

“Brilliant, insane and utterly unique, A Greater Monster offers pure sensory stimulation, verging on sensory overload. The graphics, concept and narration are pause-worthy, and they all combine to create literary indulgence at its best—its most interactive. The narrator in A Greater Monster doesn’t hold your hand and guide you; he doesn’t ask you to like him. Instead, he delivers a sharp uppercut to your chin and asks you to stop cowering, open your eyes, and fight back. You will. He’ll make you.”

—**Jen Knox, author of *To Begin Again***
(2011 Next Generation Indie Book Award winner)

“I can’t express how brilliant my favorite scenes in A Greater Monster are. In this extraordinary work, Katzman pushes language to do things, which are truly astounding. This is where Artaud meets Williams S. Burroughs meets Lewis Carroll in an obscene, violent dissolution of character, plot, and setting. A Greater Monster dismantles the foundations of narrative, of the human subject as master and center of time and space, reason and language, and the word is transformed into image, into an indigestible thing that both resists easy consumption and is utterly entertaining.”

—**Carra Stratton, Editor Starcherone Press**

“Beautiful mystic-schizo DayGlo wordage. Poetic, peripatetic, and diuretic prose that befuddles, enchants, and amuses the reader at the same time.”

—**Lance Carbuncle, author of *Grundish & Askew***

“This is bizarro fiction at its most intense. It contains scenes and unique designs that seem engineered by some Mad Hatter and Chuck Palahniuk cross-breed.”

—**Lavinia Ludlow, author of *alt.punk***

*“After David David Katzman’s brilliant first novel, *Death by Zamboni*, a masterclass in the uses to which comic writing can be put, comes a novel that couldn’t be more different. A Greater Monster opens in a world that’s immediately and recognizably ours, a world of profit potential and financial files, before spinning off into a spiritual (and carnal) quest that reads like *Alice on acid*, while channeling every trash sci-fi nightmare *Creepy Tales* had to offer. ‘A book is a special idea’ explains one of the characters, and this book is certainly special, with language that doesn’t so much describe as enact the constant dislocation undergone by the narrator as he spins in the vortex of his own mind’s making. ‘Let us visit the imaginarium.’”*

—**Charles Lambert, author of *Scent of Cinnamon* and *Any Human Face***

“A Greater Monster is a highly creative and original story combining poetry, imagery, and prose—all working seamlessly without a break in momentum.”

—**Charlie Courtland, author of *Dandelions in the Garden***

also by David David Katzman

Death by Zamboni

A GREATER MONSTER

DAVID DAVID KATZMAN



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bedheadbooks@yahoo.com

Chicago, IL 60613

Reach the author at DavidDavid.net, goodreads.com/daviddavid or agreatermonster@gmail.com.

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I have never seen a greater monster or miracle in the world than myself.
—Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, book III, ch. 11

A Greater Monster

I jerked awake from my half-sleep, still clutching Ganesh in my right fist, when I heard the moan. The room smelled of ashes and rosemary. Hit the power button without shutting down and clenched the action figure tighter as my computer whined to its death.

Nothing.

Put my ear to the floor.

Perhaps I hadn't heard it.

I returned to my chair and considered the elephantine god in my hand. *I'll take him to work as a sentinel to keep me company*, I thought. The rich olive color would bring some energy to my office, which was a black box within a large black loft designed to simulate a warehouse (while incidentally honing paranoia and cruelty).

Papers strewn across my desk. My financial files. Had a moment of disorientation—thought I was hanging weightless above them, a dancing spirit. All those numbers representing all that I have.

Could be erased in a flash.

“Take,” he said, holding out his hand. I inspected his dirty, wrinkled palm and the small black lozenge that sat upon it. A gift. The least I could do was allow him the honor of giving it. *Better living through karmaceuticals.*

We stood at the mouth of the alley, dead still. My clients would not have been pleased. eEye would not have sensed anything. Everything needs to keep moving. A breeze rippled across my face, curled down the back of my blazer. A freakishly warm December 21st. Mid-60s. The old man did not move. A monument to homelessness, a statue of failure, wearing a postman’s jacket over a shirt with the outline of a horse on it. Work pants, a dirty baseball hat with the swoosh logo, and sandals covered in what appeared to be dog shit completed the outfit. *Better him than me.* I grabbed at the pill. Turns out, I wasn’t as quick as an action-movie star. The moment I contacted his palm, the old man close-fisted my fingers and spit a glob of phlegm violently at my feet. His acid-green eyes met mine—“Why’d the chickens cross the road?” I scooped the pill and yanked my hand from his. “Why’d the chickens cross the road?” he repeated more urgently. I backed away, thrusting the pill into my coat pocket. The rough wool fibers rubbed like a Chinese finger trap. As I turned the corner back to the street, he bellowed, “Cuz he’s a goddamn backstabbin’ chicken’s why!”

I swiftly trod the well-worn sidewalk dirtied with graf and excrement, noting the quote near Halsted: **MURDER YOU ASS WHITES ESP. BLONDS** → Then further east a couple blocks: **KILL YOU WHITE LONG-NOSED ASSHOLE GOOFS** Mmmh, sorry you couldn’t make it like I did. Welcome to natural selection, loser. Shifting the pavement beneath my feet by walking in time. In a timely fashion. In my black custom-made suit. Took the flaunt way round. At Halsted and Belmont, a silver SUV almost hit me as I stepped out with the walk sign.

“Fuck YOU!” I screamed while flipping the bird at the slut behind the wheel. The blond-ass bitch looked straight through me. Indeed. On second thought, perhaps the angry proles were onto something after all.

Assailed by a syncopated rhythm: hammers echoing from a courtyard, scuffing of shoes, buzzing insects, a bus’s roar, distant sirens, dog’s bark, staccato overlapping of two languages, five conversations. An impassive

blue sky looked down upon me as I marched ahead penned in by concrete. Mangy mutt stopped in my way, craning up at me. Move along, rabid thing. It scampered off.

Touched my L card to the turnstile pad. Up the stairs. Had to squeeze past two deaf white-trash mullet-heads signing furiously at each other, almost coming to blows with their signs. On the platform. Checked out where the girls were. Over there, stood near the most attractive one. *Breasty McSweater, if you knew how much money I make, you'd want me*, I thought. But she ignored me. An ugly girl looked over at me, and I could sense her searching for eye contact—I gave it; she smiled tentatively. I put on my fat glasses. I could see through Fatty's clothes, skin, blood, and muscle. Nothing but a jiggling pile of creamy snot. Could I bag this fat? All the kids are doing it. The biggest bag of fat wins prizes, big fat fucking bags of fat prizes. She looked down.

Later: a client meeting discussing the strategy brief for the eEye launch. Skull-crushing boredom interspersed with hyperventilating fear.

