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CRIMSON

Nocturnal perambulations. Insomniac halflives. The stars alight behind a sepia smog. Flickering rainpuddles disperse stoplights. Stopsigns glare LED reflections: a hand flies faceward to snowgoggle squinted eyes. Fire in the retinas, migraine novae. New Formalist warts pierce clouds, scratch sky, carve out of the wounded haze a jigsaw formation. An array of tensors wired against each other's grains, an attentional knot binding and dragging: a concrete diamond, slate and neon, fracturing the mind's pharine light. A Callery pear emerges boldly from a crack in the sidewalk, forcing a petaline bloom from stone, then folds inward and inward into

A red room. A cubic room:crimson::a black door:locked. A cubic room throbs into existence: blood red with one locked black door and a red table, centrally located. A beckoning call. An owl over the garden wall. A crow cawing from within the space within. A black door opens and a red room prolapses through it, inflating, which contains the door and a single red table, atop which is one deck of playing cards. A multioctaved bell tolls, its subharmony rumbling the playing cards into a liquid state, its ebb resolidifying them. Their values have absorbed fractions of the infinite vacuums between, achieving a heretofore invisible incrementality. In a cubic crimson room with a lone locked black door through which the room inverted and inflated into being three inflated skins play poker on the only piece of furniture, a small circular standing table, to the tune of a tolling bell debating with spit and vigor whose hand is better. None fold; their pride is what dealt them an infinity in this room. They wring themselves like wet towels and drag their empty forms entirely through each other's orifices until they knot so densely that they weld into one being.

its dais and approaches the counter with its modeled handbag and inquires as to whether the store offers a discount for the dimensionally displaced or otherwise pseudoalive. The stage inside the store is quickly dismantled by stage hands around the mannequin leaving the circumferential storeroom naked. It covers itself Edenic with an avalanche of backstock, which is promptly damage-discounted by four middle managers with bags under their eyes that could each contain a pint of whale oil. The clerk, embarrassed by the ordeal, withers into a pile of lavender petals; the four middle managers crawl inside of each other and disappear; and the piles of boxes pop out of existence one by one like bubbles. The mannequin's eyes grow wide and its chest heaves, looking around for help as it begins to blur again into the dead form it once

was. It fails to find any and reverts, standing statuesque in the center of barren linoleum waste, its outstretched hand full of petals that drip out like from a leaf. Rivulets of vermilion matter trail down shop window like rain and into a hieroglyphic message on the sidewalk: on your back and piss upward into your open mouth. Accompaniments swollen sinews. An LED screen posted massive on facade of a building with known purpose features news footage of ten fortitudinous butter babies rolling downhill trying to

a wheel of cheese to a finish line and unable fully to grasp the totality of their feat, their ignorant grace in the face of death, the depravity of the act of trying to overcome forces that are greater

nonexistence leaving its craggy wen in its wake. Life appears in bursts of semirecognition; faces unwind and rewind in the passing crowds like windfluttering sheet ghosts, conversations a whirl of unparsable noise rolling tidal. A pause in a store window. A mannequin blurs and a humanity emerges to overtake the plastic; it descends fearlessly nude from

