosperous life, toiling away and consuming within his means. He felt addicted in this, like he was doing something decadently passive—like shooting drugs or watching a lot of movies. He knew that one day calamity would strike him hard—either he would have an accident of disastrous proportion or something would befall a loved one. He had been living on borrowed time. And then his wife was murdered. Despite the tragedy, a part of him was relieved that the wait was over and he was left with some good memories.

Once as college students, Jane and Luke Peters swam naked in mediterranean water. Blue water engulfed their bodies with a warmth that melded skin and sea. They swam as disembodied consciousness under a dome of cloudless sky. Waves swept them up onto the black beach.

When the red sun set, they moved within their thickened cool skins down the cobblestone chaos of the yugoslavian village. They walked to the home where they rented a small bedroom. The landlady, a middle aged woman with jet-black hair, moved her children out of their bedroom for the two travelers. She watched out for Luke and Jane like her own family.

Luke and Jane walked past the gate into the simple courtyard with the flowers straining against nighttime gravity. The woman, with her father and a Latest, were enjoying a bottle of wine under evening stars. Peters thought of the garden of eden. They motioned for Luke and Jane to join them. The couple settled among them and received multiple glasses of wine. They did not understand a word of the slavic language and Peters' drunken mind was free to wander. The old man talked of the war. The old man, like a child, held a machine gun and mowed down his mind's germans. He made a rat a tat tat sound. They saw the blood pour with ease.

Jane and Luke retired. They made love. At this time, Peters cared little about money, television, computer links, vaginas and the vagaries of drugs.

Later, Jane and Luke stood in his grandma's backyard and watched her divine water like the old mediterranean man divined blood. Peters was a descendent of a long line of water witches who could find wells with any fresh Y shaped stick of weeping willow. The stick bucked, fought for release in Gram's tremulous hands as she wrestled the stick to the spot where the earth would bleed water. Jane watched Gram with genuine interest.

Jane loved all ages. She adored children as well, even the defective products.

He can not match those feelings of his former wife. Once a month, Peters doctors the children at the central colony. The true stamp of a throwaway culture is a trash heap of children.

Assembled as a living junkyard, they stare eat shit in contortions of Peters' form. He stands among them, these mistakes of organized society—kids brain-damaged by toxins autos guns and the mistakes of pediatricians. Those wide bleeping eyes love television. Yet turn them away by simple accident and they stare, with equal fascination,

at the wall.

There is another reason besides convenience that we place them out of sight:

They make us uncomfortable.

Peters asks, god why me?

Peters' job is to ration out antibiotics to keep germs from prematurely digesting them. Others brace these children against the pull of gravity. Peters once heard death called gravity. How true, the eternal 32 feet per second per second accelerating pull to our graves.

commits them to gravity.

On the rainy day I had my accident, I met Luke Peters for the first time. I was riding my motorcycle and, like Peters, I was cultivating a diet of Latests. I was on my way to feed my appetite.

On this day, I took a curve a little too fast. As the wheels slipped on the wet pavement, we (machine & I) went down. As gravity pulled along the perpendicular, we kept straining forward. Gravity won the contest.

As I was being ground along, I had a single prolonged thought. In that long moment I could have easily replayed the few major events (conquests, sexual and otherwise) of my life.

Instead I had a single mass-produced thought, “Thank god, my helmet is on.” I heard the scrape of bike and the ripping of jeans.

“Thank god, my helmet.” The scrape of skin.

“Thank god.” The scrape of flesh.

The scrape stopped short of my bones. I felt the burn of raw flesh.

Or instead of a flashback, I could have thought about machines. Our machines complete us. We push our machines, they pull us. Black boxes mystify us. A man beats his wife, but won't let a scratch fall on his car.

It was the well-tuned hum of my motorcycle that ordered me to go just a little faster. It brought me down. (And the media kept me from myself. It was James Dean, his leg a gaping wound, who picked up my coarsely filed bike. I felt I was James Dean, a light turned on a memory of a retained movie.) I wonder where my skin ends and the surface of the machine begins. My wonderment holds for others as well.

I will watch Peters with intense fascination. He'll be in my hospital room shortly, standing at the foot of my bed, asking questions, staring at my chart. He will stand before me in rumpled clothes and clad in a food stained white coat. His face and hair will be perfectly groomed. With his narrow face and pinched nose, one sees Dr. Peters as a pure breed of animal.

Dr. Peters drives nice machines that he sees as extensions of himself. I know this for he tells me. In moments of strictest confidence, he tells me even more; so much of what he does in medicine is the mating of men and machines:

Sing of the scratching of teeth
and fingernails
Along the greased hell-pole
of our existence,
Against the hustle & bustle
of the ventilator as
Gravity sends us down
down

down

down.

Knowledgeable people say man is the animal that uses tools. Or has thumbs. I say man is the animal that thinks he is not an animal. And he uses a noble cause or machines to allow for the deception. Death is sublimated as a sacrifice for a noble cause or a failure of not enough technology. Somewhere lost in all of this is the natural acquiescence of an aging and dying animal.

LOOK IN THE GOD DAMNED MIRROR AND BARE YOUR GLISTENING TEETH TO SEE YOUR TRUE SOUL—A BASTARD ANIMAL THAT ARMS ITSELF WITH ANY CAUSE AND TOOL THAT CAN KILL. In countless lands, millions upon millions have been killed with the marriage of purpose and the simplest of tools. Now we have the Bomb.

The first man is on the vestigial plain of primeval earth. He is little better than an ape and for the first time picks himself up from all fours, and stands. He is unsteady on two feet, but once he is firmly planted, he scans the horizon and takes in the sight of the other animals, their bellies dusty from walking on four legs.

And here it comes, the monumental event—the first human thought, it percolates up the primitive brain stem and fashions itself in rough hews in the neocortex. A vague feeling of contempt admixed with superiority forms a mask on the first man. He makes the first human invention which is not fire, but a club. The four legged (who exist only to procreate) become clothes food pests and sport. As god's chosen clubs away with glee on their little skulls, he becomes bolstered in the idea that he is not one of them.

What we need to see is not our common humanity, but the tenuous existence of a bunch of scared animals (ourselves) on a single planet.

I am in the hospital as a patient. I am forced to do the two things that bother me, I think and lust. Meanwhile, the television hovers over me as an oracle, a blank face that is amused in smug superiority of my plight, my pain, my burned human flesh.

I spend whole days in its sway, a fixture in my life more important than the sun or the moon. It beams down on me. It teaches me how to think even while I'm doing critical analysis of its effect. I spare nothing, I watch everything. I focus my attention on the commercials. I see machines, women, fast food and meat.

My sexuality is bound and gagged with hate. I lust at the nurses as they work on me. I inspect their made up faces, the lines of their underwear beneath the white uniforms. I am a modern man and therefore a rapist through and through. I was taught my sexuality at a young age from television no doubt. Look at the woman in the bikini getting her silicon jostled as she takes a bumpy ride in the jeep. She is sucking on a drink through a straw. The camera gets a close-up of the slow deliberate grasp and slide of lips along plastic.

My Latest walks into my room. She is wearing a tight miniskirt made of space age material (neoprene) that allows no imagination from me. I turn off the television.

With moby dick pallor,

My body has healed (but my mind?).

I have begun to see Peters socially. We have become as close as childhood friends. We contemplate trading Latests, my little one for his big one.

Late one night, we converse in conspiratorial overtones at some dark downtown bar. We are unwound by alcohol:

The mind
is not a spring,

it does not
flow like water.

The mind
is a spring,

it is coiled
and then released.

Peters confides, “I really think the underlying crux of my dissatisfaction,” Peters begins, unconsciously emphasizing his syllables like a black man because he is talking to one, “is that love and lust never quite came together in my life. The women I admire, the ones I respect, I love intensely on a cerebral level. But they don’t get me going sexually. But put me in bed with a woman who is mindless and I can’t wait to ‘rack’ her. The more manipulable (and younger) the woman the better. Obviously something about sexual attraction goes beyond beauty. I feel uncomfortable with these feelings.”

“I feel the same way and I think eldridge cleaver described the same sort of thing.”

“Really?”

I explain, “He describes the feelings of black men who resent the sterile hypocritical white society that surrounds them. Yet, they often have unmitigated lust for white women. They hate themselves for these feelings.”

“That is exactly how I feel,” Peters says with his eyes flashing. “I lust a class of human behavior I despise.”

I listen in amazement to the way that sentence tumbles out of Peters’ drunken mouth. “Peters, you are a scientist through and through old man.” (There is something going on deep inside of me. It is an unspoken attitude, a middle class attitude of compromise, a shameful blurring of ideals. It sneaks into my life when I least expect it, an underlying

assumption that stale science is interesting for its own sake, as if the world was all constant and unchanging.)

I alone hold the key to the transfiguration of Luke Peters. “Peters, you need some soul. It is time to put a black finger on the nuclear trigger.”

“Technology is not part of the black man’s domain,” is his reply.

“That is a racist statement Peters.”

“You don’t understand what I’m getting at here. The subjugation of nature, the colonization of lands inhabited by darker skinned people was historically a white thing.”

“I don’t understand? I haven’t heard that before? Seriously, Luke.” (But I can envision the fine scope of Peters’ mind. I see his mind doing somersaults, conjuring up images of bald men with moby dick complexions working with diligence in some precise machine that sits on the moon making bombs. The machine is very large and the men fit like sardines in it. It swallows up their aspirations without them knowing it. Peters knows that colonization and subjugation continue today but with disguised sophistication. White men sell guns to colored men abroad to enslave black men. Whole villages of filipinos are genetically engineered to colonize the garbage heaps created by industrial nations. Each morning the children of the villages tramp barefoot through the detritus sorting out shards of glass and aluminum cans which are exchanged for T-shirts and tongs. White politicians give the tax dollars of the masses to white men in industry to build impractical weapons that will never be used. They split the profits between themselves.)

“Your old man—what was he like? How did he raise you to think like this?”

I touched Peters’ skin with that sentence (and he bled).

His anger was volatile. It sprang without end. His father, that old son of a bitch, had gotten what he deserved in the end. All the years of lonely abuse had vanished in a flash. The cars collided, sparked and Peters’ father was gone—scalped, his blood poured out of him as if he had been nothing but a vessel for it during the sixty odd years of his life.

His father, the man who beat him senselessly, had been nothing but a container for five odd quarts of blood. That had been proved in the cadillac, the sum of his life emptied over the seats. The blood patted down the dust balls of memories on the floor.

(You know how Americans animate their cars. A car is alive and we are a part of it. Peters’ father was an integral part beneath the steel skin of his car. The sun fueled them, kept them organized. With the collision, the parts (father and car) mixed, entropy increased, things settled to their natural state and one got good sacrifice.)

Peters confided to me that night in the dark bar that he felt uncomfortable with the death of his father. His happiness with the death of the man tortured him. He avoided gloating in front of his family. He was amazed that the fear that shaped and controlled his life was gone and that its source was mortal. He felt guilty about his new found freedom. Jane picked up on this torrent of feeling. She accepted the irony of it. She threw out the condolence cards one by one as they arrived. The death was so underplayed by Jane and Luke that the children didn't ask them a single question.

“So how did your father die, James?” Peters asks me.

Peters listened sympathetically while I talked about my father's death. He has heard these feelings many times before, dealt with the anger of loved ones over things that cannot be helped or changed. He excuses himself from me. He feels a need to go to the hospital and visit his daughter on the ventilator. I walk him to the door and out into the rain.

the still-born souls

I've been thinking:

Man created cities because he sought the order he saw at his feet where even insects could toil dirt into form. Thus, thick walls were erected and man escaped the ravages of nature for organized thievery in the service of the Idea.

But our deep-rooted desires let us down. Nature grew out of our minds into our backyards, within our cities, as dangerous as it was in the great outside. Man can leave nature, but nature never leaves man, because all the while the jungle was assumed to be lying beyond the walls, it really lurked within each of us.

The city is a jungle, especially at night. Make miniature suns and place them on long poles to cast light on the dark night and the cluttered plight of our lives.

I have to admit that my desires do not fit within the confines of the street, my jobs, my community, my life. Most of the time I pretend and "acts my role." Other times I explode.

Like tonight. I drive through the ghetto streets and scream out revolutionary slogans from my open van window at the black faces gathered on the stoops, at corners, coming out of the crack houses. I scream: **A CAPITALIST SHIT MONGER HAS YOUR SAD FUCKING BODIES. HE TRADES IN HARD CURRENCY, YOUR STILLBORN SOULS. RISE UP AND OVERTHROW THOSE WHO POUR CEMENT DOWN YOUR THROAT.**

The faces stare back at the loud-mouthed black man that is me. They laugh at me from the realm of their infested rubble. I just keep driving and ignore the ridicule. But I stand by what I know, what I know needs to be known.

I am the guardian of Peter's salvation. He has this option: He could go insane. (I have done this, so I know: Insanity is a place of intense fear, but also an escape into the realm of all possible things, the wellspring of all change. The insane survive by the force of their Ideas. Some, their Ideas too radical, languish in institutions or get hung as witches. Others speak the Needed Idea at the Right Time and get Immortalized. The Great Ones are all insane. It gives them their Voice.)

watch your television.

So what's it going to be Peters, ah?

I have the man cornered in that dark bar. He is up against the corner, his head tilted back against the wall. I fix him up with my eyes. I have him where I want him. He is trapped between the two walls and the table between us. Like a Russian, I am plying his secrets with the free gift of alcohol.

Peters says, "People who do not understand the concept of quality of life annoy me. They must be operating under a set of ideas that are very neurotic and without any capability for change. They must feel very confined and have a need to watch a lot of television for the liberating effect of violence."

(At the same time they would find it difficult to view an equivalent presentation of sexual activity. This would be unsettling as it forces confrontation with concepts of human existence. It involves concepts beyond the subjugation of people by violent ideas.)

I ask him, "How do you judge the quality of a person's life?"

"I once was a physician in training on a renal ward, a place where patients lacked functioning kidneys and needed to be interfaced with machines three times a week for continued existence. Suffice to say when a person loses their kidneys, other major organ systems are ready to check out—heart liver brain, so these patients were a sickly lot and very fragile. They would develop overwhelming septic shock and other unusual complications on a daily basis. With their dependence on machines they were as close to inanimate as humans could get. I looked after these patients on a daily basis and I always thought that something was amiss but could never place my finger on the pulse of it.

"These patients because of the fragility of their bodies and chronic afflictions were very uninterested in their environment. The television sets were on in their rooms but these patients paid the screens little (if any) attention. And I thought that was it! Quality of life is INTERACTION, our consciousness and its ability to interact with our televisions."

The next round is on me, ah Peters?

"So what do you think is the deep dark secret of human-kind, doctor—are we nothing but animals?"

Could that be all there is Peters?

"We are mere machines I'm afraid," says Peters, his head bobs down and searches for the bottom of his glass.

An interesting thought, I think with sarcasm, I have to admit it never occurred to me.

“The deep secret that all doctors know is that human action is very predictable, it’s only difficult to explain. No machine can ever explain itself. Sometimes with my stroke patients, a fragment of the person is left and I see that what is left is nothing but machine. It is sad, but true. People are exposed as androids. They rove their eyes back and forth in mute simplicity as you hold their lids up. Ask a question if they are alert and all you get back is fractured polish. Later like a mask of drama, they go from joy to sadness in the flicking of a switch.”

I am speechless. Peters picks up the tab and departs to pay a late night visit to his daughter on the ventilator. I hold the door open as he stumbles out onto the rain-soaked streets and walks to his shinny car. He gets in and melds with the metal skinned extension. I wave as the thing drives off into the dark night.

It has been awhile
since a poem
forced its head past
the birth canal
in good rhythm.

The electricity of a snake,

Once again, Peters is lost in dream.

He is a bird, flying above a spinning gray globe upon which is etched cities and fenced land. The bird is above snow covered forest and sees the wreckage of a machine far below. Alongside of it is a fire. A thin stream of smoke snakes upward from the fire. The bird gasps as it follows the smoke down.

Peters is on the ground and stares at the wreckage of the plane and the comely young body of the nurse laid out before him. He is cold, both of his legs feel broken and numb. Pulling himself along with the help of his arms and grasping at the scattered debris, he is able to feed the dying fire. Thoughts of eating the nurse intrude unwillingly into his mind.

He had departed from the city to pick up the dying minister last night. With him was the technician and the nurse whose body lays before him now.

The plane left under the cover of darkness with the threat of a snowstorm before the small northern community where a minister was bleeding from a ruptured aorta. Caught up in excitement, the thought of failure or personal death had not occurred to Peters. Or at least Peters could not recall that it had. Now he is cold, his mind is slow.

The plane tipped its way off the ground into the hovering darkness. The dials of the cockpit, the stars beyond the window, the frequent coded communications burned their way into the eyes ears skin of these hypervigilant people suspended in cold air. The three passengers faked casual conversation on the fate of a football team. The plane flew as a single organism with dense multifaceted motives churning inside. Peters was quiet, he tried to focus his attention on the flight. He was horny, he thought of the nurse.

A communication informed them of the storm. It was large enough to be, for all practical purposes, unavoidable. Peters pulled the stick back and edged the plane higher. Not all of Peters was concentrating on the flight. Whether the part that was off on the tropical island would have made a difference or not is open to debate.

The plan was to fly above the storm as it raged. And by flying above the storm, they would rescue the middle-aged minister. If challenged by the storm, they would turn back. Three lives for one was thought to not be a good deal.

Later the darkness with the burning stars turned into a uniform gray. The plane shook and got cold. Ice collected on the plane. Peters edged the plane yet higher. He imagined the shaking of the plane transformed into an energy that shook the breasts he had once seen as the nurse bent over while wearing scrubs. The V of the neck had gaped away and there they were, well tanned as if the nurse was spending time on that island, right now.

Enough was enough, the plane as organism could go no higher and was shuddering. It had gotten so cold that Peters could no longer sustain the tropical island fantasy. It was time to turn around. The minister would just have to bleed on his own.

No words could adequately convey the crash. The winds became very thick fluid and hit the plane in waves. The plane was battered as it flew low over the scrolling ground until it fell apart with an urrrch and Peters was thrown free.