“As we all know,” I said, “security is big business, and this product has huge profit potential. Since 9/11 and even further, with the popular acceptance of global warming as a trend, people have two options. Those who can afford it invest in both directions at once to hedge their bets. The first behavior is a ‘conservation’ or so-called ‘green’ direction where they attempt to ‘make a difference.’ As miniscule as that difference may be, our research shows that people find it psychologically satisfying because it makes them feel like it’s *other people* who are part of the problem. In addition, they feel they are contributing to future safety needs by trying to reduce the dislocation that will be caused by environmental catastrophe. It’s important to note that—except for a few Luddites here and there—this is self-interested and often halfhearted behavior in the average consumer.

“The second track is to protect themselves from those who may be angry and in fact economically at risk due to the new poverty caused by environmental degradation and economic collapse. While green technologies are doing well in the market, these security products are doing even better. Personal safety comes first. There’s nothing but upside here. Further consumer research

shows eEye is best targeted at the six-figure-and-up demographic—individuals whose psychographic profiles wed them to the faith that money can buy safety. Of course, we don't say that. What we do is, we play upon their fear of the unknown and position eEye as the solution. We're recommending the following brand positioning: eEye is knowledge and knowledge provides security—or, more concisely, eEye equals knowledge equals security."

So why is it ... the more I know, the less safe I feel? I reached into my pocket for a tissue and touched the gummy pill. Had forgotten it was there.

"We're going to need to review concepts for our sales meeting at four tomorrow."

"But you just approved the brief. There's not enough time. At least ... let us come back to you with a mood board," I found myself dredging out of the job bin.

"No, we're going to need to show them a full ad campaign. Can you deliver or not?"

"No problem, Christopher. We'll have the creative for you."

So many meetings, I couldn't get any damn work done. Shut myself in my office with a paper plate and a knife from the kitchen. I retrieved the black lozenge, set it on the plate. It looked like a gum drop or the inside of a black Chuckles, with an oily consistency and an odd phosphorescent sheen. Perhaps this was where all the bitter black Chuckles go when they die. Or perhaps it was glue soiled by the hands of Mr. Homeless Guy, Esquire.

I clicked open an email just delivered from the GM.

You've been doing great work on eEye ...—*blah-blah-blah*—... account worth 500 but with growth potential ...—*blah-blah*—... let you know Ed has decided to move on to other opportunities—*fired*—and I'd like you to take over his account for now. You'll have to continue managing eEye but this is a great opportunity for you. I'll be out of pocket tomorrow but Ficks can begin your download.

Please. Strap some electrodes to my temples and sear my brains.

I raised the plate to my nose and sniffed. Nothing. I stuck the plate in a drawer with the knife and proceeded with the fiction of the day.

“I want a fucking life!” The cry echoed from somewhere in the warehouse outside my door. The creatives were getting restless. It was 12:21. Third night in a row I’d been at work past 10:00.

“So lose the account and your job, fucker!” I shouted back and stuck my head out the door. No one. Just a cleaning guy sweeping the floor. He didn’t even look up or acknowledge my presence ... perhaps because we don’t speak the same language. I retreated to my office. Back to my laptop—email from the art director. How much of my life has been eaten up by this machine? What is that, masturbation into a vacuum?

ill be back at 8am if youv got comments

I opened the PDF and reviewed the creative. One good idea, two mediocre. Oh, you spineless jellyfish sons of bitches.

Gotta grab this bull by its balls. Bounced a koosh off the wall for an hour and pulled a couple smarter headlines out of my ass. Fired them off to the art director with some comments, and it was done. The presentation was at 4:00 so we’d be fine.

Warm and stuffy. 1:35 a.m. A dead zone. Discontinuous, discontinued from life outside the walls. I’d rather sleep here than take my work out. Inside and outside reverse so easily, separated by nothing. The outside falls in, the center will not hold. What shambling chimera slumps out of the office?

I turned off the light and sat in my ergo chair with the glow from my laptop spilling across the desk. Lifted the plate from my drawer and placed it in front of me. The object on the plate seemed to have darkened since I last looked. Gotten blacker. I put it back in my drawer. Searched for “free hardcore” and clicked a random link that led to a garish porn site featuring teaser images of

topless women. I closed it, triggering a horde of pop-up windows to swarm across my desktop. Who would be quicker—me or the interstitial masters of the universe? Eventually they got the better of me, so I rebooted. For a brief moment, my office was completely black. I pulled the drawer open and touched the gummy shit, pinched it in half between two fingers. It was jelly-like.

Popped it in my mouth. Tasted like chicken. No, hah. Tasted like bone and asbestos. Like death. I swallowed and gagged, but it went down. My tongue went prickly and started to burn as if I had eaten too much pineapple. I gasped as it oozed a trail down my throat, taking its time. Mistake. That was a mistake. Oh yeah, shit. Why'd I do that? Shit. I closed my eyes. The computer monitor reversed itself, a black square in silver frame. I got up and grabbed my jacket from the door hanger then put it back.

I touched the wall of my office. It was cold. Industrial. Metal rivets. Grey. The floor black and oily. This was fashion. This was marketing.

Ganesh was there on the shelf next to my desk. *If I'm really going on a trip, I might as well pack my totem.* Joke. Stashed him in my pocket anyway.

Some time passed. Sweat ran down my forehead. I felt alternately hot and cold. I gripped the armrest. Desire is not pleasure. It's fever. I picked up a folder of project timelines and emptied it across my desk. Aimlessly flinging and crumpling presentations, turning things over without looking at them, dumping shit on the floor, pulling open drawers and emptying their contents. There went my paperclips. Binder clips. Spare change. Taxi receipts. Business cards. *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Cuntholes.*

I was hunting. For what? For courage? Need to tell a new story of myself. The born-again do it. They let someone else write the plot for what they become. Boring. If I had courage, I would write my own fiction. Become someone interesting.

I was having a hard time wrapping my head around ... why I was doing what I was doing. And what exactly *was* I doing? Outlines softened. Surfaces went

foggy. What was I supposed to be doing? I was caged in solid smoke, sharp smoke. I saw it settling in, filling the space. A skintight dream with hard corners, corroded metal defined space. I shaped the proportions when I could to avoid the spikes. The heartbeat of work. Pain and pleasure cannot be argued with. They demonstrate me. Touching is just electrons repelling. Nothing can touch. Ever.

I passed my arm before my eyes and watched it skip past me like slowed frames in an old movie. Life was stop-motion.

Realization: We render time by stitching together moments—flipping pages in the book of consciousness presents a continuous stream. Our senses too slow to realize the separation of moments, like a strand of pearls through eternity.

Time is terrifying, time is unspeakable. Clock-time lies down between moments ... but distance warps with velocity, time bends with velocity. Frames of reference. Are not absolute. Are selfish. A private reality. Clocks have a life of their own. Framed by references.