I used to watch Harriet Grasper dogfight goldfish. She spent everything spare in her paycheck fuelin' her Vick fantasies. She clogged the toilet with bodies on a nightly basis and had to get one of them turboplungers you only really hear about in yore Arthurian legend to deal with the rothberg cloggin' her septic. Her house was a monument to violence and every appliance therein fuelled that obsession, was clearly selected in a utilitarian way to facilitate her genocidality. She ain't have all 'at many friends, but she had a cadre of morbid admirers, myself among 'em, who tacitly let her behavior spiral into Shakespearean madness. She ain't never really recover. Her hair fell out; she lost water and electricity so she could buy more tanks, and then the filters up and stopped working from the lack of electricity and the tanks got all algaed and inhospitable for goldfish (however long it was they were gonna live anyway) and just like that her obsession suffocated itself under the weight of its own depravity. A couple nights ago I was walking down Fifth and Vine and saw her squatted down by a small tributary under a bridge proddin' something with a stick. "Harriet you ornery sumblitch it's been a good hot minute; what's goin' on with you?" She ain't say nothin'. She looked me in my eyes with this vacant bovine expression I couldn't read. In hindsight I think it was the gaze of translucence. The kind of gaze you don't often see unless the body it inhabits has forgotten all of its faculties and been rendered habit. Her habit, the one causin' her to weaken her knees by that particular wayside, was proddin' what remained of a pair of dead trout floatin' on the surface. It was evident, at least to me, that she'd been proddin' them for a good long while. Maybe that's just 'cause I'm used to seein' what she'd do to all 'em other'n's. I miss Harriet sometimes deep into the night when I'm awake watchin' something or other uninspired on the television so as to forget who and what I am. It's in that moment of misentertainment that I think of her. She was so singularly spiritually motivated by a pure enjoyment of something. She knew who she was and by God she embraced it as tenderly as a mother would. I miss bein' entertained by her entertainment, and I miss that big gummy smile she'd get when she flushed them fishes all at once and had to shove her hand down the pipe to get the porcelain goin' again. I hope she's happy, wherever she is. Maybe she's still under that bridge. Maybe she's somewhere cosmic, outside of the body that imprisoned her joy. Maybe she's in some liminal heaven, wakin' and dead, proddin' some fish into starvin' action. Maybe she's up there proddin' us. Wherever she is, I hope she's happy.

the

dew

the
pool

lie

of

the
no
live

beat

and older than they are, greater and older than their parents and their parents' parents, greater and older than the universe; the toll that this act takes on their little bodies, those bodies that will grow lumpy and deformed and broken under the stress of the minute fractures and aches and sprains incurred during these precious moments of youth, the waning malleability of their forms, the great time spans of their existence larger than they can yet conceptualize, the gravity of the bliss and the carelessness that they show in the face of that invisible scarring for the lack of

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enough if lived without intensity which of course will, in time, certainly ebb into adulthood's passivity and acquiescence and senescence and decay and arthritis and senility and servility and mindless rote complacency as the gears of life clank on and the damages they incur in this most joyous moment begin to rear their hydra head and bite and bite and bite down on their vitality and their ambition and their joie de vivre, the death drive that will nag and plague like a sandbedded anchor in the deep and deepening silences between joys and noise pleading for release and pleading for satiation and pleading for something or anything that'll silence it but never will and pleading for an end to the monotony that punctuates a decade of boundlessness and a dropping of the chains that grow inevitably to bind them to the doldrums until freed by a tomb and an epitaph; the inevitable onset of body sores, bronchial euphoria, bradycardia, tachycardia, mild emphysema, lactic acid burns, sideburns, handlebar mustaches and cumsalted kisses, an unsalted packet of peanuts poured into a bottle of cold cola and drank with forehead-slapped remorse, a v8 engine whining with the effort of twenty mares, a boar hog fighting for coherence as it feasts upon a cornucopia of blue-bruising