Peters is between an outstretched woman's legs. He is partaking in that age-old training tradition, he is a medical student delivering a welfare woman's baby. It is four in the morning and he is garbed in mask and gown like the doctor behind him. The doctor is very tired and is not concentrating on what Peters is doing. A little head is ramming to distend the vagina from inside out. Peters sees the plastered black hair come closer and then recede in time to the contractions. A little glistening face is exposed amidst the clots and body fluids that coat the distended vagina. Peters is awestruck (as I am) by the violence of the event and the extent to which we deny the explicit ugliness of our origins. Peters awkwardly uses the bulb to suction the nostrils of the perfect small nose. The doctor reminds Peters to check the neck of the baby to make sure it is free of umbilical cord. He does and it is. The baby has reached that critical point when it pops the rest of the way out with a gush of fluid behind it. Peters grabs hold of the slippery thing and gratefully passes it off to the doctor. Peters clamps the cord in two spots and cuts between them. He draws samples of blood from the cord with syringes.

He turns his attention to the bloody and torn vagina in front of him from which the umbilical cord emerges and descends like a charmed glistening snake. Peters is struck by the simple mechanical appearance of it, a coiled extension cord plugged deep into vagina. At four in the morning, it taunts to be pulled so one can go to sleep. Peters thinks about the type of electricity it carries. Peters breathes in the antiseptic meets blood metallic smell as he repairs the lacerations and the woman is happy with the baby (newly cleaned and hence disguised) on her chest. The afterbirth will be out soon; all will be well then.

Cold dim consciousness gathers as Peters comes to and sees the plane split open like the husk of a locust before him. His legs are really not broken, he is able to stagger around the plane. The technician is nowhere to be seen. He finds the nurse, she is still in her seat. He takes her pulse, it is present but feeble. He cannot awaken her. He rubs his hands along her body checking for injuries.

It is a fine body and is in contrast to that first one, the elderly body he dissected as a first year medical student. It was an initiation rite. He stood over it while breathing in the smell of fat, the smell of preservative, afraid of himself (that he would show emotion) more than the dead. The parts (head eyes cock cunt) that connote human were kept covered.

He hacked sliced cut and crunched with the crudest of tools, saw pliers scissors and knife. It was brute dumb force demolishing something it could never understand.

Peters discovered one thing, muscles
attach by tendons to bones and
move us like strings move a puppet.

He finds the rescue kit and starts a fire from the windward side of the wreckage. It will provide heat and a potential signal for rescuers. He brings the nurse next to the fire and bundles her with the blankets.

That was five days ago and now it is today. He is losing control of his legs and the feeding of the fire. The nurse is in a coma and still has a pulse.

Thoughts of eating the nurse consume his mind. His thoughts are deadlocked in the fight of a moral argument against a practical one. The fire is dying, if the body is to help him it will have to be cooked soon. This consideration is braced against the indelible to feed on someone else's body, especially someone who is alive. He rechecks the pulse, it stubbornly persists.

If discovered he would run the risk of prosecution. He would be associated with Ed Gine and the other serial killers (the free-lance nonprofessional ones, not the bulk-quantity political ones) in the collective eye of the bored masses. Worse, Peters realizes that Ed Gine lives somewhere within him. Peters feels that these thoughts about Ed Gine are the crucial ones, that the others are irrelevant. He sets his mind into cracking the tight logic of this hard-shelled nut.

Peters is thinking so hard, he isn't thinking. Then his mind does a somersault that puts him at ease, does the beating of a heart mean that someone is alive?

Peters moves to throw the body on the fire.

He wakes up in a cold sweat. He is alone. It is early in the morning and he is unable to fall back asleep. He gets out of bed and dresses to go to work. If he has time he would like to visit his daughter before the inherent symbolism of her ventilator. After that he will need to get to his clinic. Because it is raining, it will be predictably busy as everyone will feel a need to get outside of their cloistered existence.

a spark of dark parts,

This is the scariest part.

Peters stands at the bed of his daughter. She is uniformly three feet off of the ground, the intensive care bed holds her up against the pull of gravity. If it wasn't there, she would be in the ground now.

A machine stands by of simple design; Peters stares in distracted interest as it works while silently his mind attends to deeper things. It is a giant piston in a clear cylinder. It is attached to Jenny. Jenny is pumping the cylinder up and down. Jenny exhales and the cylinder goes up. Jenny sucks in and the cylinder comes back down.

Jenny's body is bruised from the multiple needle sticks and procedures. This must be an altar upon which she has been sacrificed. Sacrifice is the Turn of all events, that by which nature redeems itself and life moves on. He has become used to sacrifice since the murder of his wife. He thinks about that event.

Jane had lived life to the fullest. Jane didn't believe any neighborhood was a jungle. No matter where you were—people were people, some were bad and some good. Bad people could just as well be in the sterile suburbs, some whitewashed existence where bad deeds could be disguised in the prevailing thought.

Jane was in a downtown park attending to the mentally ill. Poor slobs who listen to those voices we all have playing inside our heads. Jane felt they were gentle souls. (I feel they hold the power for change.) A gang of youths was also in the park looking for distraction.

They saw Peters' wife, a very beautiful woman in her early thirties who had given birth three times in high ceremony. (The births were blood and body fluid sacraments that we all suppress. The reality of it can be very painful.)

The lead youth was carrying a brick, with the momentum of his body and accelerating arm the brick was brought to Jane's head. Sparks flew from her head into her eyes and with them brought darkness. Now that Jane was unconscious, the youths exposed her body and it was theirs for awhile, as the schizophrenics ran off for cover and belated help in the form of police who found Jane naked and wounded.

The bored youths were nowhere to be found and Jane's sacrificed body was deposited into the back of the ambulance and taken forth as silent sacrifice to an altar like the one Peters stands before now. The schizophrenics were arrested for the crime.

Peters had closed himself off from the details of the assault. He did not want to know what had happened to his beautiful wife who had been taken from person to mere object in the minds of a gang who had no concept of personal mortality. Death to them was something that only exists in the flat confines of a screen that is contemplated in trance.

Technology, like the intricate bustling of a small insect, was working to stave off the inevitable. The gang also had technology at hand, that they hoped would finish the job when they realized they had raped. Black metal and tape enclosed the parts that slid together. Chemistry touched off a small explosion that pushed a small piece of metal through the muzzle at the whim of the youth who served as leader. The landscape of the park was looking very different to him. It had many more colors, a world he would have a hard time remembering when that small piece of metal moved with nonchalant ease out of the end of the barrel. The bullet was pushed out by a release of energy, atoms that fell apart and rearranged in waves from an incandescent spark of dark parts, simple mechanical world in miniature. Gravity was pulling down on everything, the youths, Jane, the fleeing schizophrenics and the bullet.

The bullet easily burrowed into skull and tumbled.

The bullet traveled. Jane as a nervous child at her first day at school looking up at the chalk board and she wonders how the board will be filled up and then the memory was no more.

The July parade she watches from her father's shoulders and it was no more.

Her first teenage date and it was no more.

Her first sexual experience and it was no more.

The first time her eyes see the awkward Luke Peters and then he was no more.

The damage was beyond measure.

Peters and his daughter are alone with a bunch of beeping and grinning machines.

gives the old shock shock.

Let us have another go at it shall we?

There we were, me being Dr. James and my real horror show like boss, Dr. Peters, working over some starry old burnt out veck. The veck had been tolchocked in the height of fashion with a toozoe in every foramen. The veck had starry glazznies that were flashing scared while we performed multiple horror show venipuncture and the old shock shock. We had good fun doing that, yes we did, with the other admos being all paper work and rabbitting, while the real doing was here my brothers.

We barked out the old commandos to the rabbitting nurses. I felt the surge in me, coursing through my veins, of the strength of the young over the old.

Greed burns bright & life is short,

Let us have another go at it shall we?

People wonder why crime exists; but I spend a lot of time wondering about the converse, namely what causes people to do good acts? I wonder why society doesn't shake apart from all the reverberations that hum silently inside each of us. I have desire that would be easy to quench through actions that are within my grasp. What keeps me from robbery, rape and murder? Since greed burns bright and life is short, what keeps us from doing these very simple things?

This was especially true of my youth. My parents were well off and tried to isolate me from the neighborhood, but I rebelled. In my neighborhood, nobody (meaning my friends) had anything and we all wanted something before we got snuffed out or too old to enjoy anything. The only people who got anything took it.

Peters would never talk to me again if he found out, so I won't tell him, but when I was young, I killed another man. What kept me from doing it again (and again and again) was not guilt or fear of reprisal and certainly not fear of the police, but amazement of the ease of it and that made me insane.

A lot of it had to do with the way in which it was done. I thought the whole world was my neighborhood multiplied a hundred million times, which meant that the world was an inescapable jungle. A little screen in my parent's home confirmed this belief of mine.

An older friend of mine who was like a brother to me (I admired him but didn't trust him) had given me a gun and I loaded it late one night after my parents had gone to sleep. I was sitting on my bed. The bullets were shiny and I passed my fingers over them for some time. They contained a power that I sensed would change my life. I was in awe of my new found machinery.

It was early in the morning. My heart was racing as I stood by the bedroom window and my friend drove up in his modified car. I nervously pulled the window up and straddled my way out. The gun was in the inside pocket of my jacket fully loaded with the safety engaged. I kept checking the safety, kept rubbing my finger over the protrusion of the knob through the outside of my jacket.

We drove for some time and I was inside myself. Every now and then we would stop and I would recognize a familiar site, a certain intersection with a plastic sign or storefront. Then we were moving again.

My heart was beginning to slow down as I forgot the purpose of the ride when my friend slowed and stopped the car. I was aware of my heart again. Approaching the car was a young man my age on a bicycle.

I took in the entirety of him and his bicycle while ignoring his face. I need to say that with my braggado I did not avert my eyes, I TOOK HIM IN as he passed.

My friend swung the wheels of the car hard to the left and moved the car so that it was ready to jump the opposite curb straight on and then put the collection of interconnected parts in reverse so we were now in the opposite lane looking at the boy's receding back as he peddled away.

Without a thought, I pulled the gun from my pocket and stuck it out the window. I couldn't pull the trigger. The safety was on. I turned the safety off and stuck the gun back out the window. I heard a very loud noise that startled the be-jesus out of me. A red spot appeared on the back of the boy as he veered the bicycle up off the curb and fell on his side. I was holding a gun in a numbed hand. The gun was still vibrating. I looked at it closely. The car was moving again and we drove by the downed man, but I didn't look as we passed. My friend had to tell me to put the gun away. I put the gun away.

an immolation to a new order

With that shot, I was cast out stoned into a new existence. My eyes saw different. People were cast into a new perspective. My new eyes were hot-wired to the back of my head; I used them on the street and saw things previously hidden. The weak had bobbing heads that emanated a distillate fear that passed to me in waves. Teachers taught not how to think but how to stomach intolerable boredom in preparation for menial lives. Policemen on the beat had undulating paunches that made sweat, were inverted camel beings. I would walk a mile to see what I could see.

At home my father had hair growing out of his nose. My mother had wrinkles that cleaved openings for her mouth and eyes. They threatened to hatch new openings as she aged. I imagined her old with five eyes sprang at odd angles on her face.

In contrast to the way I saw things, inside of me there wasn't much. I believed in nothing (or rather, I BELIEVED IN THIS ONLY, because to believe in nothing is to believe in something).

I inhabited a part of me I never knew existed. It was as if a person is a globe and I was living on the side that had previously been hidden from others.

So from the outward aspect of that planet I lived my new life. I was a member in a new family that worked better in the streets. The older friend I didn't trust was now my brother.

The man on the bicycle had been an immolation to a new order. Gods, being like us, either because they create us or we them, demand sacrifice in barter for new lives.

Things are proportioned according to the good graces of God.

There are minerals and
plants
before animals and
then comes man, next
come
angels and myself
and lastly, God.

Time was all battered to pieces. I had become crazy and life was chaotic. I remember instances in isolation. Of the week between my immolation and commitment, my new family

beat an old man mercilessly for \$16.38
sacrificed a few dogs
talked a woman into taking us all on
ignited a schizophrenic to his natural state of fire.

New things were being seen every day, until one day I convinced myself that my mind had turned inside out. I spent that day rearranging my room to prepare for a life with an inside-out mind. I was capable of nothing but muttering.

When they opened the door to my room, my parents found me naked and stammering. They listened to me mutter on about **GLOBES BEING SUCKED THROUGH HOLES AND INVERTED** which was my way of telling my family of a little dark event that had been too dense to comprehend and that now I was different.

My parents searched my room for drugs and found none. They took me to the hospital, my first and last visit until my skinning at the hands of technology.

I was hospitalized with all the other intrepid souls.

They gave me food and pills, but I knew that man lives on more than these alone. I gathered those around me who were willing to listen to my mounted sermons.

As a messiah, I oscillated a frequency like a radio. My skin was invisible and the waves passed right out of me. My heart was a mechanical clanging part that beat to feed the fasting muscle that suspended my bones against the pull of gravity.

from the center of the storm

Dreams were edible things. The followers knew of my terrible Vision.

That the Devil, who has the hard shell of an insect, will walk along a coast littered with bleached bones and ragged flesh. He will do a jig. And when he does this jig, heaven will open up and reveal an angel with a censer.

At the time of the End, the angel will hurl the censer to the earth. The landing will be wind fire blood. The sky will roll up like a scroll and what will be left will be the blackness of sackcloth. Islands and mountains will be moved. All the green grass will vanish, while men imbedded deep in the earth will have aspirations to see what they can do for the sake of an Idea (though later they will pray for death).

In the aftermath of all this, the stage will be set for what-will-happen. That another angel will sound a trumpet and a rider on a horse will come forth. The rider and the horse are really one organism with a moby dick complexion. The beast ushers forth the men from suburbia who descend on my neighborhood.

They leave behind women in clapboard houses who talk about the holy book of that other religion and the sanctity of life. Among the pictures of a cachectic man stretched in sacrificed on a cross and dogs mouthing dead birds that adorn the walls, are the slogans of a new order:

God Bless My Kitchen

HAPPINESS IS IN THE HOME

welcome to a home of the lord

The men will come to kill all the firstborn.

The men bring the firstborn out into the street. Some of the firstborn are very young while others are old. The women are crying. They have to be pulled from their firstborn babies, children, brothers and husbands limb by limb. Disentangled from their mothers sisters and wives, the firstborn are put into a line and shot. The gutters drain blood.

This will happen. My disciples look up at me with bleeping eyes. They hear the intent of what I'm saying: In return for the Meditative Flow of the One, I give you purpose.

I walked the corridors of the hospital to sooth the uneasiness of my legs. I learned my first lesson. I was without mind. I learned that my mind was useless. I had a thought and it was like turning over a rock. I found devils on the underside that clung like grubs. I found them difficult to brush off. I found it better to not think and avoid such

excrescence. I was forced to remain at the unthinking center of my mind. I was the eye of the hurricane.

One day I became aware that the storm was dying around me. The planet lurched and groaned on its mooring of inertia. I woke up one morning and realized that despite a fear of an eternity within the hospital, the spinning was underway.

It goes without saying that after I walked that globe back to where I usually live, my families chose to not talk to me. My parents sent me away to live with my aunt in New Orleans. I finished school surrounded by religion and magic.

to the forbidden pulp.

Now I am a mystic that believes in many things. Peters is my good friend and I imagine worlds about him.

Peters is in the jungle. He is peering from behind the branches at the Latest stripped naked of clothing and makeup. She is stretched out on a mineral altar. The rhythmic expansion and relaxation of her chest strikes Peters as being profoundly mysterious. The throb of Peters' heart meshes with the drums the natives beat.

A priest chants while waving a chicken and an axe. It appears that he is directing the landing of his god. He places the squawking bird on a rock and chops its head off with the nonchalant ease of uncorking a bottle. He waves the beheaded body of the chicken around and sprays the Latest with warm blood.

The drums percolate and the beating intensifies. Several natives plunge in turn into the Latest's sucking woman flesh in a fertility rite. Peters watches the couplings intently. He wonders when sex in his life lost all mystery and the orgasm became another drug effect. As if he was a warlock over some cauldron, he knows which drugs to pull off the shelf to create the same effect.

He dreams of being reborn into an early pristine existence.

In the beginning was the Lord and He was alone. Out of whim or loneliness, God began to create. If He was like His creations, perhaps He was feeling unfulfilled.

Thus God created heaven and earth. He breathed form upon the earth, making land and sea, day and night.

In the sea, He made the great whales and fish that reproduced after their kind to form a squirming entanglement of brainless heads tails fins and entrails.

On the land, He made the animals. They reproduced after their kind to form herds that moved like the shadows of clouds across the land with little collective intelligence.

And over the dominion of roving fillets and drumsticks, He placed Peters. God brought the animals to Peters one at a time. Peters gave each of them a name, chicken fish beef pork venison steak fur glue.

Despite this, Peters felt alone.

What happened next made Peters happy. Peters thought God was kind since He didn't make one for Himself. Peters also thought God was creative. It was exactly what Peters longed for, a woman.

In the Garden, God placed Peters and the newly created Eve. Though God knew the weaknesses of humankind and should have known better, He placed the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden and forbade either of them to partake of it's fruit.

It was the usual sunny day, Eve was taking her daily walk in the Garden. She heard a noise and was startled. She turned to face the noise, placed her hands on her naked waist to provide fortitude. Dangling from the Tree was the Snake.

"Eve, this is Satan." Its voice was fine wine.

"Satan, you little child, can you ever stand your ground in your True Form?"

The reptile spoke, "Eve, do you know why God forbids you to eat the Fruit of the Tree?"

"I often think about it; it is just about all I think about."

"Do you want to know?"

Eve paused before she spoke, "God has never forbidden us to ask questions, of course I want to know."

"I will tell you and you may tell Peters and all of your children and their children's children. It contains the Truth of what it means to be Human," lisped the snake.

Eve doubted this, but on her own had been thinking about the Tree and the possible reasons why God would ban the eating of its Fruit. She wondered about the diseases that might linger in its pulp.

On the turn of another day, she could no longer stand it. A certain knowledge had to be contained in the Fruit of the Tree. From a permissible tree, Eve picked a single apple. She placed the apple in her mouth as she climbed the Tree to grasp a single well-formed Fruit. She had not broken God's single commandment by doing this act.