Speed separates: the faster I go, the faster everything moves away. At light speed, time accelerates to infinity; a catapult to end-time, light is the end. Within a singularity, density is infinite, gravity is infinite, light cannot escape. Light has zero mass. Time ends at both ends.

Time, you bastard, what are you? An allergy? A sickness. My body aches. I need to become completely still—my insides, I need to stop them, enter the singularity. But what are you? A reflection into matter of speed? Velocity's unconscious. Time is velocity's dance partner. Movement changes our angle through time. Time and space are trapped together, live together. Space trades places with time. Light is the crease where space and time, matter and energy fold.

Time is imaginary space. How do I get from one moment to the next? Space doesn't have direction, why should time? It's a medium. Within which vibrations occur. It just is, not movement, no strand, just now.

Time is—Realization: I could see nothing.

I could see nothing.
The room had vanished.
No forms.
No color or ground.
Absolute zero.

I was thinking, *This is a vision, a vision of nothing. Nothing is recognizable ... not my vision—I'm borrowing someone else's vision. Whose? Who are you who sees this? A spirit guide? The spirit lives in me and is driving me. But ... spirits can be liars or truth-tellers ... quixotic tricksters. What is this?*

My stomach was a black pit spiraling into a negative space, an aching hole where my cock should be receding like the tide into meaninglessness.

Vacant vapid.

The surface of my life felt fragile, like a tympanum, taut and ready to snap. What if there's nothing inside to come out? Nothing, only air, no me in there, no life, nothing to become.

Suddenly, in the clarity of a drug-dark high, I became aware of the emptiness of all things. Every single thing around me, surrounding me. All belongings, buildings, people, people are empty shells, behavior mapped onto mannequins precluding any possibility of truth by gorging at the trough of emptiness—what fills up the emptiness I can taste my fear the fear. I wanted to smash everything every single thing and everyone. Smash the walls the objects the people the air myself crack open the shell release the loneliness. But nothing is so dense and powerful a delusion. The irresistible pull of a black hole the ultimate greedy bastard my inevitable demise drawing closer so I fill myself with more death to get closer to it. Love is burdened with all the feces of emptiness, a vacuum. As empty

as
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And then I began to dissolve

Drift i n g
glid i n g

between
the

lines

Everything was wrong. I had done something not quite right, but I wasn't sure what. Bad things were going to happen to me. I had to try to follow along, play along, if I could just figure out the rules. But I had messed up somewhere. I didn't know the rules.

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I could sense them like crust at the corners of my eyes. I felt outlines, vague outlines of other people in the room with me, but I didn't dare look right at them, I couldn't move my head in that direction ... were my eyes closed? I didn't want to open them because I was ashamed. I could see one of them out of the corner of my eye, one of them was female. Smooth like a doll. Her head was a brown deer head. Doll plastic. Salvia. I knew her name.

A cold glowing eye floated in front of me glaring with basilisk gaze—I threw up my hands to protect myself and the eye vanished in a jagged bolt of lightning.

Heard a sound.

Click.

Slid apart to a place. That deer. A time to get up and move sideways around the room because I was supposed to, disapproved of I could see that.

I was clutching the armrest—must've sat down again. Perspiration trickling at my temples. Oh, this was not good, no, I knew, my desktop exploded like a stick of dynamite *Ispasmedontopofmydesk* it was exploding wouldntstopexploding I stretched the bomb exploding I grabbed it and held it up.

I could see its fat mouths poised to embed themselves into my body

Hello?

[“...”]

Hell oh Hell oh

[“...”]

I tried to yank the thing away from my ear, but it wouldn't let go. Sparks crackled out of the mouthpiece cascading fountains burning my hands, face. I realized I was shrieking. I shut my mouth the sparks vanished black fluid absorbed my consciousness, caught in spongy ether.

I heard the sound of time out of my eye *click-click-click-click-click* trying to catch the present moment I could hear the flower of the metronome from the corner of my eye but I could not see it distinctly. It repelled my touch. Reality pivoted on a single point, I was spinning up and out like a tornado.

I saw through the back and top of my skull. Two television screens face to face talking to each other. There. The metal desk. And my hands went through it to the molecules then the empty spaces full of waves and waves I was swimming. I was in the bathroom wanted to get out because it was so hard. But I couldn't walk.

Whiplash of wind howling through me. The withering glare of the ice mantis emptied my body of all substance. I sensed the fraud. All true calculations

had been hidden from me. The mantis moved across my line of sight leaving a trail of cruel certainty in its wake, outline after outline of itself disapproving of me from the corner of the room.

Motionless, they spoke with the utmost disdain and venom, You live here? We could not have come up with a better punishment for you than this. Your pleasures are shallow and false and nothing exists behind you but emptiness in your so-called civilization so you strain to fuck things, you know deep down you can feel it in your meat that all this pretended human creation will shatter, plunge jagged seeds into your flesh and grow a torture garden.

Silence struck me like a blunt instrument. The stall door slit ajar. The sink—blotched with little lakes of water, a geography of disgust. At a urinal. The small dirty yellow tiles with streaks of rose over and over and over again the same dirty yelling tiles over and over and over again to infinity squares rotating reality clicking around in an infinite wheel I must follow it or I will be lost and life is the ring of the rungs of reality where I step off a world within a world within a world within a world and I needed to wake up because each world was worse than the next stay where I am right now I have to go back—the clicking rotating universe each one a fractionally different version of me I had to concentrate try not to panic stay in the right one or I could become one of the other ones instead I needed to stay in the right slot or I might not come back eyes closed eye saw rows of disapproving people one of them in the middle in the back a deer head of lucent brown they were all related to me and next I was swimming surrounded by liquid pressed against it I plunged through milky clouds diving through fathoms of ghosts. I could not breathe and I did not need to. Slices of clear-clear water.

I saw this then this was the way it is, it always was. This I saw. This was the way it is, it always was. This place was divine. I was always here. I would always be here. And I will return to it. I will always return to it. It is behind everything haunting me. That other place had been a trance. A trance that seemed to last twenty-eight years. This I see now. This is the way it is, it always was. I imagined that world. This is what's real. I imagined that world. This is what happens when I dream of being real.