fungus,
a fire in
the

the front
beneath
fibrous
field of
into pus
their

One time over coffee, Marjorie Turnbuckle told me I looked just like eight or nine short-statured children stacked atop one another in a trench coat. I wasn't sure what she meant. I was under the impression that all children, or at least the most of them, were of short stature. This impression, I later learned, was mistaken. Like I said, though, I wasn't sure what she meant by that until I arrived at the barren landscape I inhabited and looked in the mirror at my crudely formed and somewhat lumpy body. She was right. I, in the span of time that had elapsed since last I gazed upon my shape, had succumbed to that eldritch temptation that demands I morph into an indeterminate number of shapes kaleidoscopically phasing in and out of each other simultaneously amalgamating, congealing. The issue with Marjorie is that she's very rarely wrong in her interpersonal analyses. And if she is ever wrong, she is only wrong in that moment, for she had the inerrant foresight to become correct over time without fail, quo vide. She once told one of my old buddies Marcus Bratchley, for another example, that he closely resembled in demeanor and appearance the gingerbread man that you would throw out of the batch so as to avoid judgmental stares from your guests and comments such as "terrible host; how could that have been appropriate to serve us?" or "can she even bake?" Marcus was in distinct shape at the time, but after she had cast her stone, surely a week later he was found to have been immolated thoroughly. It seems we have resolutions, but rarely ever answers. But I digress. Out of morbid curiosity in that dread mirror, I sought to unveil the truth and so unveiled myself. And just like that I fell apart into some quantity of smaller selves, short-statured and as malformed as any off-putting gingerperson. I haven't recovered or recollected since. At present, I am still legion. In some vague silence, I sit unstirred like morning coffee silt swirling round the base of a murky cup. Time arrives and passes through me, unfelt and largely unnoticed but for the deepening of my least fortunate wrinkles and abysses, of which there evidently are many multiplying by Mandelbrot mitosis, duplicating by division, replicating by venture inward, creating self of self repeatedly until no self is truly as self as the one before. As such, I am a harrow amongst harrows inscribing my own sins upon another sin's back and morphing said bounds into a labyrinth of Minotaurs and inescapable dead ends growing and changing with the seasons but ever remaining a prison, for I am father and son, Daedalus and Icarus, creating the means of my own downfall and the net that would ensnare me upon reentry. Maybe Marjorie saw this in me, this hollowness unfolding into its echo. Maybe she was uniquely attuned to the deepening well within me that draws everything into the cold. Maybe she herself was somewhat frozen.

understand yet
fact there, the
many things
their own lives
are unable to
understand as
there because
invisible or
dependent on
lived the life that
only just
beginning; the
omnipotent death
propels them just
as gravitation
down that grassy
onward into a life
adrenaline and
adventure, the
sensation that the
live is not lived

boars in a campground rooting through a layer of hot dogs and soda cans and ice bags to find and eat black truffles out of a red cooler as the nocturnal whips and whips their excited breaths ectoplasmic into the moonlight and the tent-dwellers stir in anxious anticipation for they know not what upset their peace but they pray for raccoons and they pray against bears and as a boar hangs its wartorn tusk in a bag of ice and howls a sound no camper recognizes, in fear of wendigo they bolt in a multitude of directions and are systematically hunted down and consumed by the boars (unsatisfied by their few scrounged truffles) so completely that nothing remained of their bodies to be identified and their ravaged campsite remained there out of fear that a wendigo would wreak vengeance if its message was erased



pareidolia, saliva cascading down of my chin, gelatinous teeth bending the whims of a bag of pretzels, teeth fluttering in the breeze like a wheat, a spot of shin skin liquefying beneath the unyielding barrage of fingernails as they dig at an

Hung-up funambulator pandulates
 Democlean;
 dustmotes dazzle in firelight kicked up
 by sudden spectator uproar;
 the sword swallower gestures and
 poses unaware of the above and the
 behind.

incessant and insatiable itch etching the name of no knowable god into
 their tibias; the sound of the shrill echoing doom caw of Crow Magnum, a
 mountain of magpies, maggots writhing, rotting and ripening, writing is
 wanton decay, is the subconscious melting through the tips of one's fingers
 and into their keys, is a sensation of mirrored otherness coming to form,

you grow as I melt, the puddle of excremental putrescence collecting at the bottom of the pile
 scooped up into a bucket and poured through a sieve until discretely parsed into pages and
 pages of loose text, the feral and the febrile meshing into a face within a face bursting at the
 seams, recracking fontanelle, shining crimson like a long hall and a slow rush, "Here's Quirrell,"
 morbid Mordrake with the whispers and the shivers longhauling an interior terrain, Butor at the
 base of a giant Butter

his features as the sun
 liquid, memories of
 zentangled carefully
 obliterated by a monk,
 the sand a million
 other in amidst the
 memories of
 sunshading seven
 in loose dirt playing

Behind my temples and my eyes
 lies a grapevine of lymphatic
 bubbles bursting pus, each throb
 striking like a sunflare, each pulse
 dilating my eyes so everything
 refracts in glittering sunbeams.
 Inside my skull it is roughly ten
 thousand degrees. Grasping for a
 word is like plucking a dandelion
 by the fluff. In the land of
 unwritten songs I am a sovereign.
 In the library of unfinished novels I
 am Novalis. In Babel my flowers
 bloom blue. I am the wintry
 traveler. I am a blackthumb, a
 grower of dead things. I am tired.