Eve presented the forbidden Fruit on a platter that night to the unsuspecting Peters and kept the apple for herself. Eve was not going to risk eating the Fruit herself. As Eve bit into the apple, Peters took a deep bite out of the Fruit and swallowed. Peters had broken God's only Law. Eve watched intently.

Peters was unaffected, he was not singed by thunderbolts. Nothing happened. Eve closely watched his responses to casual banter. She could detect no differences in the man. She forgot about the Fruit by bedtime.

Peters slept fitfully. In the middle of the night, he awoke with the Knowledge ready to burst forth from his frontal lobes. He needed to tell someone. He woke up Eve.

“We are animals.” It was that simple, no more, no less.

“Oh god, I always suspected.” Eve’s reply was charged with the shock of sudden realization.

In the morning, they made clothes to cover their bodies and smeared makeup on the parts left uncovered. The Latest plucked off her fur and shaved her legs.

They heard god walking in the cool of the garden. Peters and the Latest ran like schizophrenics into the jungle and hid. Eve could look forward to the ritual of childbirth and Peters would lose himself in hard work in service to this Idea of subterfuge.

The albino niggaz

The clinic of the nursing home is going to be very busy today, thinks Peters as he stares at his reflection in the glass door. The door proclaims Restful Pastures Nursing Home and beyond the ghost of his face, he can make out the elderly women scattered about the lobby. They list in various postures ready to fall, but are restrained securely in their wheel chairs. Peters pauses briefly to catch his breath before he opens the door and steps inside. Some of the women recognize Peters as the doctor and smile while Peters brushes the snow off of his body.

It is the first snowfall of the year. The residents of the home have been pushed down to the lobby by the excited nurses and orderlies and lined up to face the windows. Peters casts his gaze over the assemblage of near identical spinsters with white hair styled into afros. Peters' nose acclimates to the smell. The smell permeates, refuses to be buried under the concentrated antiseptis. After he departs, it will linger in his brain.

Peters smiles in sudden giddiness at the women who are looking at him. The old crones imagine me naked, thinks Peters. He springs lightly to the elevator. He continues to smile at the women as he waits. He hears a ding and the mouth of the elevator opens. Peters steps willingly inside and is sealed up, like jonah in the belly of the whale. He is taken up, the numbers count until the chamber shudders to a stop. The doors open and Peters stands before the crowded clinic.

Peters is aware of the water of work that immerses him. He will have to work very hard in order to breath before nightfall. He nods greetings to the two nurses as he enters and pretends not to notice the gaze of the waiting patients.

“Mrs. Slezinski is your first patient, doctor. She is in exam room number one.”

“Thanks. I'll just get to work here,” says Peters as he grabs the thick chart by the door and enters the room. Mrs. Slezinski is sitting in a chrome wheel chair. Her nose is gently bleeding.

“Mrs. Slezinski, your nose is bleeding. Here let me.” Peters grabs a towelette from the dispenser by the sink and gently moves the bloody withered hands aside and applies pressure.

warm blood asks for its own
while my finger bleeds
and does me no good,
stems the flow from my heart.

Mrs. Slezinski is alive and was discharged from the hospital after a long battle with the force of gravity. She had been a fixture in the intensive care unit for a very long time. She had been an ethereal thing suspended in mid-air and hooked up to various machines.

One day a nurse made her bed, while another cradled her frail body with the suspendocrane. As the body was tossed to land with a plop on the fresh sheets, a blood clot was dislodged from a vein in her leg. It coursed through the gurgling stream of blood and beating heart to lodge in the lungs. Mrs. Slezinski was taken to emergency surgery and afterwards was hooked up to more machines. Mrs. Slezinski recovered, though in the process she became annoyingly demented.

She now lives in the nursing home on a diet of salt-free meals, stool softener and blood thinner. She watches a lot of television.

The bleeding from the face was now a river. Peters thought of the airway of the patient as Slezinski managed to say,

“YoU GOd-DaMNeD NiGGer. LEt gO Of mY NoSE, yoU fiLTHY NiGGer. i OWn thiS BuiLDinG. YoU kNow tHiS BUildINg, I oWn thiS bUIldINg. StoP MakiNg mE bIEEd, sTOp mAkiNg mE BIEEd. i’M GoNNa caLL tHE poLICE, yOu FiLTHY nIGGER.”

So Peters let go. The towelette fell with the moist smack of an afterbirth on the floor. The voice was barely audible when one of the nurses barged into the room.

The nurse was even more pissed off than Mrs. Slezinski. “Doctor, the patient is bleeding to death. What are you doing? What WERE you doing? Are you crazy?” She grips the nose with a fresh towelette. She glares at Peters. Peters thinks she is a precursor to the women in the lobby.

The answer to that last question is—yes, Peters’ brain has short-circuited and he has no need of his mind.

“Here Gail, let me take over. You still haven’t stopped the bleeding. In order to stop brisk bleeding one must compress the major feeding arteries.” Peters firmly grabs Mrs. Slezinski by the neck. The nurse screams and tries to wedge her body between Peters and the patient.

“Nurse, I’m trying to save the patient here. If you would only just get out of the way.”

“Bonnie! Dr. Peters has gone crazy! Call the police!” yells Gail.

“Nurse. Please. Let’s get control of our emotions. See, the bleeding is slowing.”

Bonnie gets off the phone with the police. The two nurses pry Peters’ hands off of the neck. Mrs. Slezinski gasps out, “GoD, DaMNeD NiGGeR,” before collapsing to miss the edge of her wheel chair. She lands on the floor and breaks her hip.

The nurses are very rubbery. Peters examines the elastic things as they all wrestle to fall on Slezinski who cries out in plaintive whelps.

Blue men with big belts arrive to take Peters away. They shoot him with a stun gun in order to subdue him. The gun goes off, needles get spit out and trail fine wires that stick into Peters. Peters convulses into a heap on the floor and bites his tongue. The two blue men drag Peters up and through the clinic. They drag him to the elevator. Peters' mouth is frothing over with various bodily secretions, blood spittle and bile.

"Man is . . ." Peters mouths through the spittle.

"What's that doc?" The blue man looks at Peters' lips.

"Man is . . ."

"What's that? Come again old man." The blue man stares into the eyes of the mad man.

"Man is . . ." says Peters while inadvertently spitting on the blue man's face.

"Not wise old man. Not a smart thing at all," says the policeman. He beats Peters with a club. The other blue man smiles.

Peters yells out, "MAN IS THE MACHINE THAT THINKS HE IS NOT AN ANIMAL."

"Now now doctor. You're scaring the good folks at the home. Everything is going to be OK now."

The albinos sit in their wheelchairs and stare at the doctor being led away and shoved into the back of the patrol car. One of the blue men returns to talk to the nurses and scribble on a pad.

Two ambulances arrive. Peters, his hands in cuffs, is swallowed up by one machine, while the other swallows up Mrs. Slezinski. The ambulances depart in opposite directions.

blast-off,

I am cast out as well; numbed, I sit and watch the television.

The spacecraft, virginal white, stands at attention on the pad.

The slow count of downward time, it is parceled out with the certainty of small lots to settlers, as if the success of the mission depends on the exact millisecond of the launch. The white numbers on the corner of the screen relentlessly get smaller; the digits to the right are a blur. Moments lost from my life forever.

Wait a delay. The movement of numbers stops. Time has been indefinitely frozen until further notice.

I see no difference in the spacecraft, the sepulchre is still in place on the altar. White streams of smoke continue to trickle up from ports along the side of the machine.

Back to the newscaster who fakes pseudoscientific babble from behind a desk in a grassy field, the object of worship blurry in the background. He is joined by another man who holds aloft a little replica of the spacecraft and removes stages like a priest holding up a host and breaking it apart.

This image is preempted, from the back lot of our nations capital comes the latest sequel of regional conflict, aerial bombings of some crazy despot (who once was a friend of ours?—it is never mentioned). For those who prefer their sacrifice on an inhuman scale, the sacrifice of a whole country (or at least a few cities) is presented. It does not ease this moment for me. I have seen this moment too many times. I prefer a more personal sacrifice.

Like immolation of the spacecraft and repetitive images of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Now a word from our sponsor.

while we tune in.

The detectives search Peters' medical office and find scraps of paper covered with lunatic scribbling which they read...

“...transcendence depends on the necessary condition of cathartic release through ritual sacrifice. The sacrifice must mirror the subjects bland life and then provide a liberating release of psychic energy. . .”

“...addiction is the foundation of all human activity. It is a necessary thing, it keeps me at work and at my routine which is codified ritual. Unfortunately, only the portion that manifests itself as the inscrutable urge to take chemicals is recognized by us at large. . .”

“...addiction is at work in ritual sacrifice which is ritual by virtue of its repetition. Ritual has been a part of human societies since their formation, probably coexistent with the development of tools and predating the development of fire. . .”

“...television and other mass media provide a safe arena for explorations away from the tightly controlled routines of our existence. We tune in and drop out, millions of us at a time in mass communion. Walk down the sidewalks of suburbia and see the little gray oracles, televisions and computer screens, holding our attention. With their ability to transform us, they become comparable to other forms of religious or drug-induced transcendence. They are the circumscription of all unspeakable thoughts and yet what could be a better social control?. . .”

“...pornography and the activities of serial killers are both mass media representations of ritual as is war and the failure of technology. Pornography involves the same preplanned scripts involving props of suburbia and one or more individuals enumerating a small finite set of activity. Serial killers perform stylized crimes (often in a fugue state) which give birth to ritual compulsions. Regional conflicts always involve rebels fighting a home government of questionable legitimacy supported by our leaders. Crashes always involve the retrieval of black boxes amidst the cluttered burning of metal and bodies. Ritual is idealized repetition divorced from time. Addiction keeps us ensnared to rituals that are idealized repetition divorced from time. Otherwise, would our minds reach capacity if forced to create everything anew?. . .”

The detectives quickly come to the conclusion that Luke Peters is very mad.

The wheel of quivering meat

In deference to my demons (and
your openness is a wound):

I want to pierce the thin skin
of your non-consciousness:

burrow like a thousand worms
into the matter of your mind.

All it takes is one fundamental Idea to upset the balance of things.

Society is like a wheel, it revolves around a core of morality and Peters modulates that core like a jazzman. Peters is a reformed consumer. Once he voraciously consumed: women fast-food meat. He spent as much as he made. Now he is harmful to the existing order of things. This harm comes when he thinks about the meaning of things with me, his eternal comrade.

Peters is taken to a factory of people to be repaired. While neurosurgeons plot and pour over blueprints, Peters finds God in his dreams.

Peters plods back and forth in the hallway. He wears socks to quiet his footsteps. The nurses badger him to wear shoes. Peters gives them no mind. He has no time for the unimportant. He needs time to meditate.

Peters sees Visions. Principalities of the Air are Heads. The Heads descend from a great height at a blistering speed to stop suddenly in front of Peters. Peters is thinking intently and suddenly, whoosh—Peters is staring at a disembodied Head (it looks somewhat like the head of a monkey) inches from his face.

This startles Peters. This will often happen when he tries to talk. He then loses his place and is forced to stare at his listener until the Heads start to speak.

The Heads speak and tell Peters of our future, about the evil around us and the change that will overtake us.

Yet, he is more than mere conduit, he is a Blessed One. He makes prophecies that surpass the ones I made when I was on fire. I was John the Baptist for this up and coming messiah named Luke Peters.

Luke Peters is making the authorities nervous. I know they are telling the neurosurgeons to do something.

contraption gets wrenched

I pay Luke Peters a visit. I get his room number and walk down the hallway to find a crowd at his room. They overflow the door of his room and gather around trying to get a glimpse inside. I am forced to join the people on the outside. I listen to his isolated Voice and imagine the movements of his Body.

I am caught up by the nature of his Voice.

“A conflict can come in many different guises. I stand in front of you and say the Truth: powerful people lord over us and force their Idea of consume/produce upon us.

“I am for justice in the midst of this craziness. Let them come. Let the men of the Idea come with their contraptions and attempt to put the noose over my head.

“These men are the worst sort of liars. They stare down the camera, the eyes of my nation and lie without blinking. Let them come and tell us otherwise.

“The tide of history washes over us and we are drowned. Our bodies are returned by the force of gravity to the earth. My body is a gift for me to use for a short time. I mean to use it well.

“I must pluck out my eyes and exist by my heart alone. I feel and breathe justice. They can place a gun against my head, but I will never recant my beliefs. What I know needs to be known.

“So far the Idea has taken a life of its own. It, unlike you or me, is alien to this earth and has resisted dying. Some of its proponents are no longer alive. The earth claimed them as enemies. But the earth has not been able to kill the Idea. It sheds single components but keeps on living (and devouring).

“I come to throw a wrench in the works. I want to break it down, to shake things up and call attention to all that is wrong in the world. I will not be happy till this is done.”

Peters continues,

“Remember how it started. The apostles of the Lord knew the potential of the thing when they saw it. The Messiah was on the cross with His Side lanced. The opening was perfect for the insertion of a feeding tube. A breathing tube could be inserted down the Holy Throat and the Body could be kept alive forever.

“So they took Him down under the cover of the night. John and Paul unfastened the ropes, while Judas, who was sitting on the strong shoulders of Matthew, carefully pulled the nails that had been driven through the palms of the Lord. The limp Body of the Messiah sagged and the apostles pushed their arms forward onto heaven to keep Him up. They brought Him down gently.

“Matthew, who had the strength of an ox, was entrusted to cradle the cachectic Body of the Lord and Peter gently wiped His Face clean. Judas remembered the time when the Lord had washed his own unworthy feet.

“The apostles took the near dead Body to a cave and there they nursed Him for three long days. John insisted on placing the feeding tube. He gently wedged it in and through it dripped wine and goat’s milk suspended in animal skins. Thus, Christ was kept nourished.

“With the greatest of care, Peter intubated the Lord. Mark set the dials on the holy ventilator that the angel Gabriel had brought down. It was golden and had many dials labeled with a foreign language that the apostles understood only in prayer.

“In this way the Lord was brought back from the dead. He arose from the cave triumphant and was seen around the holy city. The authorities were dismayed. The pharisees thought it was the work of an imposter. Once again, they plotted. But it was too late, the Idea was unleashed and would spread without bounds.”

headfirst into the barrel.

Peters has us in his palm. Though we are in an institution, we have no fear. The force of the Idea propels us. I stand entranced and listen with the others.

Peters preaches on,

“The Idea spread from the holy city like a brush fire driven by dry winds to the countryside and beyond. It burned over the years.

“The Idea was buried in the holds of the ships that crossed the oceans. The Idea was hidden like a dark secret with the rats in the hold of the *sana maria*. A dark animal of an Idea was in a barrel with the salted meat, ferried along with the guns and ammunition.

“The force of the Idea was very strong and used in the justification of the killing of others. The Idea seemed to say, an animal with a machine is a man, and the same animal without a machine is an animal. Yet it was also very subtle so that if the Idea was glanced at directly, if the barrel was spilled and the Idea dumped out with the rats and the meat, the Idea seemed to vanish and be of no consequence.

“The Idea arrived in our neighborhood just over the big hill to affect salvation through its love of violent action.

“Chief black kettle was dismayed at its arrival; the blue coats were making a mess of his village and his people. How could a people be so barbaric and out of touch with the compassion of the great spirit?

“The blue coats had come under the cover of the morning mist with the village sleeping soundly. The blue coats stampeded the horses corralled at the edge of the village. As the animals ran around and beat the ground while vocalizing, the indians woke up with blinking eyes. They grabbed clothes and ran out of their tepees to see what was happening.

“The blue coats had repeating machines that spit lead into the men and women, the old and children. The injured fell moaning in the soft clay. Later the white ghosts would hack away with machetes to finish them off.

“Chief black kettle brought out the flag of the Idea. It was also the flag of the country of the blue coats. He ran it up the pole in front of his teepee. Black kettle had once been to the capital and had seen the great father. The great father promised the chief that, as long as he displayed the flag, no blue coat would ever harm his village or his people. Black kettle knew the great father would not lie. He called his people to run to the flag.

“The remaining indians, scooping up small children, ran to the center of the village to join the chief under the cover of the flag. The warriors of the village pushed their parents, their wives and children into the center and formed a human ring around them.

“Black kettle was suffocating in the middle of his people as they crowded together in fear. Black kettle should have deduced the clues of this oblique evil, that when white men wrapped iron bands around the mother and tied her down, it was beginning of the end. Unnatural black horses that belched smoke made their way on the iron bands through the hunting lands of his people. White men would tame the belching horses and dismount to kill and waste buffalo. A people who would do this were capable of any evil.

“The women and children around black kettle sprout holes and blood. Black kettle got hit in the head and his last vision was a dome of blue sky.

“The blue coats secured their trophies and buried the remains under the parking lot of a mall. The bones lie there to this day.”

Bones, skeletons
so miniature they
fit in neat little
piles on desks.

“I tell you this story to make a point. I want to weave a web strong enough to ensnare the Idea. Granted it will take a strong web to pull the Idea out into the glare of the street so that everyone can see it is the Beast.

“I am compelled to tell the Truth. For once in my paltry life, I have the courage to tell the Truth: the individual components of the Idea don't see the murder in their making; the Idea represents a factory of death by ritual sacrifice.

“This is critical, I don't want anyone to miss this point—it is the key to the strength of the Idea—The components have killed and maimed, but never have they murdered.

“Murder is intimacy squared by humanity. Slaughtering indians is an intimate act, but the blue coats never considered it a murderous act. They never thought the indians were human. Infinity times zero is still zero. Think of this, think of the progression of ritual sacrifice.

“Deceptions like this could not last forever. So the true believers of the Idea made complex contraptions and modern rituals to increase the throughput of their sacrifice.

“Contraptions that spit lead across a field at the shadows of men evolved into spacecraft that drop bombs on things unseen. Intimacy now equals zero and we should be very afraid.

“While the contraptions evolved, elaborate rituals were devised by men that worked on the pruning of humanity. High priests washed themselves of undesirables by herding

them into showers without exits. Never think for a moment that they thought of it as murder.

“So modern sacrifice has become a vast orgy of consumption. Aircraft fly way up and drop multiples of bombs (or sometimes just single big ones) on people so small they are inconsequential.

“And with this consumption, our leaders are guilty of treason. They have let us down. They have sold us and our country down the river of history to fill the pockets of the rich.