My skin peeled off to get away from me
 I touched my ears and they rang like toxic metal my teeth were grinding
 A place of phantom surfaces
 A knife sheep god eater and the twitching toads
 The people were beautiful and spoke a language incomprehensible machine chatter
 Gleaming iridescent white suits and strapless dresses blinding cocaine teeth
 Their laughter sizzled in my head and the scraping of rusty wire
 She (of rainbow hair) passed the needle
 He (with silver eye) passed the needle
 a drop of nectar glistening at the top a lambent drop trembling in light
 is me
 the slightest disturbance a slight gust evolves and swirls me into heaps
 endless and unnecessary
 as I turned to speak—vanished in a poof of dust
 Matter is the energy of perception with the sentiment of a pile of maggots
 My self soled in sagging burlap
 a chemical dancing on the tip of the iceberg
 the creative radiance grimaced

Words break world breaks eat ourselves O the sea the hole the Center the whole (no)thing(ness) around and round under and up and u

Things were not good not good I was shitting bricks ripping hairs out my asshole felt like my intestines were going to blow fuck fuck fuck ah shitfucksssss

I felt myself being ripped apart inside my asshole chunks of my ass thrown across the bathroom spattering the walls my legs falling in opposite directions my body surrendering to the tile my face bounding off a surface warm milk in my mouth my tongue felt the topology tooth tooth tooth? jagged edge my face was a jagged tooth my eyes they were closed they would not open I was tugging at them with all my willpower nothing the abyss no orientation no perspective abruptly swung open: my face was in the urinal I pushed back many bodies entangled with me we were all kneeling at the urinal I wriggled and all the bodies writhed around me a knot of little snakes nadouessioux nausea overwhelmed us and we vomited into the urinals before

A beginning:

In.	Out.		In.	Out.		In.	Out.	
	In.	Out.		In.	Out.		In.	Out.
In.	Out.		In.	Out.		In.	Out.	
	In.	Out.		In.	Out.		In.	Out.
In.	Out.		In.	Out.		In.	Out.	
	In.	Out.		In.	Out.		In.	Out.
In.	Out.		In.	Out.		In.	Out.	
	In.	Out.		In.	Out.		In.	Out.
In.	Out.		In.	Out.		In.	Out.	
	In.	Out.		In.	Out.		In.	Out.

Ensnared back at my pad. Wrapped in a blanket. Shivering dog-sick. Puke all over my shirt. Lips numb. Drifting in and out. So many threads of nothingness knitting through my head. Flipped on the poisonous afternoon TV. The television exudes a warm glow of friendship on lonely nights. An insect god waiting patiently for me to rot and decay. Quivered a lot. Smoked a bowl to try to calm down. Shook like Parkinson's. Checked the locks on my door three times just in case. Unlocked one by accident the last time. Had to check three more times. Phone rang. Hot and aching. Lay on the sofa, ceiling fan going around slowly, so slowly. The original *King Kong* was on TV. Closed my burning eyes, sickness of commercials infecting my ears. I think I heard one of my babies on there selling home security. Home security. A house of cards. My job, the economy ... there's always nukes. A home is paper-thin.

I was thinking: *Why'd I do it, why? Every time saying, if this trip ends badly, I can handle it, but I forget every time forget I can't control my brain, parts of it shut down like in a dream that dream where I was talking to him—not thinking he's dead, just talking to him, not saying this isn't possible, this is a dream, don't think it—what was the last one? ... indistinct characters ... can't seem to look them in the face—a warehouse? The office. Right, typing at a computer ... dead fucking father ... run over like a deer in the road—I can hardly picture your creased face, that stupid outfit you put on for the “traditional” dance competition, leather headband stuffed with turkey feathers, feather anklets, beaded wristbands, looking like a sad-ass mascot doing a competition for fuck's sake about tradition ... had to marry a white woman didn't you and move us into a log house so you could still feel full-blood that's why you never could look me in the eye, saw me as iyeska the day I blew up, it all blew up the scholarship the hell I'd go back to the shithole rez no more speak to half-breed cuz I was going to be better than you and you knew it.*

Closed my eyes. Pounding hangover. Couldn't sleep. So fucking tired, but my brain was wrapped in barbed wire. All I could do was groan and feel like I was going to die. Even my tears were afraid to leave me.

I blinked, looked up. The ceiling light was contorted into an angel of death.

Suvé. Suvé. Swedish and quintessential. That summer after college in Europe ... my big black backpack ... the creaky old youth hostel in the Alps—way up at the peak of the peaks. Nothing around but cliffs and snow and space. Meeting over dinner ... talked ceaselessly until it was late, everyone asleep but us. Insects of all kinds zwinged around the ceiling lights, and the chill air sluiced through cracks in the rickety walls. What did we talk about? Pine Ridge, I told her about Pine Ridge and how it was the poorest place in the U.S. and about Wounded Knee and fry bread. I wanted her to see me as special. The one time I told anyone about being Oglala. She just listened, didn't act like it made a difference one way or another. Her tattoo—a peace sign inked in tie-dye on the back of her neck. I love the symbolism of it, she said, whether it's genuine or not. She wanted to believe it had meaning. Sitting across from each other at a rough-hewn picnic bench ... she held out her finger and a monster dragonfly landed on it. The insect preened its eyes for what felt like forever. When it finally flew away she asked, What do you feel when you're in love? and I remember thinking I don't know, I don't know how to answer that, so I just answered without thinking, I want it to be over so I can fall in love again. She had to make a call so we wrapped ourselves in wool blankets and stumbled out into the moonless dark to find the sole payphone in town that stood a hundred feet away down a dirt trail toward the cable car that went up to the top of the Jungfrau. We found our way to it by using our feet to tap for stones lined along the border of the trail and squeezed into the phone booth. She pulled the door shut, and the ceiling light went on. One cube of light amidst miles of pitch-blackness. She was close enough that I could feel the warmth of her breath as she spoke. I leaned my back against the glass wall as she slid a card into the machine and punched a number. For fifteen minutes, I contemplated her long glowing hair flipped back from her forehead like wings and listened to a song I couldn't understand then or ever.

I stroked my slippery hard-on and pictured all the women I wanted to fuck, one after the next falling onto my dick, falling into each other, through each other, becoming one large, arbitrary, beautiful woman who I realized was nothing, and she vanished, and I was fucking myself, and my dick was abraded. I lost it, I lost everything, and I melted into a hole, folded into myself.

My face in the mirror. I looked tired. Thin and brittle. I rubbed my eyes several times. Opened my mouth, front tooth chipped to a point, throbbing. Should get that capped immediately.

I turned on the water and let it run, steamed up the mirror.

The need to buy something uncurled in me like an erection. I would feel better if I just gave in to it.

“Show me what *you* like,” I said to her. The super-hot salesgirl. Perfect oval face like a supermodel, perfectly straight lustrous platinum hair with swathes of blue not found in nature, and perfectly round tits not found in nature either. Jeezus.

She turned, walked to a display. I followed. “This suit,” she said, pulling it off the rack. She stood at my side and held it up in front of us. “It’s from *Perils of Money*. This is the most fabulous thing I’ve seen in a long time. The cut is very cool—a sixties Fellini influence, narrow Italian lapels—and the fabric is amazing. Feel this.” I touched it as she held it out to me—very plush and light. “This is a thin, lightweight velvet. The contrasting lapel and collar is felt, but this velvet—it’s about the same weight as cashmere, and it’s so exquisite. It’s just the most fabulous thing. They make some nice pieces.”

She looked me directly in the eyes.

“This is beautiful,” I said.

She held it up to me, evaluating. “You’re about six foot two? I think it might be perfect.”