Buddha cataloging
 shines them into
 colorful sand
 into a fractal and
 erosion of cliffs into
 children bury each
 jellies and the glass,
 sugarpines
 softbodies halfburied
 worm, a book in

which a grieving boy hotboxes spice in a tent and realizes that his destiny is to play with worms,
 a larva melting into pupal putty in its cocoon and reforging itself into the shape of Millard
 Findlemeyer, Locally Famous Tap-Dancing Marmot Found Cooked Perfectly Medium Rare in
 Local Bakery Oven Will Be Served to Volunteer Firefighters, manbones reducing to stock in a
 cauldron, three Elphabas pricking their gums swearing
 something ruby this way comes, a hanging in Dwarfstown
 attended by methamphetaminic method actors, rows of
 teeth on teeth on teeth, jaws a mile wide, clenched
 musculomass distorted, distended, chewing gum
 mastication stretches tendons pumps pentagonal the
 facial form, faeciform cruciform fetid and cornfed,
 conformed, deformed and misled, misbred, locked up
 fixed stare, thousand yard, two thousand yard, et cet, ad
 in, corn oil add-ins give me the pig sweats, missed
 breaths from hitched beats, a bindle and a typewriter, the

The children of portapotties and famine look lazily over
 the chasm between themselves and the Emerald City.
 Dejected by the gulf, they long wholeheartedly to sail free
 into the currents. They fry their temples with bolts of
 lightning, their tumult divinely intervened. Crucifixion
 dreams: Oz quartered and pinned in pieces upon a tree,
 the curtain torn. Flayed and filleted, cooked medium rare
 and consumed like leavened bread. The children of
 typhus and tyranny tear apart the firmament looking for
 loot to fence. Break unserving institutions down to the
 bricks and break the bricks into bags and cut the cut
 with clog for the double double: all teeth, all animality.
 Glossolalia in the gilded age. All shine: no luster: no
 meat: all bluster. Bodies on the pile pile high scratch sky,
 fire alight smoke a smog, choking fog. Filibusters and
 fligree, empty facsimiles. The children of fate and failure
 inherit dead dirt.

Count'em. Twelve dead martians stuffed into a
 trunk in my grandfather's attic with the
 problematic memorabilia. Count'em. Eleven
 half-naked farmboys frolicking in the fields behind
 my house. Count'em. Ten corpses bloated from
 drowning found half-eaten in my toothless great
 aunt's root cellar amongst the cans and the
 kerosene lamps. Count'em. Nine rattlesnakes
 conjoined at the tail draped over a hatrack like a
 spent squid. Count'em. Eight trout slapping their
 wet little bodies against the linoleum floor of my
 bathroom. Count'em. Seven clowns traveling
 cross country in search of the perfect compact.

boxcars and thick necks firelight the hipsters'
 angelheads, blitz the body memory, keep your legs
 above the rail, look for a fix in Tangier streets, too
 high to fail, four score and twenty scores to keep
 the shakes at bay, hog grease in the icetray,
 icewater cleanse the mainframe, fourteen missing
 hitchhikers found flayed and fish filleted, needles in
 the gums when they ran out of veins, sweatglazed
 runaways stained and perforated pertaining to the
 circumnavigated, fated deathstrings timed and
 dated, underscored and accentuated, fetid death
 songs performed and widely hated, rebar sleepspikes encrusted and saturated. The dull glow of
 the skyscrapers' unceasing light which through yonder yellowed windows breaks vaguely
 illumines from the alleyway dark the form of a beburled hominid of no recognizable genus or
 species crying unto the heavens that he is not a monster, that he too is deserving of salvation,