“Our leaders design wars not to be won but to consume. Our leaders make foreign governments so corrupt that the people unfortunate to live under them are forced to revolt. The Idea trains a Roving Eye on these test tube creations of strife and consumption.

“Wars last years and each tops the preceding one. More and more bombs (purchased at mark-up from the rich—get it?) get dropped. Where the bombs fall make no difference. The bombs get dropped on cities, but uninhabited jungle will do. Consumption drives the Idea—the rich and leaders prosper from conflict. Conclusions get thwarted—the conflicts are designed to last as long as possible.

“Now is the time to rise up and kill them before they get us killed over some stupid cause.”

Peters sweeps his hand over the heads of his followers. Though confined to an institution, they have no fear. The force of history propels them.

In comparison, this idea staggers into view and I am caught up with fear—what am I doing here?—amidst all these crazies, I think of my hide.

So I leave. My heart beats furiously as I cover my head and walk out.

For months, I go about my life and put what Peters said out of my mind.

Welcome the young lambs

Patricia and Michael go to the asylum to visit the old man. They were dropped off by GreatTits who decided Peters was beyond saving after all. She moved out of Peters' home, but still tends to his children out of guilt. Jenny recovered and left home as soon as she was able. She spends her time with Tommy. She told the others she is relieved that her father is out of her life.

The two offspring check in with the nurse at the front desk. They are led through the security gate and metal detector where they are abandoned to find Peters' room on their own. The two teenagers walk side by side down the long hall and feign fearlessness as the psychotics check them out.

"Ahh, my young lambs, come to mother," says an old crone with intense eyes. Michael ignores her, but Patricia is riveted to her eyes. An old man thrusts his tongue at Patricia. She is unable to perpetuate her facade of fearlessness. She walks the rest of the way looking at her feet.

Michael notices the crowd outside his father's room. His first thought is that the patients are attacking his father. He starts to panic until he hears his father's voice. They stop in front of the room and listen to the Voice.

"My children, welcome them everyone." The denizens of the institution look at the two teenagers with approval. They do not realize that Peters is speaking concretely, that the children are indeed his flesh and blood.

The two children stare mutely. Peters and his audience are quiet. One could hear an idea in the silence.

"Dad, what's going on?" says Michael.

in a relic of the imperial age,

“God-damn, where are the good rock and roll stations these days?” says Jenny as she flips the radio dial around the scale.

Tommy, one hand on the steering wheel, uses the other to push her hand away from the radio, “There’s one around 102 on the dial.” But Tommy is also unable to find a decent station. “Christ, what the hell? Is this the mother-fucking end? Put a tape in.”

Jenny searches through the box of tapes and slots one in. The crunch of music mixes with the sound of wind in the cockpit of the convertible. The convertible is Tommy’s most valued possession. He worked and stole till he could afford to buy the massive chrome car that he restored as a relic of america’s imperial age. From a vantage point in the air, one can see that they are speeding due west along one of the great super highways to claim a new life for their soiled past. But someone needs to tell them that california is full up.

up from the wilds of garbage.

I try to forget the beliefs of the new religion. But soon it is the fourth of July and I watch all the hoop-lah and fireworks (ahh—those fireworks) and bad thoughts intrude into my mind:

Children grip fire-
crackers, the electric
surface of the sun.

Fingers now lost,
ligamentous joints
fall on dark ground.

Firemen on fire, they
burn like flags,
drop like meteors.

Suburbs burning,
burn like stars,
glow like cinders.

I can't help thoughts like these and I know they will make me a marked man. I cannot hide. I am torn with guilt because of my gutlessness.

Forced to do something drastic, I spend the last of my pay, give up my car and my lifestyle (the end of all these things—doesn't it make me more worthy?) to live downtown in a tall building.

So I live by myself and ponder what to do next. I look down on the geometric beehive noodling of the architects who have designed my city. I have quit my job.

Can't you read the desperation in my voice? I spend the last of my days gathering courage. My money is running out. And so is my time.

I enter my apartment in the dead of night, dodging the destitute who roam shirtless and spout expletives in Spanish as they scrape out a living on recyclable cans and pee in fountains.

(I think about recyclable cans. The destitute pick the cans up whole, fish them from the wilds of garbage cans, bring them home and feed their hungry. With me it was slightly different—I cradled the cans and separated the pull-tabs from their bodies before crushing them flat. Those pull-tabs—collect a million and a little girl gets dialyzed for a day. I see now, that in everything, I was manipulated; only middle class guilt can separate a million pull-tabs from a million cans.)

Way up high, I have new perspective. I have a balcony enclosed (it is so high up that it would be unimaginable to have it not enclosed) by small panels of screen and glass. It is an inverted terrarium with me looking out. I look down and see cabs and trucks moving between rows and rows of buildings, but all individuals are lost from view.

I sit at a desk I've erected in my terrarium and look out for inspiration. I can open a panel in isolation and wave my arm outside and feel the wind blowing hard between the buildings.

This little area is my escape, I sit up here and compose portions of this book. I have left the banality of my life and job. I only have to think about Peters and myself and the world. I think about these in many different combinations.

I contemplate opening panels in continuity to create a space big enough to wedge my body through and escape from this mess forever.

The epilepsy of your design,

All things are possible
in your mind's ghetto,
a rapture to freedom
by me, your mind's negro,
from under your brass knee
& the epilepsy of your design.

The night has rolled in. All the white people have left their jobs, even the hardest working have left hours ago, piled into their cars and have left the city in droves to return to the suburbs. In their place come all the denizens of the night, all the people of color arrive to start their shifts. What is left around me is an anti-city—dark people like myself, wearing headphones plugged into their own individual existence, cleaning bathrooms and floors. It is our city at night. We sit in the big chairs.

a false icon to the future,

I remember what it was like growing up as a young black boy in a middle class family. My mother cooked up dreams for me while I hid behind her protective haunches.

So why am I surprised by the old neighborhood when I return?

I leave my tall building and hail a shuddering tin of a yellow cab. Without much sleep in the last three days, my nerves frayed to the point of shorting, I rocket along in the back seat. I look at the scenery as I travel back in time to my old neighborhood.

I ran down these streets as a child. I ran past the emigrant apartments and narrow storefronts. Changes are afoot. The old family grocery (where my mom bought the ingredients to conjure up her meals) is gone and replaced by a BigBurger. The BigBurger front is the only thing shiny and new, an icon to the false promises of the future. Everything else is moldy and full of rot. The laundromat of my childhood evolved over the years to an engaged stand that cashes checks. The majority of the fronts are peeling and boarded up. Some landlord is bidding his time and waiting for the neighborhood to kill itself off, so he can sell the uptown property to some developer who will pave over our bones and put up a mall. Only the BigBurger will be left.

So what do I see now? Liquor stores and drug dealers peddling escape. The bars are gone. People do their drugs in private or in small groups. It is too dangerous to imbibe socially, things being what they are these days. Frustrations and fuses are short and everyone (and I mean everyone) needs to strike out. So people do their thing in private and keep the striking out behind closed doors, maybe get wasted and beat the wife who in turn beats the children. The children, poor chemically altered little shits, get drug induced rage en utero. They try to yell, but can only gulp urine. Rage like that lasts forever.

I am out of the cab, fork over some money to the bald white driver. I am a black man, yet I tread uneasily on my former turf. The effluent here is derived from booze. Big signs for booze stand in the breeze along with the stench of digested and exhaled booze. Empty bottles and glass vials lie around like ghosts.

The pride of my neighborhood is the young black woman and she, like the rest of this devastation, is available for a price.

There she is, I am approaching this lone woman who stands displaying her meat, gracious full sides of thigh. My knees are buckling at the sight of it. I know she is putting out her insides for a price.

“Homeboy, got what it takes.” She says it not like a question (it is), but like a statement. I stop. I meet her eyes. Her eyes are the skin of metal. I almost give in (don’t fault me, you know I am a religious man) because she really is just a machine (not human), a receptacle for semen and cocaine.

Everywhere I look are machines. Machines standing around in groups talking the worst kind of jive. Everywhere I look are black people acting like the two dimensional darkies of the flat screen. My neighborhood is lit up in technicolor; there is the crack house, guarded by teenagers wearing expensive plastic shoes and gold chains; there is the stoop, secured by sitting old men.

I turn back and look at the machine with the thighs. I stare at her mouth, full lips that purse in fake seduction. I imagine what it would be like to borrow them, but I catch myself (and furthermore like a prophet) I strike those lips with an open hand. The blow torques her body, she spins falls and strikes her head against the cement steps.

The machines across the street clap and grab their dicks. The receptacle machine moans as she turns that body onto her back and mutters, "Fucking bastard."

The breasts and thighs heave and my dick thickens. But my dick (like those of other religious men) is not really a part of me. I feel it as a disembodied entity that has no connection to this monk. It is a simple cause and effect response that I do not control. So it is easy to ignore.

"Put the bitch down."

"Tame the ho'."

"Show her your stuff."

I pull out my stuff, my handgun, and thrust it in their direction like a ragged salute. The men scatter with the predictability of machines as I pull the trigger and

the gun goes off
off
off.

My body is jarred through my quivering hand and I hear a chorus of "crazy nigger." I wish for an army to clear my neighborhood of automatons so they can be replaced by humans. Is that too much to ask for? I put the gun away and walk briskly away.

I hail another cab and on the way home I realize that life is cheaper than ideas. My life is cheap. That woman is barely worth anything. We are all subjugated to a greater cause and in my life that is Peters.

vibrates in your inner ear.

Yet Peters is a white man and beyond that a white messiah. And if it didn't occur to you, I will freely tell you that makes me uncomfortable. Me, a coolie for a white messiah? Might as well worship Jesus (unless you think the jew was black).

I am colorblind (alas, like all religious prophets). Despite all the hardship I've been through, all the abuse I've put up with in this intense brief life, I am colorblind. Members of my race, even my mother, would say to me: "How can you say that? Look at your skin, the way it absorbs light. Nothing gets reflected off of it. It absorbs other things beside light, contempt rage hate abuse. Tell me you are color blind, I dare you."

All things being equal, I am. If all that we have been through has to be repeated for all generations then it is time for the END (or as the nazis say götterdämmerung). The cure has failed and people (black and cracker alike) are unworthy (and unnecessary, the technology exists to do this).

It is for this reason that I am for Peters. Our mothers spent centuries worshipping Jesus and no one turned the color issue on them. Don't do it to me now.

I'll tell you, black schizophrenics have their own special burden. We pick up on the fear that lies just below the surface, the fear you sense rarely, perhaps when you accidentally end up in my neighborhood by mistake. We feel fear endlessly, it vibrates in our inner ear, a constant buzz. It drives us mad. White schizophrenics invent their conspiracies. Ours are supplied ready-made on a platter.

Give me that special platter, a slice of racism, a piece of bigotry, a side order of condescending genocide. The platter sits on my head, worms its way into my portals. Once inside, it is uncontainable.

Make no mistake, we are LOUD, much louder than our white compatriots who are always unsure of their confused beliefs. We shadow box, kick out and yell. You think we are striking out at unseen enemies. You cross the street to the other side when you approach us. You see us yelling and think we are crazy.

But you are wrong. We crackle with our own energy, rattle our bones to make a noise and sound the alarm. We are more dangerous than you know.

To cure a surgical disease

This night I sleep, I dream.

I dream that Peters will be removed from the institution and operated on by the neurosurgeons—for dissent is a surgical disease. They will remove the small part of his brain that is to blame for all the trouble. I dream that Peters will lose his Voice and be returned to society in good standing (or just sacrificed outright).

The surgeon from the Roving Eye is making rounds at the mental institution weighing the benefits of surgical cure versus intractable disease for the denizens. (The Roving Eye supplies the component part to the dream in my head; can It have such control over my life?)

He sits in a chair behind a fold up table piled with patient charts. In this room, the day room where the patients typically lounge about watching television and smoking cigarettes, walking the edge off of their medications, in this room—this monster examines the patients and pronounces judgement.

Dozens of patients are paraded individually to this judge for five minutes of attention. The patients are encouraged to keep the head up, the shoulders back to imitate military bearing as they walk. Once seated in the dentist's chair, they face the judge and the physical begins.

The judge shuffles through the chart, condensing decades of life into a few moments of clinical acumen and asks questions to clarify a few points. After the judge is content, he yields up judgement since, being a component of the Roving Eye, he also serves as jury. Depending on the answer, the patient is either very relieved or despondent. The patient is then ushered out by the two blue men to one of the two doors.

And so it goes, patient after patient sits on the chair. The remaining patients ponder fate in their rooms. Two patients to a room, each neatly dressed, sit expectantly on their beds. Some of the luckier patients have been coached by sympathetic orderlies and nurses—be precise, concise and neat.

After the nervous fat lady is led away never to be seen again, Peters is escorted by blue men to the chair. Peters and the judge are separated by twenty feet of foreboding space.

We all know—the judge, the messiah Peters, sleeping me and now you, that the real purpose of this mass examination is not THE PERIODIC PRUNING OF USELESS PATIENTS ONTO THE TRASH HEAP—but the mass sacrifice of Peters and his disciples. All the patients escorted through that door have been and are only Peters' disciples. The quaking fat lady—yes, she was one of them—is now being compressed into pellets to be used as a meat extender.

“What’s your full name?” says the Judge.

“Luke Anthony Peters,” says Peters.

“State your occupation.”

“ . . .(Peters mumbles). . .”

One of the blue men shocks Peters with a rod. Peters has a small seizure and his head dangles forward. The other blue man pulls Peters head upright by grabbing a fistful of his hair.

The judge continues, “It says here (the judge points with a thick finger onto a page) that you are unfit for work. Mr. Peters, what do you say about that?”

Peters says nothing for the next questions until the Judge says,

“Do you pledge allegiance to the Roving Eye and to the Truth for which it stands?”

“no.”

The blue man shocks Peters, who shakes with his head flapping until his hair is yanked up by a fist.

“no.”

“Do you pledge faith to the BigBurger?”

“no.” Blue man goes zap zap on Peters who says,

“no,” and then passes out.

The judge shakes his head, skims through the remaining pages of the chart. He casts his decision for terminal disease. He fills in the death certificate—natural death from pneumonia this April 29th 2010 at 3:58 PM.

The blue men pull Peters to his feet and drag him to the door while the judge signs the last remaining forms.

I am wide awake.

requires liberal Thick-It,

I am bolt upright in bed, every pore in my body is cranking out sweat. Have I surfaced from a horrible swim? My heart is racing. I have to tell it to stop. I tell it to cease its drumming and slow down.

Thus relaxed, I quickly put on my clothes from the piles strewn across the floor of my apartment. Though my heart is now slow and regular, my fingers are trembling. Time is stretched way out and I am painfully aware of the time it takes for my fingers to button each button. I say over and over, “Don’t let me be late, don’t let me be late.”

I grab my keys and the gun. It feels cool in my hands. I place it down the front of my pants and pull the sweater down to cover it up. I remove the gun and apply the safety. I replace the gun in my pants.

I am out the door. I close and lock it, only to remember I forgot to bring my notebook (the same notebook you are reading now) and extra bullets. I go back in to get them.

The bullets cling like change in my pockets as I lock the door. I wait for the elevator. The bell goes off and I am on—in the presence of some people. I look at the numbers as they sequence down.

The doors open before me and I march through the lobby. The doorman had said goodnight to me, but I didn’t know it till I was hailing the cab outside.

The outside air is cool. My hair is standing on end. The cab stops in front of me, I open the door and sit next to the driver. I catch his eyes and face, a stocky representative of the downtrodden masses—and I am relieved.

“Institute of mental health. 30th and second avenue.”

“Can do.”

We travel along in silence. I am not very numb, not numb enough for this time. Everything I see as I look out of the grimy windows—people walking, people starring, people standing, storefronts, flashing lights—irritate the skin of my eyes.

I am conscious of the idea that I might be hurtling to my death. Then my mind is gridlocked with different ideas—ideas of how to survive, of how to enter the institution and how to leave alive.

The driver must see through my nervousness because he strikes up a conversation though I know he is someone who prefers to be quiet.

“You alright?”

“Yeah.” I come off too abrupt, but I sense I have nothing to fear from this man. “I have a friend, a very important friend, who is in there right now.”

“Your friend, does he work there or just in there?”

“Just in there. I want him out.”

“Some of my friends work there. How badly you want your friend out?”

“You can get him out?”

“Listen buddy, how badly do you want him out?”

“I could kill.”

“Cut the shit, I don’t want to hear it. How much are you willing to pay?”

“My life (for once, I mean this).”

“Listen. I just want to know, how much money is your friend worth to you?”

“More than your forsaken hide is worth.” I say this while looking through my wallet and thinking about the money I have left.

The deal is quickly sealed. We turn off into a minimart. I put my card into the squat machine to get my available balance and a negligible maximal withdrawal of \$100. I am allowed to do this once more today and I show Frank, the cabby, how it is done: the placing of the card face up into the slot; the push button sequence of the special four digit code number; the punching out of the appropriate commands; remembering to wait after receiving the money to get back the card. Frank takes note of all this and my cash card. With a little bit of daily work, he will be able to withdrawal the last of my money over 23 days. This pleases him.

And pleases his friends. They are both janitors who work this evening at the institute. They have all the keys and know a few security men.

They are friendly enough when they let me in the service entrance, provide me with the perfunctory white coat from the laundry and tell me how to navigate the hallways of the rambling complex to Peters’ unit. But then they walk away and lay low to protect themselves. I tell them I won’t turn them in if caught. This does not make them feel better—I am surprised by this.

The building is ugly patchwork, stylistic schizophrenia—an original turn of the century brick building at the core surrounded by additions, each a more modern style than its predecessor added like the rings of a tree. The hallways snake without providing alternate paths, the flooring changes from wood, tile, carpet, sponge-sheets and back

again. I cannot risk asking directions from the employees I see while walking. Occasionally I see a blue man. They look just like they do in my dreams.

Never look at a blue man's stun gun, it makes them nervous. I've known this for sometime growing up in my old neighborhood. You just walk right by them looking straight ahead. Do not look them in the eye either, that makes them even more nervous.

I am nervous. The blue men are becoming more numerous in this part of the hospital and they all ask, "How are you doc'?" as I pass and measure my response carefully.

