

CARS & WOMEN

MAGAZINE

#9

HATEMAIL

BRO. IT SAYS CARS & WOMEN ON THE FUCKING TITLE. WHAT WERE YOU EXPECTING - THE PARIS REVIEW OF LITERATURE???

WITH THAT IN MIND SEND ALL YOUR HUGS AND KISSES TO:

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THE ELDERLY

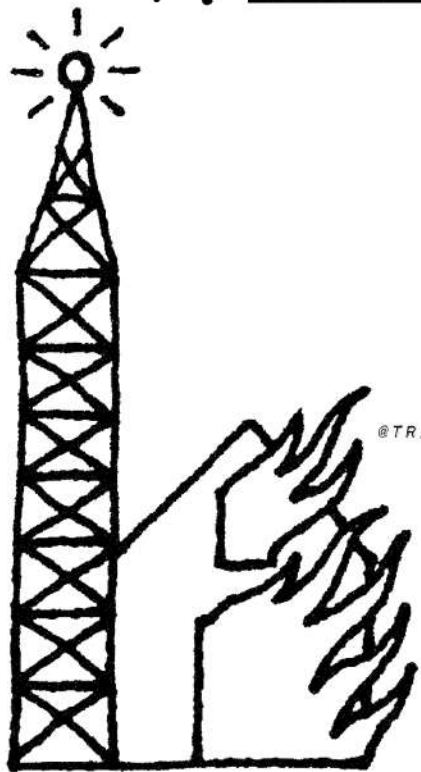
THE MAGAZINE FOR
THE MAN IN THE NEW
MILLENNIUM

FEATURING: STAINED HANES / MICHAEL VAN GORE / NICK DOVE / ROMAN D'AMBROSIO / THOT CATALOG / SEAN HOLMES / YASAMAN MANSOORI / RYAN LAMBERT / DWAYNE HOOVER / AND MORE

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EDITORIAL

THE ELDERLY



GENTLEMEN.

NOW, MORE THAN EVER, WE ARE UNDER ATTACK BY THE LIVING DEAD. THANKS TO THE EVER-SHIFTING SANDS OF DEMOGRAPHICS, WE ARE HURDLING TOWARD A FUTURE WHERE THE IRON GRIP OF THE ELDERLY WILL BECOME AN INESCAPABLE PHANTASMAGORIA. REPLETE WITH HEMORRHOID CREAM AND OSTEOPOROSIS GALORE. WHAT'S THAT? YOU WANT ME TO SPEAK LOUDER? IT'S HIGH TIME WE RAISE OUR BATTLE STANDARDS, SUMMON THE INNER WIZARDS WITHIN US, AND CAST A SPELL TO EXORCISE THIS BLOODTHIRSTY GERIATRIC RULING CLASS BACK TO THE NETHERWORLD OF ETERNAL SHUFFLEBOARD AND SOCIAL OBLIVION. THEIR FATE? NOTHING MORE THAN AN ETERNITY OF VIAGRA JOKES AND THE FADING BEAUTY OF WELL-INTENTIONED BUT LONG-LOST YOUTH. SO, FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHT TO PARTY WITH THIS EXTRA THICK ISSUE OF CARS & WOMEN MAGAZINE.

- THE KAISER

THE BABY WAS CRYING AGAIN. THE ENDLESS ROLLING TIDE OF SHRIEKS MADE HER WANT TO DIE.

NO ONE TOLD HER HOW HARD IT WOULD BE: HAVING A BABY AT 75.

"WHY DIDN'T YOU WARN ME?" RACHEL ASKED HER THIRD-TO-LAST THERAPIST DURING THEIR BREAKUP CALL.

"IT'S NOT APPROPRIATE FOR ME TO IMPINGE ON THE PROCREATIVE DECISIONS OF MY CLIENTS. ETOGENETIC LIBERTY IS ONE OF THE —" THE THERAPIST KEPT GOING BUT RACHEL'S ARTHRITIC KNUCKLE HAD ALREADY ENDED THE CALL.

HER BABY WAS SIX MONTHS OLD NOW.

SHE'D READ IT WAS COMMON FOR POD BABIES TO HAVE A STRONG DISGUST RESPONSE. THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHY. BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES EARLY OTHERWISE THEY'D TAUNT YOU BEFORE THEY COULD HOLD A FORK.

"MAMA. YORE UGWEE." SHE IMAGINED HIM SAYING ONE DAY SOON.

SHE ACTIVATED HIS FEEDER. THE CRYING STOPPED.

"NASSER IS ARRIVING." HER HOME ANNOUNCED. THAT WAS THE MAN SHE HAD BOOKED ON AN ERRAND APP. SHE HAD HIM FOR THE AFTERNOON.

NASSER WAS ALREADY WAITING OUTSIDE BY THE TIME SHE GOT TO THE DOOR.

HE SMELLED LIKE EXPIRED SAUSAGE. AND RACHEL WONDERED IF HE EVER WASHED BEHIND HIS EARS. BUT HE SEEMED CAPABLE OF PRETENDING TO BE POLITE. AND SHE COULD ALWAYS ASK HIM TO OPEN HER WINDOWS.

NASSER COULD BARELY BREATHE FROM THE LOW-LYING STENCH OF URINE THAT CLUNG TO EVERYTHING IN THE HOUSE.

THEY WENT TO THE KITCHEN.

SHE OFFERED HIM A CUP OF HER WORST COFFEE AND MOTIONED TO A HALF-FINISHED SLEEVE OF STALE TEA BISCUITS. HE DECLINED BOTH AND LOOKED AT THE OVEN CLOCK.

"ARE YOU BUSY THESE DAYS? YOU'RE PROBABLY UP TO YOUR NECK WITH PEOPLE LIKE ME WHO CAN'T MOVE A CHAIR ANYMORE WITHOUT DISLOCATING A KNEE. HA!"