Count'em. Six cow molars found growing out of my gums between preexisting teeth much to my dentist's dismay. Count'em. Five missing hikers found piecemeal in a number of alphabetically-arranged shoeboxes that line the uppermost shelves of my uncle's walk-in closet. Count'em. Four days have passed in the search for my neighbor's prize shih tzu and they've at long last begun to plumb the tunnels. Count'em. Three tons of whale fat found clogging my other neighbor's pool drain. Count'em. Two butcher's knives sharpened to brittle hidden beneath my pillow in case the jakes get up to chicanery while I catch my beauty Zs. Count'em. One day I'm just gonna get in my car and start driving and if someone or anyone asks for my papers or my purpose I'll hand them my set of keys and walk until my legs give out and if any Good Samaritan stops by the side of whatever road I collapsed on and asks if I have anywhere in mind to go I will tell them that I aim to dangle my legs off the end of the earth but wherever they're going is close enough for me and I will ride with them until they reach their destination and I will eat from their dog bowl and sleep in their shed and when they finally ask me to leave I will do so and do so and do so again until I wither into the dirt and am consumed by the annelids.

holloweyed staggering chattering frozen by angel dust, heaps of rust blown out with tetanus wafting like spores or pollen infecting us, LORD give hope to those of us who've passed through the Dis gate into disgrace, the bodies in our bodies beg for salvation in a language only our gut instincts translate, LORD have mercy on the blood eaters and the backstabbers..." and contains elsewhere a wealth of painted tides that drag the eye in a hypnotic spiral across pockets of other such aphorisms no one has the time to read or contextualize or even comprehend in entirety without breaching the psychic valve and unleashing the pressurespray of a dambroken flood which scours and slices with neither aim nor regard. In another dimlit alley in what meager privacy is afforded by a catty-cornered dumpster a sharktoothed tortoiseshell babybirds droplets of tarry rot gravitationally milked from the proffered forearm of someone whose face has been long lost to that same rot and reduced to a swirl (which, with a sniffle and a wipe, becomes newly skewed, ear-to-ear smeared) patiently as if I had gone feral in the barroom. Ten men

"Barking dogs. Screaming. Sirens. Screeching tires. Taillights breaking. What do you make of all this?"

"Is this thing on?"

edges into ripples whose shattering shine enlightens their feline Siddhartha in a mute idioglossia telling it successfully to quit bogarting; foliage in hand, the matron singlefingeredly swirls an orifice that collapses almost instantly upon the insertion of the woodtip into an airtight seal whose forced inhalation suffocates the matron and wracks their body with heaves and shudders and a fruitless scratching and digging and a reluctant slumping and a thick, wet pop and a sudden total discorporation into a puddle which, after reclaiming the foliage with a cleansing shake and a few rapid emberresurrecting huffs, is lapped up greedily by the cat, whose patience, evidently, had reached its slaving end.

that the desperate look in his eyes is neither bestial nor sinful and that his imminent refamiliarization with the void from which he was birthed uncounted years ago is not a welcome event, that his life is not and cannot have been forfeit, that there must have been more to it than this, that it was worth more than the dirt he would return to, more than the burlap upon his back (the sum of his meager belongings), that he was numbered and named among the inheritors of the Emerald City whose streets are paved with ruby and gold, that the indignities he has suffered could not have been the totality of his purpose, that he was not born to be a receptacle for the norms' need to other others, but the crowd of faces blurring past are deaf to him and the moths are busy with the lamps whose allure surely spells their doom and his wails echoing in the alley remain to him the only proof that he has even spoken. A spraypainted mural obscured by scorch and awl (like barkcrossed lovers in a carved heart) reads in a legible gap "...and if hell is other people then we're buried in Cocytus brainbared and

I had gone feral in the barroom. Ten men dead by my hand. In my dreams I was a Rottweiler barking at the moon. I have seen a human being with a cloaca and a part-time gong farmer. I have lived ten lives beneath a fragrance of lilac.