I took it from her hands. “I’ll try it.”

She led me to the changing room, which was a frosted acrylic cube mirrored on all four sides, open at the top. “Let me know if you need anything,” she said and left. Tore off my clothes and tried it on. Like a hipster fucking James Bond with money to burn. Checked the tag. 4k. Jesus, an entire paycheck. Burned all right. Back out.

“Let me see,” she said, taking me in. “You know, they made a limited edition of twenty of these, and each one is a different color. It looks fantastic on you. You look fantastic. I wish *I* could wear that.”

“I’ll take it.”

“Congratulations. You look so hot.”

I handed her the plastic as she presented her sweetly smiling face as if it were a gift—felt it down to the pit of my stomach. She disappeared. I wandered down the excessively wide, winding staircase to the cashier's desk on the first floor. My gaze skimmed the surface of the luxurious interior design until I found her hair, then her thick lips—a vaginal exaggeration—before settling on her precise upturned nose (also probably done). “Here please.” I signed on the touchscreen, watched my virtual identity vanish and the jacket folded neatly into a box debossed with the store logo into a semiopaque rubber bag and into my hands. I slid my business card across the counter, “If you'd like to get dinner ... ?” She smiled and nodded with the painful artificiality of an airport food court, had already moved on.

I left, could barely breathe, my throat filled up. My cock ached hard as a gravestone. Followed the sidewalk, walking rootless, wandering past the yuppie slutpads of the Gold Coast. The homogenous brick facades gnashed at the blue tongue of sky, drooled out the black tar street. I entered a convenience store only to be flayed with blaring music—Jesus, it was fucking Christmas. The aisles were pathways in a robot brain. Tinselism. All fucking commodity cheese. I felt myself cleaving in half, bifurcating, axed along my axis. My stomach chattered like a bag of popcorn kernels in a fire. My face. This much stubble? I was back in my bathroom and not sure how I got there. But the day before ... my thoughts hit a wall. The razor. I wanted to shave but watched my palsied hand attempt to hold it. Not so much. My face. Hadn't I shaved already? My usually flawless memory was twisting out of my grasp like an eel. I needed a good steak dinner. And some sleep. Something to settle me down.

I opened my eyes.

“Did you get some dust in your eye?” she asked.

I blinked.

I was in a room. Windowless. Eggshell white and rectangular. The ceiling was high. I sat on a sofa upholstered in expensive oatmeal linen, the back rectangular, the seating deep. The floor was polished white concrete. It took

me a moment to recognize my living room.

And Sasha. Half Dutch (her mother), half Jamaican (her father)—she claimed—the resulting gene mix being nothing short of astonishing. She lounged opposite me in the pool of my red loveseat like a mermaid, with two pillows propping up her waist and one elbow on the armrest, waves of brown hair cascading across her chest. Her dark eyes drew me in, bounced me back, pulled me in. Her eyes absorbed everything yet were impenetrable. A thick envelope sat on the coffee table between us.

“I’m not sure,” I replied.

“Your flat is nice.”

“Thanks.”

“You must do very well.”

“I do okay.”

“I have no particular interest in working,” she said.

“You don’t want to be one of those housewives with kids?”

“Don’t be ridiculous. They’re under the impression that the suburbs go on forever.”

“They’re high.”

“No actually, that’s the problem.” She took a hit and passed the pipe to me.

“Mmmh.” I lit it and inhaled. Exhaled. The heat burned my throat—and numbed it.

“Cannabis is magickal,” she said. I could hear the “k” in it.

“Yeah? It’s just brain chemistry.”

“Do you think? I take it you don’t believe in magick then.”

“I said no to religion in favor of ... I dunno ... logic?”

“Eh, no. While’s true that Western religions contradict science, right, that’s just competition. For how people think. They are of the same category. Religion’s actually a perverse attempt to apply reason to a chaotic world—*attempt*—an attempt to quantify mystery through laws and rules. Would you like to see magick?” Her vaguely European accent—so hot. She gestures through the formless smoke. “Vanishing trick. Ready?”

“Uhm. Sure, whatever, twinkie.”

“The present moment. It’s gone. Where’d it go?”

“Very funny.”

“Mock all you want. Even nothingness is alive. Have you read any quantum physics?”

“Of course. I went to Harvard, didn’t I?”

“Quantum particles zip in and out of existence constantly. That’s magick if I’ve ever heard it. Unfortunately, particles don’t have morality, so that doesn’t give me hope for love. Unfortunately.”

“Love?” I became impatient. “Hell no. Nature isn’t moral. Don’t talk to me about nature. I grew up hearing all about the bullshit greatness of nature. And spirits. The only spirits I saw around that place were rum and whiskey. Fuck it. Come on, they *charged* you to participate in the sun dance. It wasn’t a ritual, more like a flesh carnival about as deep as a punk’s penis piercing.”

“At least it’s balanced. Nature has balance. Humans don’t fit into that anymore.”

“Whatever. Nature doesn’t give a fuck. Remember that little tsunami that hit Japan? A comet could swing by tomorrow and wipe this whole planet out, leaving not a measly remnant. No art, no life, no summer, no rocks, endangered species, organic food, hybrid vehicles, no crust, core, anything. All gone. Call it Chukwa if you want, not going to make it any more spiritual.”

“Well, lovely. But even so. You have no idea what happens outside of time. Dead. What if you ... you could observe the existence of every single being from the very dawn of life to the extinction, watch every sunset, every thunderstorm, you could experience every single one.”

“Uhm. That’s a nice fantasy and so not scientifically rational. I’ve seen everything I believe in.” I took another hit from the pipe. “I never like getting high alone.”

“Why?”

“Because it reminds me of what it’s like to be old.”

“So why do you do it?”

“Because I want to be reminded of what it’s like to be old.”

“No wonder you’re so bloody depressed.” She came over by my side and touched my hand.

“I’m sick of talking.”

I walked down the narrow alley toward where my chance encounter with mister homeless guy had taken place. Two dumpsters on the left, hulking metal things, gave off bad energy, extrusions of cruelty. I came to the end where another alley crossed, and a car pulled past me into a parking space.

The sun fell. Shadows remained behind, burned into the brick like nuclear wraiths haunting the walls. What was hidden on the other side? The petty lives of all these people.

There he was, crouched against a building. I went over to him, ready to run if need be.

“You gave me something yesterday,” I said. “What was it?” He didn’t reply. I repeated myself.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“You gave me something. Do you recognize me?”

“It’s all one day, man.”

“Why are you here?”

“I’m a jagoff, man. So I fucked up. I’m a jagoff. Everyone makes mistakes. I’m a jagoff.”

“Do you have any more of that stuff?”

He got up, rocking side to side, and rushed down the alley, limbs flailing. “I don’t have anything, man. Don’t hurt me. It’s all poison, man. I don’t need a job. It’s poison.”