"I'm fine, what do you think of the weather?"

Is that convincing enough? No, I have to admit it is not. I am nervous, my heart has become a separate entity, a sacrosanct jumping animal. My heart is distending the skin of my chest in and out. People are going to notice.

A bathroom. I push through the door. It is empty, no one is in the graffiti covered plasticene stalls. It smells of antiseptic alcohol. I breathe the odor in deeply as I fall back against the empty wall and collapse with my head between my knees. I run for a stall and have a few dry heaves and feel a little better. I sit on the flush urn and take a few breaths.

I am here for sometime. I read some of the graffiti, recheck the gun and its chambers to make sure I cannot squeeze in one more exploding bullet. It is full.

Someone walks in and approaches the urinal on the other side of my stall. I look up to make sure the wall of the stall is high enough so that he cannot see over it. I then proceed to slowly look below the bottom of the plasticene to check out his shoes.

They are not the well-polished blue shoes with the thick soles worn by the blue men. They are sneakers, the old fashioned kind that lace. When the streaming stops and he zips up as he goes to the sink, I leave the stall and use the sink next to him.

I strike up a conversation, "How are you doing tonight brother?"

"Fine. Yourself?"

He seems friendly enough. I look into the strangers' black face, an elliptical thing with wire rim glasses and a goatee beard. He wears orderly garb. He smiles. I reply,

"I'm new here."

"Yeah man, I don't think I've seen you here before. My name is Clyde." He offers a still-wet hand that I grasp.

He continues, "You know, I think you're just about the first black doctor I've seen in these parts."

Oh shit, I'm black. I forgot this not so subtle fact in my plot to rescue Peters. I've disguised myself as a black doctor. No wonder all the blue men stare at me. As a janitor I would have been invisible.

My friend asks, "You don't carry a stethoscope—you surge or psych?"

Believe me, I know first hand that the difference is mute in this day and age, "I'm both."

"Tough shit, good for you."

"Can you direct me to ward A-8?" The janitors had told me that Peters was recently moved there.

"Sure man, that's acute surgery."

"Acute surgery?"

"All surgical patients in the hospital are kept a few days before and after their procedure in A-8."

"So how do I get there?"

He directs me and I'm there after five minutes of turning left right right, right left.

Ward A-8 is new, with gleaming tile hallways (not the usual cheap sponge sheets) and a central nursing station with banks of physio/psych-monitors. I would not know what to say if asked a question, so I look straight ahead as I pass the station. The edge of my vision senses a couple of nurses and a blue man reading.

I am past and pick up my pace. I read off the names of the patients that are posted by each door, two to a room.

Room 827, the patients in this room are: Bed A- Miles Peet and Bed B- Luke Anthony Peters. I turn quickly into the room with my heart working very hard. But despite it being very late, Bed B is empty. In fact it is neatly made, with a crisp sheet and blanket pulled squarely back from the pillow. I recognize Peters' personal effects in the clear plastic bags lined behind the bed.

However Miles Peet is in bed, a thirty year old man with a shaved head and eyes that stare straight ahead with slow blinking. He has bandages over each temple. He is gently sucking on a silastic clear feeding tube that emerges from a panel behind his bed. I look at Miles more closely; the feed smells like milkshake and the end of the feeding tube terminates in a nipple—I think. I gently wrest the tube from Miles' lips. He keeps on

sucking. Sure enough, the tube ends in a large nipple. I place it back between Miles' lips and I feel the strength of his suck in the collapse of the tube.

A sign is clipped to the board behind Miles' head. I grab it. It reads:

As so often is the case with post-operative patients, nutritional needs are not met because of the high demands of the healing patient.

Miles has been meeting 120% of his goal feedings. Here are some techniques to help you with the care of this difficult patient.

1. Add the right amount of Thick-It! Adding too much will make it difficult for the patient to draw feed or worse, clog the tubing! Adding too little may cause the patient to aspirate into the lungs and develop a life threatening pneumonia.
2. Make an effort to talk and touch the patient. Remember, post-surgical patients have been restored to normalcy by allowing primitive brain centers to take over the function of previously malfunctioning centers. Because of this, patients need reassurance and positive tactile stimulation like newborns.

I replace the pages. I am out the door and follow the clearly marked signs to surgery.

a stigmata of sacrifice

Peters had been taken to the surgical suite on a gurney bearing the Knowledge of our sins. With the scrub nurses in attendance, Peters is sedated through his intravenous line. A junior surgeon prepares His Head.

Peters accepts His Fate. He does not fight, He does not resist the straps that hold His Head in place and His ankles and wrists still. The junior surgeon shaves His Head. The hair falls in clumps revealing a white scalp. The iodine soap is cold and drips into His Eyes, stinging them badly. Peters keeps His Eyes open. The young surgeon rubs the soap from the trephine marks outward in ever expanding circles. The soap gets wiped from Peters' Eyes and He says,

“Thank you, son.”

“Two more milligrams of Somased for the patient, nurse.”

Peters goes to sleep. Dreams course through His Frontal Lobes. The Lobes are ripe pears fit for plucking by the neurosurgeons. The young surgeon had measured and marked Peters' Cranium earlier as Peters prayed for the man.

Now the surgeon carefully numbs the overlying skin with a needle-tipped syringe.

The attending surgeon arrives and berates the understudy in a texan drawl, “You took enough hair off?”

The young surgeon replies, “You prefer to take less off (you fucking bald bastard)?”

“I do. Extensive shaving has never shown to reduce the number of local complications.” The attending physician is covering his corpulent body in the latex imbedded scrub suit. His fat face is angry.

“Next time—I'll take less off, give a local shave around the trephine marks.”

“That would be better.” This is said in a muffled voice because the older surgeon has covered his face with the splatter helmet.

The older surgeon prattles on, “Okay, let's start. Fold open the tray. There you go, grab the—damn it, this isn't right.” The older surgeon reaches over the understudy and holds forth

a hand-cranked Hagersoll trephine drill.

“Shit nurse, this ain't right. Why haven't the new drills made their way into the trephine kits? Get one of the ventriculostomy trays from the surge-med unit.”

“Yes doctor,” says the abusive voice of the plump nurse behind her splatter mask. She is dressed in her own pink teflon impregnated scrub suit. The mask is moved up and her face remains humorless as she walks out of the room. She nods greetings to her clones, elderly crones dressed in identical garb and dour faces, on her way out.

She returns with the latest in neurosurgical implements, the EBZ-2000, four speeds forward and two in reverse.

The understudy whistles in appreciation when the attending says with uncharacteristic familiarity, “Look at the beauty, Mike.”

“Whew, this is nice, sure beats the old Hagersolls.” The understudy has the device in his hands and flips it over to examine all aspects of the thing.

“You bet. I hope to get five of these beauties for the service. We’ll save the old Hagersolls for the dog lab to train the interns.”

The electric EBZ-2000, replacing the old hand-cranked Hagersoll, is placed against Peters’ shaved Head and buffed scalp. The advantage of the EBZ-2000, besides its modern jet-age appearance, is that it requires less pressure in application against the skull. The overzealous surgeon is less likely to forget to ease up right before the last bit of skull is drilled away. With the Hagersoll, the surgeon was sometimes prone to gouging into cerebrum.

The EBZ-2000 hums along and spirals up skin scalp blood skull as it digs a hole.

I am terrified as I watch this scene. The two surgeons are bent over Peters’ Head as they concentrate on their work. The nurses are transfixed on the bloody burrowing.

The second hole is being drilled on the opposite temple. I have no choice, do I?

Surprisingly, I feel like I have a fair amount of resolve as I move from hiding behind the door. I stand in full view of the medical personal, but they don’t notice me until the second hole is finished. They look up. My gun is held at arm length and I move it from doctor to nurse, nurse to doctor.

I motion them to crowd together in the center of my vision.

“Drop the drill, fucker.” (I mean well, but I am on edge and use profanity. I ask forgiveness for this sin.)

“Give Him the antidote. Wake Him up.” I point the gun at the young surgeon. He picks up a syringe and is about to administer it to Peters. I stop him and have him give a portion of the medication to one of the dour nurses. He sticks the needle into a vein in her wrist. She becomes very anxious and starts to sweat. I motion him to give the contents to Peters’ intravenous line.

Peters' Eyes flutter and He moans out.

"Let the Messiah go or I'll waste your heads. Release His straps. Now!"

Everyone, except the old surgeon, helps undo Peters' straps.

"Help Him to His feet." They swing His feet off the side of the operating table and slowly bring Him to His feet. He staggers and the blue surgical drapes fall off.

"Give Him some more of the antidote." The young surgeon does this and Peters brings His Hands to His Temples and bloodies them.

"Bandage His Wounds." The nurses do this. Peters limps over to me.

"You nurses unlock the cabinets." I point to the cabinets along the floor. The nurses whisper the combinations back and forth and finally get them unlocked and open. I have them pull the hermetically sealed trays out and remove the shelves.

"You get inside." I point to the young surgeon and he being skinny fits easily into one of the cabinets. I have one of the nurses close the door and then I close the lock. The nurses barely fit into their respective cabinets. I have to prod them in with my boot and then kick the doors shut to lock them up. Once inside, they whimper.

I point the gun at the old surgeon. I don't know why I do this, perhaps he wouldn't have fit into his cabinet or maybe it was because he was a texan (I hate texans), but I commit my second sin. Peters shakes His Head as it happens. The bullet strikes the middle of the surgeon's forehead and then explodes in blood and meat, cleaving the top portion of his cranium above his eyes, leaving him to his primitive centers. He flops backwards, with an eye dangling like a bloodied Q-tip, onto the floor.

I grab my Messiah. We follow the signs for the FIRE EXIT; we enter a door marked as such and descend the stairs that go round and round until we see another sign for FIRE EXIT, we push through the door . . .

and a get away (plan).

. . . And we are out and running across the moist grass of the mental health pavilion. It is at this point that I realize an oversight had been committed—we have no get away plan. In my haste I simply forgot. I ask Peters for forgiveness in this, my final and worst, sin.

“James, over here!” A familiar cab pulls out from the line of vehicles parked in front of the pavilion. Peters, injured, is weakening and clings to me for support. I hoist Him up with both hands and grasp His Side. Together we stumble to the cab. Frank gets out and runs around to open the door and help me gently place Peters on the back seat.

Our exit represents bad form. The other cabbies stare out through their windshields at what is taking place. The wrong attention is being paid to Peters. My Messiah deserves better. I have let Him down. But I did get Him out.

“Frank! Shit! Get us the hell out of here!”

“So this is your friend. Glad to meet you. I’m Frank, your cabby.”

“Frank! LET’S GO!”

“Hey. I hear you. Where do you want to go?”

“Anywhere, Frank. Just anywhere. Just don’t take me back to my old place. It’s the first place they’ll look.”

“They?”

An alarm sounds from the depths of the pavilion.

“Frank. DRIVE!”

Frank engages the gears and we are off. I hear Peters moan from the back seat.

The official stoma adhesive

Frank takes us to ClubFist in the seething underbelly of the city. People mill about on the garish strip. The storefronts advertise women with big tits and dicks. People of all shapes stand outside the marquee of the club. They wear little strips of leather and metal that tightly contain the flesh. The flesh pokes out between the bars of the material. Half-full colostomy bags lie strewn about on the pavement and gutter, along with empty crank vials and whiskey bottles with the labels torn off.

Franks stops the cab and helps me get Peters out of the back seat. Peters is pale and heavy on His Feet. I help Him past the crowd and up to the door. Only because Peters is obviously bleeding—blood cakes both of the bandages across His Temples and is dried on His Hands, are we let in as a couple.

As I pass the bouncer, I naively ask, “Are there rooms to rent?”

The very large aging bouncer, whose flesh smells of decay—I can conjure up his odor now—says “The best in town buddy” and instantly I know what he means. I do a quick take down the length of his body, see his pierced nipples and the exposed penis which is strangely translucent and then the tell-tale sign, the bulge along the left inner thigh and the overlying scar. This man was proudly displaying the latest in cosmetic surgery, the EjactoMaxUltimaII. Lately I had heard (I think Peters was the one who had told me) that people (including women) were getting the devices implanted by black market dentists(!) as an item of status.

He laughs and the dick rises to attention. The crowd pays him little attention. I feel nausea and push Peters through the door into the club. A grinding sweaty crowd is dancing to whiplash music.

People of all shapes and sizes, with hips either too wide or narrow, sport sagging buttocks and perfect spherical breasts along with tattoos and pierced ears tongues nipples and frenula. A cosmetic surgeonologist’s dream, the sight of elective colostomies tracheostomies pericardiotomies urethrostomies abound. Peters and I almost slip on a nonspecific ostomy bag squishing fluid across the floor. The music is deafening. The bodies slam into each other. The stoma adhesive is not meant for punishment like this and the bags get ripped off and tossed around in the only thing that seems to make the dancers grin. People are getting hit in the face with bags of body fluids. Over there a man is getting whipped in a public display of self-abasement. Some of the men (and at least one woman) dance with turgid dicks. All nipples are erect.

I look at Peters’ Face to make sure He has not been hit. He is not put off by this maddening display. His Face is calm and all comprehending—He has seen abomination and knows this is part of the world.

Going up the stairs is difficult for us. We have to navigate the steps between lingering metal people who sit in our path while relying on support from each other. Peters is faint

from blood loss and I am faint from psycho-shock. The metal people talk and sniff powder. We are invisible, no one has looked me in the eye since we entered. We are too conventional a sight to enter the senses of these minds.

At the top, I tell a metal boy behind the desk our situation. I have no money, but carry a plastic chip that can serve as credit. I hand this over and am pleasantly surprised that my credit is still good.

A metal girl shows us our room, a hastily made up single bed in the middle of a dirty tile floor that smells of antiseptis and body fluids, just like a hospital.

We settle down for the night, surrounded by groans and grunts, the creaking of metal bodies on metal beds.

I nursed Peters back to health over the next couple of days. The owner of the club was pretty tolerant of this arrangement, especially since the daily rate was substantially less than the cumulative hourly rentals. I usually ventured out mid-morning when things calmed down a bit downstairs and the immigrant labor was busy cleaning up after the excesses of the previous night.

of the last great fuck

I want to take a moment to digress with Peters' help and blessing. Revolution is thick in the air, like an ether we move in the midst of the feeling and breathe it in and out. In the poor countries of the world, people are eking out an existence scavenging our garbage while harvesting the raw materials for our stagnant engine. But back here, the world is running aground in obsolescence. Suburbanites confined to cheap automobiles hustle back and forth to work endless hours to pay off their collection of depreciated junk and to send their thankless kids to college. The neglected children have better plans. In the city, the itinerants die on the street or burn to a crisp in buildings set on fire. And the good folks of ClubFist are just whiling away time in nihilistic pursuit of the last great fuck.

But from which direction will this revolution come? The stench of this ether is strong enough to ignite like napalm.

It is an election year and the BigBurger is orchestrated above our heads and what do we have to choose between but two eager clowns (stand-ins for the BurgerMan) who spout meaningless platitudes? In a world where information is transmitted effortlessly, what we have here is garbage. That is because the BigBurger is out to control us, even if it tries to tell you otherwise.

in this time of entropy.

Tonight, the natives are restless; there is a whipping going on next door. Some woman is being severely disciplined. Secretly I urge the whipping and her moans on, then feeling guilty (Peters is looking at me) ask silently for forgiveness from Him.

The whipping conjures up painful memories for me. Memories that I had long suppressed come tumbling forth. This is a strange time surely and a moment of inner healing for me.

My father had beaten me. He had beaten me with a real whip. I think he had beaten my mother as well. He would tie her up and would beat her mercilessly and it would sound just like what I'm hearing next door. I was very young and the memory had been suppressed until now. It is coming out of me on waves of intense feeling.

And he beat me. He had often beaten me in the same manner and I suffered. Once I looked up past my bleeding back and he just stood there and smiled. Peters' father must have done the same.

Violence gets propagated through the generations. A father beats a son who beats his own son and so forth. It is no wonder that things keep getting worse. The entropy of any closed system, like our world, is fed by the energy of the sun until it simmers in disorganization.

The world spins down,

Boredom. It will be boredom that will be the undoing of this society! I tell you this and it will be an oxymoron! Look at the faces in this club. See that it is true.

Look at them dance, trying to shed their collective skins by peeling it away with whips and chains (much like the rind of an orange—so difficult to initiate the peel with the fingers, but once started—so easy) by slashing at the wrists.

So this is it.

The world spins down

like a top, a child's toy

gets close to the sun

ignites

is engulfed in flames

and

burns

burns to a crisp.

Things catch on fire, inadvertently and on purpose.

And so will this world. I smell the burning on the streets. The day's heat carries a stench of things-near-igniting. Things are heading towards revolution.

half-starved and sun-burnt,

I walk through the downtown squalor back to the marquee of ClubFist. I pass many souls along the way. I see junkie souls, all the flesh metabolized from their bodies because they spend all their time jumping up and down on buttons instead of eating. That woman over there has just enough flesh left to appease me.

I move on. I see immigrant families, half-starved and sun-burnt (ready to spontaneously combust), on the streets trying to survive the painful process of dissolving into individuals. I watch them beat their children with coat hangers. The children say fuck you, but take it anyway. I see a child, it looks latino with dark skin and a mop of black hair. It has no sexual features (it could serve both ways) and is selling cigarettes from an open carton.

The native culture has not been changed in the uprooting of the families. I imagine hundreds of native children abroad doing much the same thing, standing around on street corners with newspapers gum cigarettes, seeing their chance to run out into stalled traffic under the hot sun to force purchases on the sweaty drivers and passengers of the cars and buses. Every month a few of them get run over and perish. But it is okay, because there are many more of them and they are dispensable.

I approach this child of five and buy a pack. I try to meet his eyes, “How old are you?” He doesn’t understand. So I shake his shoulder and point to myself and say, “Me thirty three much. You—how much?” very slowly and loudly. (When someone doesn’t know english, they will understand it if you say it slowly and loudly.) He looks scared and mutters out,

“de-co,” which means ten (I think) in his native tongue. I let go of the camel jockey and he falls to the pavement. Like all of us, he has been starved to a small size.

I resent interlopers who intrude on my own hell, but I think awhile and conclude there will be room enough in my world for all the starved children.