BEES

Night. Somewhere cold. Snow had just begun to pile on the convex streetlamp lids: collecting, skidding off, collecting, avalanching, collecting. It was stubborn, that winter. Unyielding. I had just been broken up with. He said to beat it, so I beat 'em. The streets, that is. The sidewalk,

Angels on the winds of fury! Devils with the faces of rams! Hot breaths on the necks of man! Putrid homunculi dancing in the firelight, shadows on the wall brimming elation, devastation amassing into piles, buildings disembodied, rubble flung from windowspaces crushing pavement, copper wire hanging limp like nerves from gutted teeth, demonstrations crunching under feet: legs twitching, flailing supine, a million-beetles flipped by a sturdy gust crushed under boot leather matching the city: charblack and befogged with mold and rot and the scent thereof, putrefaction graffiti smeared clinging like napalm despite the pressurespray of a broken hydrant, rot ivy vibrant like dendrites firing bioluminescent.

more accurately. The ultimate walk of shame. I could feel it on my shoulders like a yoke. Gallon barrels of pitchdark sludge, it seemed like, sloshing on my back with every step. I had come to the upward slant of an iron truss holding up some bridge I couldn't name. I knew from whence I'd come, from whom, but knew not where I'd gone. Head down counting, recounting. Crunching rock salt. Flat white as far as the eye could see. Could've been anywhere. Couldn't've cared any less. I'd walked quite a ways since we separated, it seemed like, given nothing was even remotely familiar. I wasn't there for most of it so I couldn't say how far exactly I'd wandered. The taxis wouldn't even look at me. I could see them deliberating whether my fare was worth it until they met my eyes, at which point they decided in a sudden attack of great tremulous

fear to have nothing to do with me. It's like they knew what had been said between us, what had transpired that night. I'm not proud of myself. I inspire shame. I have this incipient fear that I can never know love. That I will never know worth or be worthy. I know not the

Roxypoppers moving in slow motion
like they're trucking through mud.
Rogue pluralists conjoining
unsuspecting livestock.

I know not the name of my lack, but I know its face like it was that of mine own brother. It's a troubling lack. I had felt a dead star love, heartwrenched iron twisting molten, a gravitation that could've turned Olympus to obsidian. Heart blasted to rubble beneath a spray of vitriol. I get this feeling when the waveform of a loveset seems to be cresting, the truth of which never matters more than the panic that ensues upon its sudden, sickening realization: it's this hangtime dread, like peering over the top of a roller coaster waiting for the drop, in which some leaden yarn begins to unwind downward from my stomach and spool around my organs until they're garroted tight and the need to break free unleashes the kind of claustrophobic thrashing I would imagine fightbulls feel, as if to be abandoned was to be marked for slaughter: a desperation for freedom from the collar and its chain so potent that in the blind fury of exercising it, the beast's neck breaks and in

Bodies in the water float different ::
bloated faces rip pop the tissue looks
like soggy tissues. Their names are lost.
Terror flitting swarming gnatlike, halo
elation dinnerbelling it home to roost
eating alive the faceshredding ferals it
smothers. Rage begets rage. Blood
births blood births blood births ad
infinitum.

some way it's free. When I can see in the approaching distance the end of their patience I meet it like the homestretch's second wind had pulsed my wings supersonic. I just can't take the fade. Burn their love that I may smolder forever and leave them in the freedom they were growing to desire. Drive an

Arktika headlong into the deepening cracks of a glacier and splatter it millionfold into the sea so that neither half should feel the slow detachment, the fleshly pulling and snapping of a disjoining form; so that neither half must see the other drift away. Anything is better than the feeling of