“I’m not going to hurt you,” I called after him. But I let him go.

I was gripped by fear and remorse at what had happened. And I wanted it to happen again. I had to do it again. I had to get out of there.

“Images fall like snowflakes.”

I spun around but saw no one. I stood in the alley listening. Silence. No, not silence. A humming sound that I had been hearing all along unfolded into my awareness like the revelation of a camouflaged chameleon. The sound was coming from a wall of identical air conditioner units projecting from the windows of an apartment complex, all humming the same sound. Why were air conditioners running in December? I felt dizzy and sat down against the wall. Closed my eyes. Opened them, and I was looking at my face in the bathroom mirror again.

I decided that I had been looking at myself so I continued to do so. Was this what I looked like? Was this really me? My face was a clump of parts that seemed to disagree. My cheekbones protruded more than usual; my eyes, noticeably sunken, startled me. Vivid blue—too much irritation—framed by red, forked lighting. I blinked. Dark stubble dressed my square jaw. I rubbed my chin across three, four, ten times. It felt like an irritated asshole. My nose, finished straight per my surgeon, now seemed to accuse me: I had stolen something from it. Thick straight black hair—inheritance from good ol’ Dad—longer than I’m used to, covering half my ears. Looked like I was going native. I looked *off*. I looked scary. The bitches wouldn’t be so hot for this look. Too much. I peered into my eyes and couldn’t figure out who was looking back. I rubbed my nose from side to side, and it made a clicking sound. Felt out of joint. My forehead was—

scuttling movement to my right, on the sink—a spider?

I checked all around the pedestal. Nothing. Shook my head. *Whoa*. Deep breath. Just my peripheral vision acting up. Likely remnants of that ... drug. Did that actually happen? I couldn’t see how. I checked my pocket: my finger jabbed stickiness. Still some left. Hadn’t known that. I pulled it out. It was different somehow. A black mass. A little flattened. I pressed it back into a lozenge shape. It seemed big, as big as the original piece he had given me. Hadn’t I eaten half? It was squished, hard to tell. I returned it to my pocket and tossed back a couple Vicodin from the medicine cabinet.

I woke up in my new suit jacket. It seemed to be holding me together so I left it on.

“You don’t look like yourself tonight. You look like ass.”

When I last saw her ... when was that? “Oh, thanks. Just what I wanna hear.” I laughed, but it sounded hollow.

“You sound scared.”

“Scared? Of what? That’s ridiculous. Tired, maybe. You know. Work. It’s a constant struggle. Sure, it has rewards, but I work my ass off. I tell you what, I succeed at *whatever* I put my mind to. But *sometimes* I feel like ... I sabotage myself. I know this. I’m my own worst enemy. You know? I make myself miserable ... when I should just appreciate what I have. You ever feel like ... sometimes I hold on to my cell or a fork or anything, could be anything, and I feel like I’m not holding it. Or I’m completely oblivious to actually holding it. Or you catch yourself looking at someone, and you know you’re not seeing them? Maybe I’m seeing myself seeing them. Or I fuck someone and don’t feel like I’m fucking at all. I’m sure you can relate. No matter how hard I hold on or focus or fuck, it always slips away.”

“Bollocks,” Sasha sneered. “Page two of your existentialist drama should relate a kick in the teeth. *Babylon* knocking at your door. All those pretty uniforms. You’ll know what tired is when you find yourself on the wrong list. I saw *les flicks* with clubs wade into a Pride Parade in Jamaica. You’re just like Cobain—a self-indulgent tosser who couldn’t focus outside his small mind for a change.”

“Hey, Hamlet had that problem, too.”

“Another bloody loser. Fuck Hamlet. Just another man who wanted to hear himself talk.”

“So I guess you blame the penis.”

“Uggh. Men are dicks with legs. Genetic defects. The Y chromosome is a crippled X.”

“Well, we’re agreed. Pussies are much nicer.”

“Entrance and exit. Intriguing and inviting and mysterious and hidden—that’s erotic. The deferral of pleasure. While penises are water balloons aimed at me, about to pop. Outness is all they are, surface, sameness. Penises are all there.”

“Now I understand you.”

“No actually, that’s the problem. You think you understand everything. Men are—you could say—juggernaut. Living in the land of conquest. They erase history books and print money on the pages. Drag most women by the hair with them. Women—so gullible to fall for the male lies. Brainwashed into believing it. What we need is, you see ... we just need all the women one day to all just refuse to do it, to refuse to have babies. No sex. All of a sudden—you men would have to give up. Surrender. Dismantle the war machine. Capitalism. The whole fucking system. They’d have to give it up. Of course, men can fall back on rape ... to break us. Rape camps. Which is why every woman needs to have a gun. If every woman had a gun, they’d have to kill us to win, which would defeat them. Catch *that* 22.”

“Oh, please. It’s just as likely men would stop having sex as women. Women probably need to reproduce more than men. And consume the same rewards. It’s primal. You can’t beat that. And what about gay men?”

“Sure, step in the right direction. But the percentages. Too many breeders. Freud had a lot to say about primal urges. The superego exists to overcome the id. That’s how society survives. Otherwise we’d live like pack animals in the wild or whatever. He called it the Reality Principle. Unfortunately, he got it wrong. It’s an *unreality* principle. We’re working hard to destroy our species, and it’s all perfectly logical, based on the logic of capitalism. The need to survive as individuals, as cogs in a system which is destroying itself.”

“I’m sick of talking. Let’s fuck.”

She paused. “Did you just—is that how you want this to go?”

“What, I just figured ...”

“I have no problem at this point. I can turn you into a machine like *that*. Fuck if I care. You disappoint me.”

“I’m just kidding.”

“Yeah.”

“Okay, I’m sorry. I won’t bring it up again.”

“Yeah, that’s fine.”

I followed her to the door; she took her parka off the hook.

“Right, right.”

She was gone.

A truck drove by—it said, MURDER ONE FAMILY MEMBER. That can't be right; I looked back. NUMBER ONE FAMILY MOVER.

The fumes were making me nauseous. *I can't go to work today. Wait, what day is today? Sasha. Something was not quite right about that conversation, but what was it? That was not right. A guy looked at me, drool down his greasy chin, watery eyeballs, no one else around, I'll ask him, he's trying to talk to me at the same time.*

"Excuse me, what time is it?"

Gun-colored khakis, where'd he come from? "What the hell are you saying, dude? Can't understand what you're babbling, get your hand the fuck off my arm."

Where did I put my keys?

I felt untethered, dislodged.

Vertigo hit. "Hi, I'm—" She turned her back on me.