Speaking of children, I see Peters’—neatly groomed and looking worried, Michael Jenny Patricia, peer in duplicate from behind the screens of televisions. The images mouth in unison. I stand before the storefront and admire the kids for they are on their own now. They are beyond control. The children are abruptly replaced by duplicate images of the anchorman. I make a mental decision not to tell Peters about his children. We are all His Children.

strewn a halo of garbage.

Back at ClubFist, Peters is preaching to the faithful. I know the going will be tough, this is a crowd that has seen it all.

I grab the doorknob shaped like a curved erect penis, make my way into the darkness and see Peters on the stage. The glittering planet above his head is a halo for our new age. I hear yelling from the surrounding crowd of metal people.

Someone yells out, “Hey-slucice, tell us more buddy boy!”

Peters is calm and talks loudly, as if He is talking to Himself. He does not want to force Himself on others. It is your own choice to listen. Or not to listen. But if you want Him in, you have to ask Him and listen. And He will provide a Portal for your entry.

Peter says,

“I am sui generis.

“I have fantastic dreams and then I am beside Myself.

“I ask Myself, what have I accomplished this year?

“I’ve consumed. I’ve used a lot of souls. I’ve spent a lot of money, drank a lot, and downed a lot of cans. I’ve felt abject and worthless. I’ve felt angry and felt that drug make Me feel entitled. I’ve hated and felt empowered. I’ve become a purveyor of junk. I am a connoisseur of hong kong junk.

“I’ve produced. I have made many prayers and sermons. I have made friends. I have made many enemies who are out to crucify Me. I have produced good and bad, love and hate. These I have created out of thin air. I have conjured these up from within; we are all mysterious.

“I’ve created other things as well. I have made a small mountain of garbage. Another contribution has been made to the barge that contains my life’s garbage. It was sent on its way to a far away country where discarded cans slice off eager third world toes. I have conjured up other things from within Myself: I have made a truck load of excrement, a cup of sperm along with much urine.” (Peters panders here in an uncharacteristic manner—is He becoming political?)

The crowd was silent, but now gives many hoots and catcalls to the lonely bearded Man on stage. Peters has a rejoinder, He yells,

“ALL HAIL TO THE COMMON MAN!—who is held up as an example for all of us. He comes from the suburbs. He doesn’t question much, does his bit then dies and gets out of the way (before he inconveniences anyone with a prolonged nursing home stay).

“The trumpets blare and the banners unfurl. He is wheeled out to a platform for all to see. He is awarded an olympic medal or a gold anniversary watch. His brain is dull uncomprehending. All around is plastered the insignia, Textron, Inc.”

The crowd laughs. Peters has won them over and begins His preaching.

Buried in the deep recesses,

Peters did some good preaching the next few days at the club. The crowds were tough to please and enthrall, but were appreciative in the end.

But then the blue men came wearing dark suits. They were carrying official papers and armed with the latest in automatic killing.

They made meat out of the club. Peters and I saw the whole thing go down while we were on a walk. We were dressed incognito. We were blocks away from the club when we noticed many blue-gray domestic cars with white license plates appear around us. All these nondescript cars were heading in the general direction of the club.

So we turned back. Two blocks from the club, we saw them storm the marquee. The people around the entrance scattered. They shot the bouncer with the EjectoMax dead, blasted away the penis shaped doorknob and kicked the door down.

They started by shooting a she-man they mistook for Peters on the stage. Perturbed, they made a mess out of the audience. Metal boys and girls were wasted in their prime. It was carnage on a scale I had never witnessed before, except in dreams. They charged up the stairs and nailed the man behind the desk. They kicked down the doors to each room and shot naked men and women with dicks. A hundred defenseless people were killed on this day and many more wounded when the blue men shot randomly at bystanders around the scene as they left in those cars. Peters and I ducked as they drove past.

I will never forget the sound of the carnage. The blue men kept the triggers of their automatic killing weapons depressed, releasing the triggers briefly only to reload. The sound of the weapons reverberated between the thin walls, the harmonics of the sound felt like a jet taking off.

Peters and I were going to anoint the wounded and murdered, but out of nowhere several blue men appeared and made their way through the club, kicking bodies over and putting bullets through the heads of those only wounded.

So we had to leave and I feared for my life; the attack was meant for Peters.

So this is what remains of the last great fuck, the end of things as we know them. Did we not know buried in the deep recesses of our minds that this was the way things were meant to be?

our large unmoving eyes

Next we live underground. We are suspended between life above and the deep boiling mass of the core. We live in an intersecting jumble of tunnels and sewers, access and utility pipes. Our skin is now translucent, our eyes are large and unmoving. We eke out an existence in this strange place, our last pieces of plastic have been confiscated one by one until none are left. We are broke, but we have survived. We live with the homeless and hopeless of the city.

anoint the consumptive souls.

I am writing this up in my journal, scratching away with the last exposed piece of lead on my last pencil. I have paper, much blank space is left, it stares up at me as I flip through the remaining pages. I am going to have difficulty finishing this book. I know it.

The walls of this tunnel are dripping a fluid. It coats the inside of the tunnel like a smegma, greases it up. I need a similar lubricant for my mind to help me write. At least the tunnel is lit, some enterprising homeless man of old had wired the bulbs in the little cages to work. Still, parts of this world are unlit and dark and the thought of entering these cavities intensifies my fear and loneliness.

I look into the bottom of the styrofoam cup that held the coffee I had gotten from the food shelter. I swear I see jonah down there, a holy man of god trapped at the bottom of my styrofoam cup. I turn the cup over and tap the bottom to dislodge the prophet onto the ground. He falls out with a plop onto the dirt and scurries off. I conceive of a similar fate for myself.

Peters is down the tunnel anointing the homeless sick brought to Him on stretchers made of plywood. Consumptive souls are being brought to Peters from the expanse of this underground world and Peters anoints them. Some of the anointed get up and walk away. A small pile of plywood, the remains of their discarded stretchers, lies beside Peters. We have an axe and can crunch the wood into small pieces. We will burn the fragments and keep warm tonight, just like we did the night before.

A large crowd is gathered around Peters, including many small children. To see children is good and practical as well; they live much longer than us adults and have the potential to do so much more harm to the existing order.

(I look way off into the future and see that the leaders of the world will field armies of children to fight each other for domination. They select children not only because of their hardiness and ability to heal quickly, but primarily because children are easier to transfect with Ideas. These armies of children will fan out across the countryside and cities and do battle. They will cover the plains like the shadows of clouds and proceed to brutally harm each other without questioning. They will learn to enjoy it. They chew betel gum, trade photographs of torture victims, look cool standing with guns in moving jeeps, pick off stupid-looking-grownups and have a good time without regard for the rules.)

“. . .now, I command you—walk,” Peters says this while putting His Hand on the mexican man’s forehead. Three men hold the man up in a sitting position on the stretcher, two men are on either side of him pulling forward on his arms and the third supports his back. When Peters says his intonation, they let go of the emaciated mexican who falls back and stirs up a cloud of dust. Peters and the three men stand back and look at their incipient creation.

The mexican grabs his stomach and moans. He rolls off the side of the stretcher into a ball. He moans again briefly and then is quiet.

The crowd becomes quiet as well. Peters smiles. The man begins to stir. He is on all fours and then . . . stands. He is fully upright and only mildly staggering. I am relieved. The crowd mutters sounds of appreciation. I am reminded of the first man when he discovered upright posture.

Peters leads the crowd in amazing grace.

Done. They are done singing. We are surrounded by silence. The people look at Peters. They are waiting for Him to say something. Peters holds a stick and scratches at the ground. He draws a stick figure.

Then He begins,

“A mother made some jello for her children. It congealed in the refrigerator and the children loved the stuff.

“When it was done, she brought the bowl out. The two children fought as to the proper way for it to be divided.

“One child wanted to divide the bowl in half so they could share equally; the other boy wanted the entire bowl for himself. They fought and pulled on each other’s blonde hair.

“The mother pulled them apart and told them to be quiet, ‘Listen to me. What do each of you want?’ So they told her.

“The mother was a firm believer in compromise. She arbitrated the solution. The boys lowered their heads in shame and shook hands.

“The boy who wanted all the jello, got three-fourths; the boy who wanted an equal division, got one-fourth.

“The mother went back to the kitchen and made more jello.

“This story is a parable, it is meant to speak for something greater. I tell this story to make a point; compromise is a sham, it is a sorry excuse for justice. Take a look at the wretched history of this country, no justice exists—only bloody worthless compromise. The only thing that kept us from each other’s throats was the room to expand and the wealth created from the land. But the pot has been removed from the stove, no more jello is left to slop down. We have reached the limit of expansion and the huddled masses of the third world have been sucked dry. So what do we have left? A government (and beyond that, a country) that works only through corrupt compromise. But what our tired bones yearn for is justice.”

Peters looks genuinely disgusted. He is angry with unseen enemies. He tells us,

“Please leave me. Please depart from my midst. Leave me alone.”

Peters motions with his hands for us to leave, but no one does. He breaks down and begins to weep. His Body convulses in spasms of sorrow. We look away from Him. I turn off the caged bulbs closest to Him and bring Him a blanket.

That night we stay close by the Prophet and talk in excited voices about what He said and What It All Means.

The beginning of the end,

Peters is asleep and dreams; in his dream, he is taken by BurgerMan to a high mountain and tempted. Below them, stretched through a valley, is a city under glass. And in the center of the city is a modern hospital and the mystery of the building is carried up to Peters in waves of feeling. The building is the holy place of Peters' former religion and Peters feels regret.

The dying of this city are not allowed to part the living without first being placed within its structure. Every effort is performed with this in mind. If someone collapses, they are whisked away with flashing lights and frantically mated with machines in last rites before dying. Peters used to preside over the ritual.

BurgerMan stares at Peters and grins, buckling his makeup. Certain things must be implied because the words have not been invented. BurgerMan cannot bring himself to say out loud the mixture of love-regret-loathing that he feels for Peters in this act. Peters knows the bribe, an offering of a city and hospital for the end of the Movement, and weighs the relative worth of each.

They stand side by side for some time. The wind engulfs them and moves clouds over the city. The city is eclipsed by the shadows of the clouds.

“Are you going to offer anything else?” asks Peters.

“No, what more would you want?” replies the BurgerMan.

“An absence of you.”

This is the end of the dream.

sacrifice by cab crash,

The next day Peters told us the dream and fortified with anger, we began to make various excursions above ground.

You never know when people above ground will listen. Most of the time they will cross the street to the opposite side from where you stand and shout. But I am telling you that when the ether is strong, people will stand right up to you and listen.

Folks above ground—they don't give a damn about justice. Only when their personal barometer of frustration bubbles over do they listen out of interest for their own skin.

We came out in the daylight, probably the opposite of what you would of thought. At night the blue men were patrolling in their nondescript cars. They took in anyone who looked suspicious for questioning. The unspoken motive of the blue men was that anyone who was walking the streets at night was not part of the functioning economy and was therefore a suspect (until proven otherwise).

The blue men did not want to be seen as a repressive force during the day. They wore disguises and blended in with our audiences to infiltrate the Movement. It was imperative that our preaching be abandoned before nightfall so we could get underground while shaking these interlopers off in the presence of witnesses.

The relative count of the blue men was higher with the thinning of the crowd at dusk. When we picked up our soapboxes and began to walk, these men would follow at our heels and feign interest so as to become trusted disciples.

Of course, we would know better. We would drop our soapboxes and begin to trot. The incognito blue men would fling their suitcases and shopping bags away (but never their cameras, mind you) to lighten themselves for the pursuit.

Several close calls occurred. You would have to time your escape precisely, run ahead of the blue men as fast as you could and jump ahead of a departing bus to force your entrance. Or hail a cab. Later the blue men became smarter and planted their impostors as cabbies and bus drivers.

We lost a few disciples, which was expected. Everyone agreed not to betray the larger movement and that no one was to return underground until we shook off all possible pursuers. Later this became more difficult, especially for the older disciples. They would manage to dodge all possible blue men after they were done preaching. Standing in front of a hurtling cab, they would bravely hail it down like a brave bullfighter. But even though the cab had been moving quickly, as if it was in a rush to get some place, it must have been driven by a burly blue man in disguise because we never saw these older prophets again. (We lost one prophet when a cab he was hailing just smacked right into him.)

So we lost a few. It was OK, because we are like those third world children who sell cigarettes and are likewise expendable. Gradually we learned the subtle shades of the clinging followers. A few did not have athletic builds and short hair, we trusted some of these for our escapes.

It was natural selection. We thinned our herd to keep it young and strong. The older prophets were SACRIFICED and replaced with more fleet footed ones.

we ohuuu aahhh.

Peters is preaching to the crowd, which includes some blue men and me. Peters pauses to let His Point sink in and then heckling comes from behind Him. Peters turns around, we all direct our gaze to two young men wearing gold chains. Each of them has a dog on a chain. The dogs are small and have the redundant faces of pissed off old psychotic men.

The youths are foul mouthed. They say their penises are large and that they are going to sodomize Peters. The crowd is afraid of the youths who have raped and killed several old women in the neighborhood. I over hear a woman next to me say the two youths are possessed by several demons. She is brave for most people are afraid to talk of the two youths and the menace they cause.

Peters sizes up the two youths. Silence is all around. I am reminded of a western on television. The two angry dogs yap and try to charge free of their chains. Birds fly over head.

Peters yells, "I cast thee out in the name of my Lord!"

The two youths collapse in seizures as their demons take up in the dogs. The dogs proceed to eat the youths. We all stand too shocked and relieved to intervene. Peters runs the dogs off who trail hunks of flesh from their mouths. Peters applies compression with his bare hands to the gaping wounds.

The flesh heals with the touch of His Hands. We ohuuu aahhh.

A man in the crowd, who has an athletic build and short hair, approaches Peters. He says to the Messiah, "Oh great prophet, my daughter is sick at home. She is connected to many machines and shows no sign of recovery. The doctors I have at my disposal have been unable to heal her. What I have seen this morning is a miracle. I believe you are the king of kings to do the things you have done. Please lord have mercy on me for I am a rich man and do not deserve to touch the sole of your shoes. But for my daughter's sake, I beseech you to heal her."

Peters stares in pity at the man. Another disciple and I try to talk Peters out of going with the man, but Peters beckons to the crowd, "Please do not judge or you too will be judged. Let us follow this man and heal his family."

So we follow Peters and the man as they walk to his home which is in a skyscraper that towers above the city. We take the elevator in shifts to his condominium where his daughter is wheeled out to the living room for all to see.

It is true, she is connected to many machines that talk to her blood. Three doctors attend to the daughter in turns. They tell Peters and us that she is sick and unresponsive

to pain. They stick a large needle into a fresh vein without her flinching to demonstrate. They gesticulate at the dials of her breathing machine.

Peters is angry and tips over their draped procedure table. All the catheters bowls and stainless steel instruments tumble onto the carpeting. Peters rips their blue gowns and masks off and exposes them as charlatans. He chases them from our midst.

Peters his face livid with anger pulls the tubes from the young girl one by one. Peters' face and eyes are alive with the dance of a million electric sparks, I swear I have never seen Him so alive in all my life. The girl is turning blue as Peters hoists her upright with the strength of three men into the air, the loose gown and sheets fall to the floor revealing her human nakedness and that Peters had forgotten to remove the tube from her bladder which snakes down from her pubic mound and swings back and forth.

Gradually she pinks up and opens her eyes (though it takes an embarrassingly long time and I have to restrain the father from interrupting the scene).

Afterwards, the man serves us food while staring rapturously at his healed daughter. He thanks Peters profusely and offers our messiah a bed to rest. Peters shakes his head and we quickly leave after we finish eating. We walk single file down the endless stairs of the skyscraper to empty into the glare of the street.

All that is evil

Peters and I often eat at BigBurger, home of all that is truly evil in our small world. Can you think of a more inconspicuous place for us to feast? Would they think of us here?

Peters is wolfing down a burger, the special sauce is dribbling down the side of His Mouth. I watch the sauce flow and then tell Him to wipe it off.

Peters looks at me with a sad face. He fixes me up with His Impenetrable Eyes and says, "Before our time is up you will betray Me."

"No, my Lord, not I." Peters looks down and finishes His burger. I am perplexed and search my memory for traitorous thoughts. I find none but remain dismayed. I eat poorly as we finish our meals in silence.

If today is like yesterday,
we will take some to go,
proceed up the hill,
dig into the small bag
and feed the multitude.

The sun is going down. A long line of tattered souls is in front of me. I thrust my hand into the greasy sack and hand out hunks of apple pie to them one by one. The sack is inexhaustible.

While I grope in the bag and feed the multitude, Peters preaches,

"Think for a moment about the ritual of murder. When in the course of human events it is deemed that people must be spent in the trash heap of history, pay attention to the manner in which it is done.

"Indians, women elders children warriors, mowed down by the advancing tumor of western civilization. The army mowed them down like long grass. As the indians lay moaning, soldiers hacked them with machetes into spurting stumps.

"Later machines spit lead into bodies across the field.

"Now men squint at the horizon's agony."

The people are mesmerized and are unaware of themselves.

My arms ache. I stare off into the sun. The aztecs were afraid of the time when the sun would die, involute into a darkness darker than black, so they fed the sun with beating hearts. They grasped hearts whole from the hold of ripped chests and threw them

still pumping, blood spurting from severed arteries, onto the fire. The hearts felt like electrified silk and their presence would linger on the hand after being tossed.

I have a need to erect an altar to sublimate myself to the Cause. From the top of this hill, everywhere I look, are the Symbols. What's eating the BurgerMan? I hope it's us. Away from the post-modern sculpture of fetid excrescence where we get these bags, I see the other deities.

There is the towering CowboyMan who gives us our daily cigarettes. And the EarthMan forgives us our trespasses on the graves of our loved ones He has buried. AuntJemima towers above us all, a giant black woman with legs like tree trunks. She rains manna down upon us, flapjacks fall all around.

A young filipino woman, no doubt here illegally, stands in front of me. I grab hold of some greasy apple pie from the sack and spread it across her face. Most of the succulent hunks make it into her mouth. She moves on and I neatly place some apple pie into the mouth of the middle-aged matron who is next.

in the realm of terror

A few days later I find this dark eyed woman and pay her a token amount of money to use her. She is a thick enough receptacle to support my abuses.