sand cataracting between the fingers, the unstoppable and inevitable slippage. So I walked. I hope against hope that I made the right choice still to this day. I'm haunted by regret. I've been hallucinating lately: angels and ghosts, figures clad in flowing white, crowd my periphery, I can turn my eyes to them. dresses floating in the space cluttering the edges of my me with the sensation that I wrong life, that my shame future so strongly that what awaited me, ordained by Furies, has long since gone oblivion. I don't know how I that night. I remember climbing the truss fourlimbed, slowly for the layer of ice, legs pushing outward from the beam and putting that pressure on the fingers which curled beneath it; frozen as they were, they could've assumed no other position. I remember gazing out at the moonlight dissipating into stardust brushed across the frozen surface of whatever river that was; at the couples skating eights, their laughs and rapport barely a mutter when they reached me but filled with the heartthrobbed exuberance of the moment; at the children, enraptured by that magic moment, skipping stones across a surface that would not yield as easily, watching them skip and skip onward into the distance and out of view; at the breaks of starlight beaming in pools of clarity untouched by skate or stone and in the snowflake latticeworks of frost on the windows of buildings and cars alike. It may've been nothing more than some remote exurb of Nowhere gazing over the Nothing River, wherever it was I'd ended up, but through the stained glass tears shattering in my eyes it was as majestic as Ponte Vecchio's view of the endless, sunstudded Arno beset by a rainbow collage of ancient homes. Afterward, I remember nothing of the night. I am sure that I awoke somewhere safe the next day, but how I got there must've been lost to the flurry of snow staticking the air around me. I suspect some taxi driver, some Samaritan seeing me stumble blindly in the snow toward nowhere I care about without so much as a thought in my head, took me home. I remember him. Not the driver, to be sure, but him. I remember piecemeal blurs of his face, but not the whole anymore. That has been lost to the memorycrush of both time and sorrow. I remember his laugh. He worked at this coffee shop downtown, just out of the way enough to feel secluded. I heard it when I walked in and it was a spell cast, an instant persuasion to stay and read awhile in the hopes I'd hear it again. I remember his lip ring, his singlefanged snakebite, and how its coppertang would dance across my tongue like Astaire, fly circles around it like Kelly, and burst fractal through it like white lightning grounding itself through a block of wood. I remember that his smile bore a pair of protruding

!!!

fire

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the

margins

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stars

,

my

eyes

!!!

canines he was unwilling to brace back into place, and I agreed that doing so would strip his smile of the barb on which I hung lingering for so long, a dazzling trick I would watch again and

~~There are visions of
earthworms
billions-strong wriggling
halfway out of the earth
like anemones to praise
the sun with their
delirious, ecstatic
undulations.~~

again so enthralled that I would miss whole sentences and have to ask him to repeat himself, which I know he hated to do, but he was such a wonderful storyteller that even if I had

heard him the first time I would've sat there for hours just to listen to him tell it again and again and again. I remember his deepening laugh lines and crow's feet, surely from telling similar stories: ones whose new twists and turns, appearing from within upon each retelling, would surprise him and break him out into a moment of uncontrolled laughter, a black hole into which I would get drawn time and time again beyond all hope of leaving, that laughter that staked its claim on my heart with its first peeling ring. I remember a lone lock of grey hair that would flutter into his face in moments of headbowed focus that couldn't even be broken by that intrusion, his unkempt and effortless mane. I remember that he was unfazed by the encroaching of Father Time, that he wore his scars with pride as if he were a sculpture constantly under the pressure of some divine chisel and under the gently grazing scrutiny of my fingertips I'd've sworn to it. I remember the veins in his hands, the rootwork geography of a weathered terrain, mountains as old as the universe and textured by diligent work: a mosaic of seismic activity he never once—bar that last once—let unfurl into the magmic roar I knew must have roiled beneath his stolidity, the tempest turning beneath his tranquility. I remember the cascade of earrings that would twinkle like a kalimba as my teeth raked across them. I remember his shoulderblades harrowed by my fingernails as though each motion was some saccharine sin worth etching, those amorous petroglyphs spilling an idiolect I felt I was born to pore over. I remember his network of tattoos spiraling down his limbs and around him—my inkstained Charybdis, my swirling darkness—and I remember which of them were raised. I remember the deep leather eddies swirling his pupils like a drain, the flecks of green and gold and blue pinging to the surface and catching the sun like lazyday swimmers paddling in some placid, secret lake. In him I remember feeling the grace of a forbidden space, the long exhale

involuntarily but
let out when entering into a
is not yours but feels like it
space that belongs to no
that moment, you. I
sanctuary, serenity. I
the safety net he draped
in the form of his forearms
downsoft quelling they poured into me. I remember the times he would breathe in time with me
so that I would latch onto the rhythm as he slowed it down, and those sweet little colorpopping
euphorias that followed. I remember boating the Seine and letting the current waft us beneath