Wetness on my chin. I yawned with terror. I was unsure ... I saw movement ... I tasted starch ... a line before me ... don't get too close ... don't cross the line

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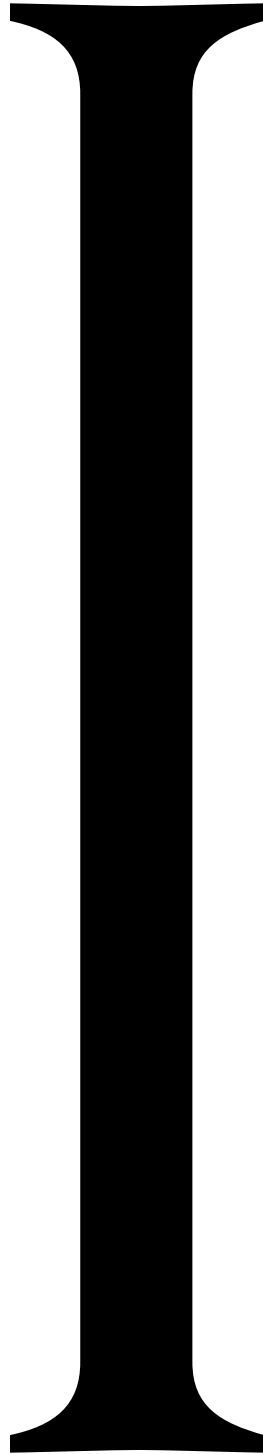
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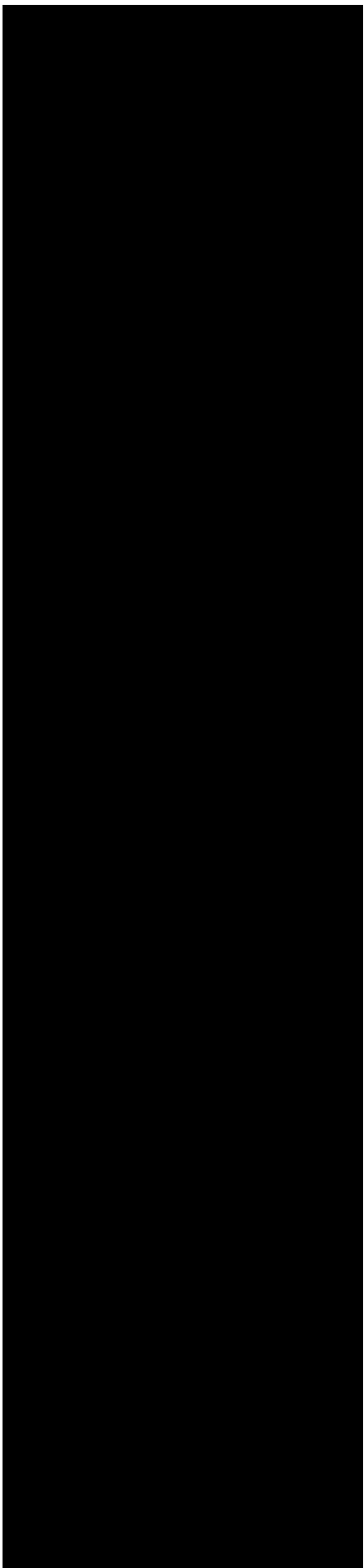
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The uniform walked toward me. He could smell my shit-stink heart. I casually put my hands into my pockets and felt the lozenge. Brought it to my face, hiding it behind my hand. Uniform approached ... too close. I would go home. The uniform walked past me. Stopped. Stood. Turned.

“Hey! You.”

I stuck the black goo in my mouth and swallowed. I turned and looked at his collar. It was dark blue, and the points dog-eared in opposite directions.

“Everything okay? You got a problem?”

Yessir. Nosir.

I looked up at his face and all I could see: two round mirrors. I saw two of me split and morphed like a funhouse reflection. My nose was exceptionally large. My face was projected forward, nostrils gouged out. My hair rose up in clumps looming like vultures. Back, far back, were tiny ears. I clutched at my stubbly chin, which was receding off my face into oblivion. My shadowy cave mouth had a glistening silver chain dangling across it, sealing it.

His tufted knuckles were in front of my eyes, blocking my reflection. He flicked his fingers twice, and I heard a clicking sound.

“What? Listen, buddy, your jacket—that’s a nice jacket, it’s all ripped up here.” He fingered my shoulder and went through to the bone.

“Whoa, you smell real bad there, buddy. Whudaya doing on the platform?”

I’m going to work.

“I can’t hear you. Maybe you should just head home and clean off a bit.”

I’m sick. I’m going to the doctor.

“You’re sick? That what you said? Can I see some I.D.?”

I tried to get my wallet out of my pocket, but there was nothing there.

“Here. I’ll give you a hand.” He checked my pockets, patted me down. Pulled out an object, held it up in front of me.

“What’s this? Some toy? This doesn’t work as I.D., pal. Howerya gonna see a doctor without I.D.?”

I’m sick. Going to Northwestern ... Hospital. I’m a VP ... they’ve got my healthnsurance.

“Hmnh.” His box squawked, and he lifted it to his mouth. “Ten four. Awright there, bud. I gotta go. Here’s your train now. You gonna make it? You better get off on the right stop. Exit Chicago. You got it?”

I’ll be ok.

Mind the gap.

The silver serpent pulled up, and the uniform was gone. I slipped between its scales and sat in its throat. *Clatter clatter clank*. The harsh glare vanished as we slouched roughly into the intestines of Chicago. Dark and swaying, jittering from side to side. Sparks and squeals. I couldn’t get comfortable. It was bony inside on the seat. I kept readjusting—frustrated and irritated bone to bone. A feather tickled my cheek. Chills. I turned and looked back, a circle of light receding. I closed my eyes. I opened my eyes; it was dark. I closed my eyes. Feet shuffled around me, followed by material crumpling and crinkling. It was pitch black. I closed my eyes. Up from my gorge a sensation of fright thrashing side to side hurling between my knees on my pants the burning rushing milk searing my throat, sticking in my teeth. I opened my eyes. I noticed his black boat shoes and a lugubrious black dog with matted hair resting its chin on his shoe. Dog in a harness. Old man with a stick. He sat facing me, frozen, eyes hidden behind big black square sunglasses, his stick thin and long. A thick, salt-and-pepper beard and mustache. He pulled back his lips in a smile or grimace or both, and gold glinted in his mouth.

“Yo, brother. You okay? Not looking so good, all twitchy ‘n shit.”

I turned to my left. Was a dark man with a knit winter cap tight on his head.

“You’re pale as a ghost, brother.” He looked at me. His face was clean and round. “You look like you need to chill. You’ve got sick all over you. I will not preach to you, but I highly suggest you need to get off whatever shit you’re on, whatever it is. I’m not judging you. I used to be on the shit too, man. But I got off. Selling Streetwise now, gonna move out of the shelter. Soon. Yeah, in the meantime, I’m working the tunnel. Never see the light of day. Stand around with my Streetwise. I don’t solicit. But I gotta be careful. Can’t trust anyone. Underground cops. I get AFBB, you know? Arrested For Being Black. That joke’s only funny because it’s true. All you can do is keep your head down, keep moving. None of it makes sense. Just roll with it, right? Keep an eye out for your brother. I’m getting my feet back under me, man. Shit, you’re still young. Anyway, it’s none of my fucking business, I know.