The moment comes with implied sexual terror, in soft sexual delusion.

I watch the special sauce ooze from the side of her mouth. We are in an alley at night. I have taken her here to protect my anonymity and heighten her fear. (I am not convinced she remembers who I am—the young preacher who feed her the apple pie.) Little did I know that Peters was also in this alley to pray and atone for my sin. I am startled to hear His Voice.

“How could you betray Me?” I look up and let go of the woman who runs off. Peters is standing behind me, His Temple Wounds have become stigmata and bleed gently.

“How could you betray Me? I cast you from My Midst.”

I am despondent. “Please Lord, my machine-nature got the best of me. I lost control. I beseech You, my Lord do not abandon me! Please my Lord!” I cry at His Feet, grasp His frock.

“You are not worthy to touch the hem of My garb. I cast you out. You will not find redemption through this Messiah.” He turns, the hem whips out of my hand and He is walking briskly down the alley. I raise myself up and follow Him with a spastic gallop. I am reduced to a whimper.

“Oh Lord, I beg Your forgiveness. I am insane with the drugs of my passion.”

He ignores me.

“Oh Lord, I beseech Your forgiveness. Please do not abandon me, I am nothing without You. I am not strong enough to resist temptation, I am not worthy to be in Your Midst.”

Then a strange thought occurs to me. It springs to my lips before I can consider containing it, “Am I possessed? Do I have some sort of disease? These afflictions, I can never remove myself from them. My Lord, I ask You, am I possessed?”

He turns and a smile quivers its way onto His Face. He touches His Fingers to His Head Wound and anoints my forehead with His Blood. I knew then that I was forgiven. But even so, things were never the same between us after this happened.

Record the journey through the realm of terror, in soft sexual delusion.

remains forever boring

Peters assembles me and his eleven closest followers. He tells us that He is going to send us out to the twelve corners of the world to preach to the unknowing.

“You must travel light with only a single change of clothes. At all times, be able to travel promptly when beckoned from Above.

“When you approach a town, stop at the first home you see whether it is a mansion or cardboard shanty. If they accept you, stay and give them your blessing. Do not take from them more than you need. Give profuse thanks for the little they can provide.

“If they reject you, leave muttering from their midst. Curse them and their offspring. Find the next home you see. If three homes reject you (and by inference, Me) leave that community for I will want nothing of them.

“Once settled in a home, preach the Message to the community. Teach by parable, for Symbols penetrate deeply into the mind and affect change.

“If challenged by hecklers, the Mysterious Spirit will give you the Words to fight back.

“You will know by Message from Above when it is time to leave.

“Likewise, you will know the Signal to return to Me.”

Peters concludes by passing out waterbottles sandals staffs sacks maps treatises plane-tickets bus-tickets fax-numbers cab-vouchers.

I have to admit this is boring.

unlike soul possession.

I was one of the lucky ones. While the other slobs got just the sandals, sack and waterbottle, I got more—an airline ticket to a new life.

I am possessed. I used to think that I was the captain of my ship, but something else has taken control here. I look into the mirror of the lavatory during my airplane flight. I see something lurking below the skin of my eyes. I screw up my blood shot eyes after my three free drinks and say out loud, “I cast thee out of me.” We hit some turbulence that knocks my head against the hatch and I am thinking something else. My head is like a TV, I tell you I am possessed.

I sit on the stainless steel funnel that ends in a trap door. I pass my excretions—piss and stool, they land in a plop on the trapdoor. I stand up, press the handle to open the little door and watch a swirl of blue liquid whisk my excrescence away. The stuff is carried by a sucking tube to the end of the aircraft and out it falls gets frozen then lands with a crash through the roof of some farmer’s home. This aircraft is the organism not me I tell you, it takes in food fuel people luggage and puts out various exhausts. It is a giant bird that encompasses the world in its entirety, people beliefs technology fuel coolant little-whirling-blades serve as muscle skin nerve lymph blood bone. I am a single component of this metal skinned bird. I am not myself.

I am a creator of ideas, not a discoverer of things. People do not discover things so much as make ideas to explain things. I only explain myself. Then what has stowed its way into my life? I have no explanation. Peters would not have approved of the stowaway. If He had known, would He have given me the ticket?

Behold, the new life

My new life is upon me. I stand with my automatic weapon cocked at hip level and aimed at the cashier. Beside me stands one of my faithful followers who is holding a gun to the head of a BurgerMan.

Moments before we raided the restaurant pulled out our weapons directed everyone their eyes lit with fear to one side or the other upset the tables filled with unwrapped synthetic food brought the quaking BurgerMan out of hiding from the closet and now I am aware of the thing that has possessed me.

Children scream as I reach beyond my partner to yank the Mask off the deity to reveal the naked face of mere man. We are reasonably non-violent I do not want to harm employees, I only want to waste another BigBurger stand. I want one less of these heinous altars in the mindscape. The children customers employees headless-BurgerMan are herded out the back entrance to the alley and then while one of my followers holds the gun to them the rest of us trash the BigBurger plant the bombs light the fuses head out into the alley grab our partner and run run run down the alley and up the stand goes, bits of cement plastic aluminum singed-frozen-meat pelt us as we make our get away.

better than the old life

We jump into the back of the old van with the two grimy back windows, the vehicle of choice for every serial killer of the automotive age. We push aside the blunt instruments and collapse in nervous exhaustion. Our driver looks back at us. I motion with my hand “drive away slow.” As we escape the old engine groans and we breathe in the exhaust that leaks into the compartment.

I accept nothing but the end of the old order, the destruction of all BigBurgers and the institution of My Way of Thinking. With the discontent as thick as molasses, I had no trouble finding my own disciples. I took a few of Peters tricks and used them to the advantage of the Cause.

We destroyed every BigBurger stand in this fair city. The authorities had no time to react, our attacks were ruthless and without obvious provocation. We raced from BigBurger to BigBurger and took them out.

We now have to lay low for awhile. We spend the time in our underground hiding place—old subway tunnel smelling of urine, mold, ejaculated-rubbers of encounters between whores and business men—preaching to the followers of the need for an Aggressive Cure and Peters’ Mysticism.

I know Peters would not have approved, but the world is unjust and My Way of Life does not fit in this world I tell you.

I grab a gun and begin to yell, “We will take them out. We will take them out.”

I rant and rail against all that is evil in this world, everything beyond this anthropomorphic skin and within that skin. They have possessed me. Every wrong I do and think comes as a result of how they have processed me from the moment of my birth. I came out of the bloodied canal and then the machinations began, cross-clamped blood drawn for analysis radium light sterile instruments. My mother picked me up two days later and looked at the ugly withered me. One does not feed something that looks like this at the breast, one would rather boil nipples and milk.

This is the end of time. They use time as a form of control.

and the lies of the past.

I search myself in blankness. What exists of my past, deep in the furrows of my brain, lost forever from my grasp? (When a follower interrupts me, what gets lost forever?)

I practice vitamin depletion with the followers. Soon will be the time to shave the hair from their bodies and subject them to multiple piercing . . .

“Saint James, sir.” A plaintive voice of a follower has interrupted my meditation.

“What is it? The Lord is waiting.”

“I am sorry, Saint James. I am afraid I have some bad news.”

“Tell me.”

“We missed one. I am sorry.”

“Missed what?” I am furious, nothing can justify an interruption. Don’t these fools know that?

“We missed a BigBurger in the suburbs. There is one left.”

“I knew it, this town just did not feel cleansed. But how? We had the directory.”

“It was out of date. A new BigBurger was built with the construction of the MeccaMall.” If a BigBurger neo-glam sculpture isn’t the Symbol for all that is evil-incarnate in this society, then the MeccaMall must surely be it.

The MeccaMall, it is the capital of this forsaken society. It goes on forever, it wastes huge tracts of native land in a glorious celebration of ubiquitous redundancy, why even the parking lot could single handedly serve as a giant black lid for the pit which would hold ALL the bulldozed corpses. It is a temple as expensive to construct as several giant warplanes with big bombs.

I have no choice, though I realize this may be a suicide mission. One can not just commit hara-kiri at this point (meaning the point of the knife I hold), insert the very sharp knife into the belly like a hot knife through butter. It would slice through intestines that are needed to digest the BigBurgers of this world.

So I whip the followers into a murderous frenzy. We dance to the gut-wrenching crunch of hostile music. We paint mysterious iconography on our bodies, dress and then wipe the symbols off from exposed skin. Underneath our clothes we are marked. We will do this mission not as covert agents, but as ourselves.

We pile into the rusted van and . . .

The stench, the liberating

. . . we are off. The van is very old and the suspension does not damp, it sloshes us back and forth in the dark hold as if we are in the belly of the whale. Out the front of the van one can see the wide vistas of suburbia crisscrossed by the overpasses and turnpikes of the freeways. We are on the cement causeway with the huddled masses of the lower castes; the rich have long since abandoned the congestion and abandon of ground travel for the air and underground tubes. Ground travel is a world of potential whose waste and accidents can maintain a number of industries that one can profit from as long as one does not partake in it (much like selling drugs).

We see the large sign emblazoned with the demi-messiah of the MeccaMall, a large mouse fashioned from plastic flesh. It is an automaton, a giant piston moves a waving hand to beckon the faithful. We follow the flow of hypnotized traffic and enter a sea of automobiles and a few empty parking spaces.

A little mouse beckons us to an empty slot. I am convinced we may never be able to find our parking space. The lot is color-coded and our color is chartreuse. We dismount into the glare of the days heat. Our pores, our collective millions, have decided this is the time to make sweat. We join paunchy middle american types, thousands of them dressed identically in ill fitting shirts and shorts, to form a march on the gleaming structure a mile away.

It looms ahead of us. The americans are excited, talk in loud voices and gesticulate. It is a colossus, it has subsumed all the occupants of the cars that lie husked around us and is consuming the line of people of which we are a part. Upon the structure is hung decorative machinery, giant revolving wheels and pulleys peppered with small mechanical monkeys. I see the magnitude of what we fight against and try with our Lord's help to suppress feelings of hopelessness.

I am in a daze as I enter, the inside is a giant cathedral of redundancy, repetitive storefronts thirteen stories high all around us. People are walking with cross-purposes all around us and way up high. The followers and I get directions from a teenager dressed as a mouse. The air is cool inside and our wet shirts cling to our nervous bodies.

We take a giant escalator that snakes around and around in the center of the mall until we are deposited on the thirteenth floor at the foot of a smiling clown statue. It is all done up in plasticene with red hair and yellow pants. It is the guardian angel of this BigBurger stand. I see the trap doors in the belly, the holes of the eyes and mouth through which the muzzles of automatic killing weapons can be placed in a jam. One must walk over giant plates to enter the BigBurger and we watch as a greasy teenager is sucked to the plate breaking his arm. He arm is bent at an unnatural angle. He had a penknife and as clerks wearing bullet proof vests pick him off the plate, we know the plates are turned on and real, unlike the fake weapon detectors some BigBurger stands use to bluff the violent.

This BigBurger is obviously created with us in mind and we implement the contingency plan whereby Sam and Bob, who carry the plastic explosives and no metal weapons, pass over the detectors alone. The others continue forward and will take a circuitous route back to the van. I stand inconspicuous and watch them go up to the clerks behind the plate glass and order chocolate and vanilla BigShakes. They sit at one of the red tables among the crowd and suck their shakes through plastic tubes. When they are finished they nonchalantly gather their trash (one must not forget this at the risk of dismemberment) and place it in a clearly marked trash receptacle. They proceed to the rest rooms and enter the door that is marked with the male burger.

A moment passes.

Wait. Something is wrong. The trap door on the belly of the statue has fallen open and the statute bristles with the nozzles of automatic killing, one nozzle out each eye, one out the mouth and several from the belly. I reach into my pants pocket to extract my weapon, but it is long (the muzzle reaches to my kneecap) and it takes some time to pull the length of the muzzle beyond the lip of the pocket. As I pull the weapon out, I see Sam and Bob run from the bathroom. Bob clenches his abdomen as he tries to keep blood in his wound. I bury myself into the passing crowd and throw myself to the ground. The clerks extract weapons from below the counter and along with the statue open up fire. Spent casings shower from behind the head of the plasticene BurgerMan.

The people around me scream and make sick groans as they get riddled with bullets and collapse. Two or three women fall on top of me. I push their bodies off and crawl among the wounded and dead away from the scene.

People from the ghetto would instinctively flee from carnage like this, but the middle americans (who subside on no-smell death) rush to the scene to provide assistance. Predictably there is a second wave of automatic killing as the BurgerGuardians are unable to differentiate the approaching citizens as friend or foe.

After a cacophonous ten minutes of spraying the crowd with bullets, the BurgerGuardians realize that no bullets are being returned and stop shooting. The citizens of the outer fringe of the crowd make their way into the epicenter of the wounded and killed. They try to help some of the wounded up but everyone is slipping on bullet casings and blood.

I am convinced I was not noticed in the melee. As I was crawling my way out of the pool of bodies I stashed my weapon in the large wound of a corpse. Like everyone around me, I am covered in blood it feels like oil for awhile until it starts to clot at which time it becomes progressively tacky. I know Sam and Bob are among the dead, they will have to bury themselves.

As I walk in a daze, I hear the bombs go off. Waves of people, every last one of us, throw ourselves prone to the ground as if worshipping some unknown mecca. The sound

emanates from beyond the structure. The BurgerGuardians were able to move the bombs from the bathroom to a location outside the mall and detonate them.

I am outside. The air is cooler and makes me aware of my caking of blood. The sun is setting and as I have gotten older, I swear to God—it has become more red. I make my way past people who are suspending the wounded in various postures and contortions of agony. I see the potentialities of being wounded by exploding bullets, people gashed with ragged wounds of the head and trunk or missing limbs. Blankets are placed across the back seats of cars so as to not bloody them as the wounded are loaded inside.

I reach the van. The remaining followers stick their heads out from the window and wave dispirited greetings to me. The side door of the van is rolled back and I collapse in my pivoting chair.

We drive out the parking lot and blend into anonymity with the faceless traffic.

catharsis of violence

Oh shit, we hear a siren behind the van and we crowd the back to look out the two grimy windows. Behind us is a police car, its sirens flashing and behind the police car is a Channel3NewsVan. The NewsVan is capturing scenes of senseless violence for the cop show on next week. They intersperse the scenes with interviews of the officers who say, “. . .it’s tough to do this job, I mean, I don’t know how we can avoid bringing it home to our families . . .,” in many different ways. It is a very popular show and the following day at work everyone talks about the episodes at great length to break the monotony. Peters would preach parables on the show’s multiple latent themes.

We pull to a stop. My men and I have no desire for another battle, but we have no choice. We wearily grab our guns, load our cartridges. We open the back windows and the sunroof, three of us stick our heads and guns out these portals and let loose a volley.

The cop walking towards our van gets riddled with bullets and collapses to the pavement. The windshield of the police car is cracked and with a second volley shatters into a billion pieces and we figure we got the second cop because when we pull from the side of the road only the TV van follows. Before they follow in pursuit, they slow to a crawl to get footage of the riddled police car and the bleeding cop on the pavement.

The NewsVan is more powerfully retrofitted than our van and has no trouble catching up to us. We see the driver, the famous anchor, the director, film and soundmen excitedly documenting our escape. Together the two vans travel along the repetitive causeways of our universe, twisting and turning along the alternative paths of sameness.

From around us, we hear the sound of sirens. The tones doppler to a high pitch to suggest approach and sure enough, one, then two, then three police cars descend down ramps to our path. They surround us despite the cacophony of sound and lead we create as a force field. Our van is made of a single layer of metal and when the bullets are returned we see the dimples of dents they create from the inside. We are showered by pieces of glass as the bullets strike our windows. One of the police cars, the head of its driver bleeding, veers off the ramp and crashes through a railing. My men and I are afraid of a similar demise. We are members of a secular religion and we have no after-life, only the repose of a corpse awaits us if we die.

A bullet hits one of our tires and we have to slow down while our driver turns the steering wheel with great force to keep us in the middle of the causeway. Police vehicles of varying sizes and shapes now surround us. The hail of bullets is continuous and no one has courage to look or shoot out our shattered back windows. The police vehicles take note of this and stay behind us. A fusillade of lead strikes our beleaguered van. I direct our driver to take an off ramp and we find ourselves in the parking lot of a large cineplex. We stop the car and scatter from the three doors and throw ourselves behind parked vehicles.

A number of movies are done, the participants walk outside with squinting eyes and remember the boredom of their lives. They are confused as the cathartic violence of movies continues in their midst. They scramble to the ground, behind cars, grab handguns from their glove compartments. The police, unsure of who is criminal or citizen, shoot at anyone who has a gun. The citizens convinced that the police are impostors, fire back. Only two of my followers are still with me and ducking we make our way from car to car. Around us people get riddled with bullets and sprout rorschach bloodstains. The automatic guns of the police make a distinct rriiiffp sound as they shoot. The guns of everyone else make ptuk ptuk ptuk sounds like joyful firecrackers going off on the fourth of july. For our safety I tell my two followers to drop their guns and I do the same. We continue to make our approach on the cineplex entrance. The farther we get from the carnage, the faster we can move since we no longer have to duck.

We trot inside the entrance. I buy three tickets since my followers do not carry money. I give the tickets to the man who lets us behind the red rope.

We make our way down the dimly lit corridor and enter a door. We are standing before a cartoon in a room full of children. We take our seats off to the side and enjoy the latest subliminal offering from a corporate backlot. The movie involves a princess and her suitor, who is a commoner, and various supporting characters—her father, the king; the evil sorcerer; various intelligent mammals; and a genie. The children, my men and I are enraptured by the manic genie, a character who holds the potential of all things. As if to prove the point, the genie transmutes into various famous images of the mass media as the film unfolds, a pluripotent specter of our existence.

Once, Peters and I talked about our childhood experiences when we traveled with our respective parents to this corporation's fantasyland. This was a universal experience for our generation as it is now. We would talk long into the morning about the subtle conditioning that went on with these trips. Our perceptions would slowly be co-opted by the substitution of electroplastic lifeforms for the real things. These improved lifeforms were much more fun and could only be enjoyed with the expenditure of money. When we left to go back home, we would lacrimate and have abdominal cramps (undergo withdrawal). Our lives were emptied of any meaning by the trip. We became listless and bored; a doctor had to put me on amphetamines.