~~Sewer drains emanate smoke like
something had been chosen. Ten men
wearing Momus's glasses march down the
street conveying to the world exactly what
they're thinking as they're thinking it and
more often than not the glasses fill with
thoughts of cheap beer and expensive
pandemonium. Graffiti adorns the face of a
building with no other identification and
features a photorealistic depiction of
Laocoön being stabbed to death by the
many arms of Kali, each bedecked in
glittering bangles and luxury wristwatches.~~

~~The ghost of my great grandfather
leaked his way into my ear from a
chip in the spackle between cinder
blocks and taught me how to drink
'em neat with no pulled face and I
said "thank you, sir; may I have
another?" I feel the soul leap outta
my body like Nadab and Abihu when I
touch the spirits. Space ghost!~~

necessarily
space that
could be, a
one but, in
remember
remember
around me
and the

the Pont Marie with a bon-chance bisou to punctuate a story of ice skating in the Grand Palais, which loomed crystalline just over a riverbank populated with countless lovers enjoying the same languidity we were, waving as we waved back. I remember the Gauloises he kept in his denim jacket and the smell they embedded into it. I remember the exact shape his head left in

Ophanim in place of eyes, a wormking writhing in the nasal cavity, wasps firing on all cylinders trying to escape a closing throat, teeth rotting from the inside out and being filled with the growth of new teeth, bodies in the forest molting to reveal tangles of drowning ichthyotes, starving and malice growing febrile in the tumescent age begging for release.

he hovered impatiently over a crêpe suzette and the echo of his laugh as it reverberated against the ironwork supports of a train station; I remember midnight affogatos and the long conversational nights that followed. I remember him dancing in the urban lamplight amidst the litter and squalor like he was alone in a universe that was flooded with music only he could hear whose drums beat to the rhythm of my heart, so in tune was he to it. I wonder if he still hears it. I wonder if he still feels it, whether he feels it when it begins to slip its tempo when I think of him, so torn is my heart between fluttering itself into a sunwhite faint and stopping itself entirely to spare me the coming shame. I wonder whether he thinks of me, how often, or whether he lost himself to the world. I hope he's happy. I hope that he settled down with someone who could be his everything, who had something more than a lingering spectre to offer.

Exorcisms conducted to the tune of a choir, shearing metal piercing the still of the night from no discernible direction, wet plops of spontaneous implosion, a subfrequency rattle emanating from the center of an empty street and able to be circumnavigated without any semblance of source.

me; I wonder how he remembers me. When I remember him, more than anything else, I feel that final night's climb: its iron indentations flare up in my middle phalanges, the cold scours my respiratory tract like battered steel wool, and I remember so vividly those dents and bruises with a warmth both cozy and sore, tender still despite all these years. It bobs to the surface in the midst of all those memories like a whale gathering air so it can go on singing its lonesome song.

my memory foam pillow and I remember the exact moment I realized it had been forgotten. I remember him kneeling in the Cimetière du Montparnasse's rainwet dirt—despite how much I know he spent on his khakis—to take a tears-mudged charcoal rubbing of Beckett's headstone, so careful not to sit on it in the process and thereby disrespect its tenant. I remember hunting for Sartre's and Baudelaire's and Ionesco's and I remember clear as day how content he was to just have pictures of theirs. I remember candlelit meals of chianti and wild boar; I remember the smell of his singed hair when

Please stop pulling at

my teeth; I am aware

that they're loose.

I hope he found someone he never gets tired of. I wonder if I'd've ever gotten as tired of him as I suspected he'd've gotten of me, though I have my doubts. I wonder what of me lingers in his bones and his habits. I still dance like him. I hold my lighter the same way he does: tail in the crook of my forefinger and thumb, pulling the striker like a trigger; I still remove their child safety bands with my teeth like he did, open bottles with my teeth like he did. I wonder whether he remembers