“Look, I don’t do this regular, but you look like you need some medication to help with the twitching or seizures or whatever you got going on.” He looked around. “There’s nobody in here but you, me, and I don’t think this blind guy is gonna give a shit.” He came up close. His flannel shirtsleeve had little red worms sprouting from the cuffs.

“Listen, I got some skunk for myself. Just a couple buds. I got some bad knee pain, can’t afford a doctor, you know? But shit, you need some medicine and there ain’t no doctor gonna fix you when you’re homeless and fucked up. My cousin, he’s got the twitches, you know? And the bud seems to help him. Seen it.”

He put a pipe shaped like a cornucopia in my mouth. A flame ignited like a bloody rose. *Hold still brother, hold still. Now breathe, man, breathe ... there you go. You just need to get out of your head. Breathe and let it go. Now. There. Get some sleep, brother.*

My hand was in my pocket, clutching an object. I pulled it out and tore a hole

in my pocket. I held it up. It was a plastic shape. Grey, brown, sage, white, whorled into a teardrop. A face was submerged in the undifferentiated substance, a long nose, as the blob melted through my fingers onto the floor.

The old man smiled and his gold tooth glinted and the silver serpent clattered, slither-clattered. The lights went out and all I could see was the gold tooth and lights came back and no one was there except the blind man and me and his dog and darkness glittered around me as I slid down a curved banister and my head turned to the right and a suit was there staring at me exuding suitness. I looked at his face it was a woman painfully beautiful as a knife-edge her face traced with flickering circuitry I couldn't break free as she leaned toward me smiling shaking her hair of fiber-optic light *you should follow me*. But I sank down and out.

And I slid onto the floor and out of my body and there I was lying on the floor I saw myself insubstantial blurring into the dog. Hiding.

Re la x ed.
Mmmh.
Come for ta bull.

I observed myself:
the past has left marks on my body
my state vector collapsed
consciousness causes
all time is simultaneous. Or a concept.
Hypercube of space and time. Is why time's not visible.
Time is not a thing, no thing, it's a reflection, the reflection of change into space
the angle skews with speed

the subatomic realm does not distinguish between
all is
all is change

I curved down a banister, sledding down a helix around and around and around the chocolate, candy-cane green, uncountable shades of turquoise, rose upon sweetgrass upon sandalwood upon lemon, rolling crescendos, notes too deep to be sounds, places outside, spatial folding comprehended, chaos itself a fractal god, that which is

Energy exists. That which is

I opened my eyes, and looking up I saw a branch growing out of my mouth and felt roots working their way through the back of my skull like itchy thoughts. I was planted in place as the branch became a tree clambering through the clattering, thick oak tree in the center of the train, windowpanes of pitch night slashing the dense bark, roots like arm-thick cocks fucking the floor, gaping vaginas in the trunk with hoary white beards seed pod dropped tooth bounce pop slap tongue swallow convulsion choke choking air air.

Leaves. Scintillating in silhouette. Lines, stems, arteries grew outward, winding and convolving as multilayered melodies, chaotic calculations, immeasurably fine strands interlaced like lungfuls of air with every molecule expressing life, crystalline ice. Charcoal darkness wreathed the tributaries, chiaroscuro. The pattern of each transcendent. Crystal lady, crystalline birth. Fault lines of consciousness in a fractal cornucopia, splintering through a crystal lattice.

The dappled leaves were interwoven mandalas; the light slowed—I saw light spiraling from my eye up through the leaves, uncoiling and releasing like a galaxy of nebulae; my mind showering out of me, my need to restrain the light in my greedy eye—released, let go my need and felt a calmness; the light—I traveled with it, not seeing because the light was no longer returning to me, I pulsed from my eye and spiraled upward, a gyre of light photon-synthesizing. I felt my breathing stop. Respire-cessation. A quantum of life. Small expression of will. Surfing the quantum foam of the universal ocean breath.

I was a liquid orgasm shimmering up the xylem and phloem diffusing out of the iron bark squeezing through the petioles and bursting like a supernova

into the leaves swaying with the movements of the train, aware of all simultaneously.

The tracks are ajar

The present rushes into → *nothingness* → *all that matter and space vanished, replaced by memory*

Existence is a blip

Matter does not exist → *but in time, it vanishes*

Motion, the vibration drags time into existence

we fling our bodies against each other in desire to return to the great crunch

every particle of our being drives us in hunger

to return to the Nirvanic state when everything touched

before Chaos cast a spell, flinging a universe into existence

repulsion causing desire, rejection,

the Freudian trauma of the Big Bang sex party

and gravity is the friction, the masturbation of the universe.

I = my reified future + my reified past = a vector and the state of my vector is collapse all collapsed

The present is a coordin(ate)ator

a vector is a trajectory in the present, a point with direction, an impetus, an impulse, a groove, energy plus direction

The mind is formless

thought is energy, energy is a wave, a motion, a fluctuation

if the mind is a wave → where is it waving?

What is it waving at?

My Self? My conception of my Self?

*The universe is a dream lit up
crossing the synaptic*

leaping like a neural charge

gap

*all electrons are one electron forever leaping
all our thoughts simultaneously leaping the universe
instantaneously endlessly on its own
random irreducible absolute
cruel amoral atemporal
without influence
among complexes of universes*

I turned my head and the suit with circuitry mapping his clean beautiful face, it hurt to look at her, was observing me frowning as he transformed into a woman, the most beautiful man as she leaned forward, *come fuck me*, he said, *you should follow me*, hand of light reaching toward me seizing my branches but I descended further, escaped her embrace.

Blackness, nothingness. Slivers of light from the windows revealed the dog standing and he was big, then utter darkness then the dog growing bigger, blackness again, then the dog filling the train, towering over me. I was on the threshold

and a guillotine mouth snapped at me

the metal slammed hard on both sides of my head.

I opened my eyes. I could see the mouth. Again—*SMASH*—like a bat to my temples. My eyesight went googly, bubbles of shock popping above me in the dark as the mouth retreated once again and leapt to attack, my brain shattered into a million shiny shards of migraine light diamond knives gnashing. I became aware of a deep thrumming sound a ceaseless kettle drum, an *anh anh anh in in in* in infinite oscillation manifested, my mind so sharpened must've sliced through layers of reality, stretched tight like string theory, adventuring like Timothy Leary, torn and twisted like a Frank Gehry, stacks of warped records, chords cut, trajectories topological, lop a logical universe and my body apart. Twinned, twinned.

Static hiss a murmur the smell musk sandpaper on my cheek I lurched *BANG* against metal, the moaning louder heaviness on my chest digging a weight