I hear the children scream over the soundtrack and then smell the gas. It burns my lungs and my two followers and I crouch to the ground as we make our way to the EXIT. Because of their small size, the children are much more susceptible to the gas and fall like flies around us. We must be the only audience members left standing when I hear shots and feel a blow that knocks the wind out of me. I collapse to the ground in a pool of my own blood (or is it someone else's?). I grow faint and then I am out.

in your autistic vision.

“Inject him with the Zylox before he wakes up, nurse.” I heard this as I came to in a hospital bed. I had returned to that place of modern worship. My arms and torso were bandaged. With relief, I noted that my temples were free of bandages. I thanked my Lord for this miracle.

I have no idea what happened to me in the days after I was wounded in the theater, but I do know that after the injection of Zylox, my dick was not the same and lost the life of its own. The powers that be thought of something more destructive than the mere loss of my head. A critical part of me was cut off from myself. From this point on I’ve had to force myself to have sexual thoughts. They do not come as easily or with as much guilt. My lust became forever stilted. More subtle emotions were clipped like wings from my being as well, but I have been unable to be analytical in naming them (or is it the change of my being with the absence of sexuality—I do not know).

I spent much time staring with the dispassion of an autistic at the various fixtures in my room, symmetrical works of art more important than the people who imprisoned me. Unlike them, the objects were unchanging and could be trusted. Ever since I’ve had strong feelings for doohickeys (possessions) and in this, I have come full circle with Peters’ early life. What little life I needed could be gotten from the screen of the little black box in my room.

I spent hours doing this until one day the guards came and moved me to a prison in the middle of a desert. Away from my television, I was placed in a small cell. In this redundant world, I am surrounded by men dressed in clothes and sitting in cells just like mine. One of the men was very preoccupied with his bodily secretions. (He was able to spray me a few times between the bars that separated our cells.) One of the guards told me he was a celebrated serial killer. Several times I asked the guards to give him Zylox, but they told me that was beyond their authority. (Another convict told me that the decision about whether to give Zylox to the serial killer was a major legal milestone. The court had ruled that to give him Zylox would take away his means of expression. Seems everyone wanted the serial killer to persist as he was in the subconsciousness of everyone’s imagination.) I pondered what the killer thought and the freedom contained within his mind.

I am like that,
I could not admit
that to anyone
but I am like that,
taking pleasure
in an expanse
of brain not
forbidden to me.
why forbid to him?
perhaps only action?

They put me to work making license plates, which I thoroughly enjoyed. On account of good behavior they let me pick one item for my cell. I surprised myself when I did not ask for a television. I strove for something more pure . . .

“. . . I would like a candle please . . .” Lo and behold, I discovered a new fascination with fire. They gave me the candle on the single condition that nothing could remain in my cell that was flammable. I gave them all my paper—what use was it anyway?

The candle flame entranced me, I would lose hours in meditation on the infinite subset of its shape. The wax was interesting as well and would melt into many pleasing shapes that tickled my old self.

I see,
 in the melting
 of the candle,
female genitalia.
The world
 is nothing but
 form, form
is the thing.
The end
 has no feeling,
 only shuffling
of my feet
and the
 laughter of the
 autistics. We
survivors
will see
 only shapes, not
 a thing deeper,
will have
 the contentment
 of autism.
There
 will be, at the
 end, no feeling—
only the shuffling of my feet
and the laughter of the autistics.

I worked some more and later received a television. I was then almost complete. The television brought me connection to the outside world. The secret of human intelligence lies in the two-dimensional mapping of three-dimensional space, the pasting of a map over a globe! Flip the channel you fool! We are all autistic these days, the cold emotions taking in the expanse of the small screen that encompasses everything we lack:

. . .repetitive images of a third world mob (all of them skinny) dragging a bloated body of a serviceman by ropes through a dusty street (an image more visceral than the mere burning of a flag) . . .

. . .the new sitcom starring the paroled serial killer Ted Bundy (sic Bundlie), the highlight occurs in the sexual chemistry between himself and the actress who plays his leggy daughter . . .

. . .the itemization of body parts and wreckage of the plane that is spread out on the grass, the result of a bomb planted by terrorists once trained by your government . . .

. . .the steroid-enhanced athlete runs the ball into the endzone and wins the game, the crowd cheers as he coughs up blood from his lungs . . .

. . .the repetitive images of an accelerating mob as they destroy storefronts in celebration of the victory of a sports team and the comforting images of soldiers putting them out of their misery . . .

. . .the senseless murder of two patrol officers after they stop a speeding van filled with joy riding (black) gang members and the subsequent high speed chase into a parking lot of a cineplex where gun-toting home boys join in the fracas . . .

. . .and so forth . . .

At the end, repose

It is the End of All Things. I sit with the artifacts of my time. Around me in canisters and black plastic slabs are the photographic and videographic remains of our culture. All the things deemed worthy of remembrance recorded in the moment of their offing by humans holding cameras. When I am bored and need human contact, I often watch these images and feel connected.

The screen comes into view as I power up the television.

The mystical somambulations of a thousand african queens . . . the hormonal signals emanating from asian vaginal mucosae . . . deadly signals stretching over an extent of a thousand seas . . . the sexual perambulations of disarticulated california cheerleaders . . . like coltrane crazed. . . time out of control.

We have all been out of control for some time.

. . .all the pornographic images I've seen—sexual or otherwise—flood my mind. It is these that I'll remember on my deathbed as the image of what it means to be human, our forlorn attempts at self-sacrifice.

Poetry simmers in the mind,
spectral lies of an unknown scout,
our purging at the hand of fate,
another end of a beating heart.

So next I was destined to make my break from this cloistered existence, a place for me to exist in your sub-consciousness, your submerged mass-culture memory. I paid the two guards on the walk detail off. They are my only friends.

& escape by baptism

We march down the cement corridor to the yard. Surrounding the yard are walls around us and way up high, but off to the left inside the confines of the yard, lies the portal of the water aqueduct. The opening is a reflecting mirror of purified water. It is the lifeline of this penal colony in the desert and the metropolis, an underground river that ferries water and pipes through which flow the raw materials for our existence. Our attachment to this lifeline is not protected against cataclysm. It has no back-up system, so we would die after such an event. In contrast, the metropolis is connected with redundancy, the price of which is that it is poorly patrolled by guards.

I am abreast of the aqueduct and make my dash. The guards shoot over my head, I feel their bullets whiz by and tickle my ears. I run low. The bullets are all over the place as I get farther from the guards. Their just-missed-aim is inaccurate at a distance, so this confers some danger and I am scarred. The bullets are whizzing all over the place. Oh god, I believe in you just this once, don't let me die in vain and the next thing I know

I have dived into the cool treated water. I am under the surface and my skin melts and another part of me takes over, a part so ancient that it cannot be contained in moments like this, my ribs rhythmically expand and collapse and I am within myself, a scared animal fighting for release. I breathe in when my mouth is above the surface of the water. I swim on and on and on. Soon I reach the main body of the aqueduct and the water has a stronger flow and I stop swimming as the water carries me on.

I have nothing but the marked clothes on my back, but I am beyond their control (even without my dick). I am on my way to the metropolis in this underground tube. I feel the cobblestone surface as I bump into the small bricks fitted by prisoners' hands over time. Occasionally water gets into my mouth. This river must not be impenetrable to aliens and sure enough, one by one I see them stick their heads through the grates above. They drop inside and are picked up by the strong current. Some of them have learned to swim like me and some don't know how to swim and barely stay afloat, spitting out the water that washes into them with gulps. I grab a small child who was tossed into the water by a woman who was either his mother or older sister. The little wetback was about to drown for good except I grab him and set him on my back. He is slight, starved to a small size, specifically engineered by the powers that be to fit into the small crevices of a mine, working the day for \$2 and small amounts of food. I bet the boy has spent his days loading coal into little cars with a small shovel.

“Gracias, señor . . .” A splash of water makes him gulp and stop.

With the boy holding onto my back and surrounded by the bobbing anonymous heads of “undocumentos,” we make our way to the metropolis and the excitement of a new life. We are off to the tower of babel. Once there, I find what remains of my following. Even after all this time, they had not moved from hiding since the MeccaMall fiasco. They had no better place to go but to await the return of their messiah, Me.

from the spiritual engine.

For I tell you this, the world is run by a spiritual engine. The spiritual engine is a recent despicable invention. Man has been around for 900,000 years, but it has only been 10,000 years since man started preaching and killing in the name of the Idea. Some mutation happened 10,000 to thus transform us.

I have failed to squash the Idea. The Idea of a composite man who can be broken into pieces and sold. And can be surgically recombined. The BurgerMan is a thing composed of various textures of flesh (meat) nerve and tendon. This skeleton is not our form but a thing we have clung to for survival.

The disciples stare at me for inspiration. I am afraid I have none. Who could have foreseen the disaster of my capture and alteration, the loss of many of the followers?

I can tell that their confidence in me is bruised and worse, they know that I know this is true. Our eyes do not meet. I am different now and have been drained of my life force.

A plane leaves under the cover of darkness for a land far away. On board, blue men carry guns and Ideas. It returns from its trade route carrying junk (heroin and a virus) and a new Idea. Junk to kill enemies at home. And it is time for me to leave and ferry my own Idea. I take what remains of my followers money.

The only things left are little bits of fingernails and shucked feces.

It is good sacrifice. Like the Indians with their buffaloes, nothing is wasted and the herds are thinned to keep us strong. Everything is transplanted into the rich and powerful with little waste. No one questions the source of these raw materials transported in small plastic coolers packed with ice, what!?!—they come from the vats of altered monkey cell culture!?

the cleansing possibilities

I am back in my hometown. What do they say—there is no respect for a prophet in his hometown? I feel that way now in the Movement. I stare at Peters as he wildly gesticulates to make his point. I am crazed and for some reason his words deflect off of me. He is a member of an older generation making noise until his time comes to die. He is making no sense and I am not listening.

What happened to transform myself?

I have seen all sorts of things in my life. I may think that my experience is limited but it is not—every photon that has passed through the glass of my eyes has charged my nerves with significance that cannot be quantified. I have seen the frustrations of people who cannot handle their booze and fit into the confines of society. I have seen the disheveled fall down in a stupor to be battered by the elements—gangs cops and the cold.

“Please (my little lamb of a disciple) blah blah blah.”

Come on Peters old man is that all there is? Just your own rattling skin amplifying the hum of your bones, the noise from your voice-box? Please be honest—admit you are bidding your time here. Do you really have the master plan for our dreams?

Man is a mixture of syncopating reflexes and addictions, percolating angst.

All this is stifling and I need room to breathe. This is ludicrous, goddamn it, I feel this now. Whatever I’ve poured out of myself in tribute to Peters comes from a source that has long dried up.

The other disciples were more successful in their pilgrimages away from Peters. Their revolts also took a more violent turn because deep down inside we joined this man because we do not fit well in the streets and need change. We want to pull off the legs of this insect one by one till we get an animal of our creation, one with a suitable back to ride comfortably. It is better to be caught up with a movement that destroys even your own life then to be intolerably bored.

Brother Bob did not get a plane ticket. He did the amazing feat of hitching out to the west where he recruited and multiplied into an army that was as single-minded as himself. They loaded up canoes with camping supplies and bombs. They spent days in the wild, navigating the precariously overloaded canoes down river. Against the lip of a dam they sank their canoes under the cover of night. The bombs fell free and sank to the base of the bulwark. They swam to a safe distance and the bombs were detonated to release the water that washed the land of the BigBurger and Its sins.

Sister Sue severed the wires suspended over the desert from huge towers and later she cut the ones buried deep underground. Brother Carl did something better—he made an army that blew up satellite dishes. Sister Ann and her followers tipped over police cars

and bombed the strongholds of bureaucrats, threw malatov cocktails to the winds. Brother Steve let the oil out of 132 trucks of the postal service while living the life of an itinerant monk. Sister Jane spiked the water supply of a major metropolitan area with 23 pounds of l.s.d. Brother Mike and his band, disguised as police officers, stole money from banks. Sister Sally kidnapped a large number of children, 548, from various day care centers and brought them into the Movement. Brother Andrew obtained a security clearance and crashed military systems. Brother Lee erased the computer debt of the third world. Sister Carmelita programmed the computers of the world's stock exchanges to sell massive amounts of shares at the same moment.

But Peters, true to the form of a Messiah, out did all of us without resorting to violence. While we were away he obtained, through powerful secret followers, a nuclear warhead. Technology, like the intricate bustling of a small insect, is working for the inevitable. The technology is in our hands and will finish us off when we realize our worthlessness. Black metal encloses the parts that slide together. Chemistry will touch off a small explosion that pushes a small piece of metal through the thin skin of titanium and into the gray stuff of plutonium at the whim of the Messiah.

The world now looks different to us. It has many more colors, a world full of the potential and cleansing possibilities of violence. When the drug of Supreme Sacrifice stops bombarding our collective gray matter, we will have a hard time remembering what it was like when that small piece of metal moved with nonchalant ease to the center of the bomb. The metal in collision will release energy, atoms will fall apart and rearrange in waves from an incandescent spark of dark parts, simple mechanical world in miniature. Gravity will fly apart, the world will be in disarray.

It is a Symbol and He means to use it.

of a natural order

We have all felt the Signal and have returned. Peters addresses us, it is the Time:

“The natural order of things is interrupted by the clanging of machines. Across this ramshackle planet, guns are shot to take life and bombs are dropped to blacken the earth. And in the temples of a new religion, the sick & injured are ceremoniously mated to machines in false ritual. Dying mortals are rushed with utmost speed & the shriek of alarm to temples where they are fucked with machines, cut upon and pumped full of medicinal juices. And to what end should this perversion of man and machine lead? Is the purpose to scoff Me? I create and destroy My creations, I am the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and Omega. I have allowed you many creations, bombs and guns to take life, medicine and machines to prevent death. Do not feel complacent with these gifts I have instilled into a few of your minds. Do not forget the Source of these devices.

“But, I know these devices are idols in your mind and keep you from Me. You evoke My Name when you use these devices but you use them not with me in the gut of your being but with something else altogether—a desire to exert power. And hear Me priests of the new temple, you are the sloe eyed devils who muster this outrage to My sensibility. Your solemn sacrifices are empty gestures. And when the end comes, before the earth will be bathed in redemptive fire, the True Prophet and Messenger will show you true meaning of sacrifice & fear. In these days of black sky, congregations will turn against priests, citizens against states, husbands will turn against wives and mothers will abandon their children. And thus the fabric of society will be rendered into individuals and each of you will face a difficult life alone. And the few survivors will behold the True Prophet and the end of Time.

“James is the reluctant Messenger. He has always felt destined for something greater than himself as the government has been scanning his brain for a long time now. He has taken to the streets and proclaims the Truth.

“Wading through this sea of Truth, I want to tell you of the coming of this end Time. This Time is not for the faint-hearted. All beginnings are wrought in violence, it takes a storm to change the weather and this Time is no exception. I am not accepted on these streets, not in my previous life as sinner nor as Prophet now. And because this world has no place for Me, I know it will be washed clean as a sun dried bone.

“Hear the burden of My Word. My people have let Me down. You have forsaken Me. The corruption & greed of the world needs to be purified by an Incandescent Sun.

“Is not the father the master of his son, the priest the master of his clergy, the leader the master of his people? And if I am the Master of this hurtling world, where are My servants? What constitutes their sacrifice to appease Me? And of Me, do you have fear?

“This (bomb) will cleanse you. It is a Symbol of the All Powerful.”

Peters and I, me being his right hand man, face the audience. In front us is the Bomb.

“And what makes you different from the prophets that came before us?” I say that, that is me who says that.

We face the audience. They look back at us in silence (and shame) as we start to fight.

We get angry. I pull out my knife and start to stab Peters. I feel the warm blood splash my face.

I hack away. I am on top of Him now. My anger and sharp knife allows me to dissect below the plastic resilience of sternum and ribs. I sever plumbing, cut tubes encased in inner skin and strands of fat.

I have it now—It quivers in my hand. I hoist Peters’ Heart up into the air. It is still beating, the only part of Him alive now.

The audience, only a fraction of them looking up at me and the Heart, is making agonal sounds.

This Heart is an Atomic Fuel.

& the big combustion.

It is way off in the future these days. This book is about the special significance of those who become unhinged and the contribution of religion to the positive feedback loop of hell.

I was able to adjust to the demands of the Movement. One must not be overly rigid as one matures. I lead the church in a special chant. After we are done, the followers line up in front of me. I move from behind the altar. I imagine what it must be like to be a follower these days, to stand in the line and look up at me, the Pope and see the large figure of the Messiah Peters suspended above us all, His Chest an Empty Hold.

The followers approach me one by one and, with bowed heads and clasped hands, open their mouths. Into each open mouth I place a piece of bread that represents the Heart of our Messiah. Each follower in turn does the Gesture and then swallows. I watch their throats move as they wash the bread down with wine and prayers.

Done. The last of the followers takes a heart shaped loaf and swallows. I watch her walk down the aisle and fight feelings of lust (yes, the Zylox turned out to be temporary or perhaps I out lasted the stuff). I then forgive myself.

The lights are dimmed. The followers stand up and then turn around en masse in waves of rapt attention. We all direct our attention to the bottomless Pit in the back of church.

The Pit is ignited and giant flames leap from Its confines. And the mysterious Clown leads the Child out. (John Wayne Gacy was a patron saint from the old televised order. When we took over I erased all traces of him. He sacrificed young boys while wearing a clown outfit. I took this idea from him.) The Child is tossed into the Pit to the accompaniment of chanting.

Everyone is much more content these days, though there are always a few Heathens left who we need to hunt down. For the sake of variety, I often substitute Heathens of all shapes ages and color for the generic Child in the Pit. I broadcast the Combustions on the religious channels throughout this fair country. The Signal rains down like manna from the satellites in stationary orbit. In return I solicit contributions. Last week I prayed with the president for blessings to rain down on the land.

The book is done, it weighs about a pound. The time has come when I can lift it up and examine it from all sides. It rests in my palm at arm's length. The time has come when I have no remembrance of the act of creation. It is someone Else's work, not mine, divined through the channels of a mysterious source with a Y shaped stick.