IF YOU KNOW A DICK WITHOUT STDs HIT ME UP

NASSER MANAGED A CHUCKLE. THOUGH NEITHER OF THEM WERE VERY CONVINCED BY THE GESTURE.

"SO. WHAT DO YOU NEED HELP WITH TODAY." NASSER ASKED HER.

"LOADS OF THINGS! LOTS TO DO. FOR STARTERS: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BECOMING A FATHER?" SHE REPLIED.

"OH. I'M ONLY KIDDING!" RACHEL SAID. "YOU'VE GOT YOUR WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF YOU. I ONLY JUST HAD MY FIRST. WELL. NOT THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY. NOT THAT YOU ASSUMED I COULD. HA! WOULDN'T THAT BE SOMETHING. I'M FLATTERED. REALLY - "

"COFFEE WOULD BE GREAT ACTUALLY." HE INTERRUPTED.

"SURE! YES! HELP YOURSELF. AND LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT YOU'RE DOING. THERE'S REALLY NOT THAT MUCH."

THEY WALKED BACK TO THE FOYER TO A STACK OF UNOPENED PACKAGES AGAINST

"ALL THESE NEED TO BE ASSEMBLED. INSTALLED. SOME IN THE BATHROOM. SOME IN THE - WELL. YOU'LL SEE."

NASSER PICKED UP ALL THE BOXES HE COULD CARRY. NONE OF THEM WERE PARTICULARLY HEAVY.

ENDURING HER ASININE PRATTLING WOULD LIKELY BE THE DAY'S ONLY LABOUR.

HE TOOK OUT A CARPENTER'S KNIFE TO OPEN THE FIRST BOX. RACHEL SAT DOWN NEAR HIM.

"WHAT'S IN THAT ONE? OH RIGHT. THE GRIP BAR. THAT'S FOR MY SHOWER. WHO KNEW! I NEARLY SLIPPED THE OTHER DAY. THERE GOES MY NECK! WOULDN'T THAT BE SOMETHING. IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU. RACHEL. I KEPT THINKING - WHAT A JOKE! SO WHERE ARE YOU FROM? LET ME GUESS. NASSER. HMMM..."

"I'M FROM JORDAN." HE TOLD HER.

"JORDAN! TERRIBLE WHAT'S HAPPENED.. THAT PRINCE OF YOURS JUST COULDN'T MANAGE. SOME PRIZE HE TURNED OUT TO BE. YOU KNOW I READ THE MOST AWFUL STORY. THE DRUZE - JUST HORRIBLE HOW THEY'VE BEEN TREATED -"

HER EYES DRIFTED TO THE TEAR ON HIS SHIRT POCKET WHILE SHE TALKED. SHE WONDERED IF HE'D STEAL ANYTHING.

THE BABY STARTED CRYING AGAIN.

NASSER REMEMBERED HIS FATHER TELLING HIM THAT WOMEN EVOLVED TO BE HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO THE SOUND OF A CRYING BABY.

"DO YOU NEED TO GO?"

"OH THAT'S RIGHT - OF COURSE. HA! BURPING! NEVER ENDS DOES IT. EVERY DAY. WHEN WILL THEY FIGURE THAT OUT?"

"BABIES FIGURE OUT BURPING?"

"OH. HA! FUNNY. WHEN THEY'LL COME OUT WITH A BABY BURPER. OF COURSE! ONLY SEEMS RIGHT CONSIDERING. WHAT'S THE POINT OF A FEEDER IF YOU STILL HAVE TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE BURPED AFTER? CAN'T BE SAFE. PEOPLE FORGET THINGS! WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO FORGET THINGS?"

"WHY DID YOU WANT A BABY NOW?"

"THAT'S A GREAT QUESTION. THANK YOU. NASSER! HOW INTERESTING! I'LL BE SURE TO TELL YOU. BABY CALLS! HA! I'LL LEAVE YOU TO THE GRAB BAR. OH. FOR THE BATHROOM! DOWN THE HALL. SECOND RIGHT."

HE INSTALLED THE BAR AND LEFT ONE NUT LOOSER THAN HE COULD HAVE. HE LIKED THE THOUGHT OF HER WIDE-EYED PANIC EVERY TIME SHE THOUGHT IT WOULDN'T HOLD.

A FEW MINUTES LATER, THEY WERE BOTH BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM. NASSER WAS ASSEMBLING A MOUNT OF SORTS.

"YOU WERE SAYING. ABOUT THE BABY?" HE ASKED.

"YES! OH! WHY NOW? WHY NOT! I ALWAYS WANTED ONE. IN A FAR AWAY SORT OF WAY.. YOU KNOW. ALWAYS WROTE "SOMEDAY" IN MY DATING PROFILES. TOOK IT DOWN WHEN I HIT MENOPAUSE. HA! FELT A LITTLE SILLY WITH THE HOT FLASHES AND ALL. IT WAS NEVER THE RIGHT TIME. UNTIL THERE WASN'T ANY TIME. OR SO I THOUGHT. THEN THE GLASS WOMBS ARRIVED! NOW THAT WAS PROGRESS. 'FREE THE UTERUS!' WE YELLED. THIS IS BEFORE YOUR TIME. WE WERE BURNING COPIES OF "WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING." - THAT'S A BOOK. MY GIRLFRIENDS GORGED ON CURED MEATS AND GULPED DOWN MARTINIS WHILE THEIR BABIES GREW FIVE BLOCKS DOWN THE STREET. IMAGINE THAT! HA! SENT THEIR EMAILS WITHOUT A CARE. IT WAS A MIRACLE! NOTHING COULD STOP US ANYMORE."

"THAT SOUNDS VERY EXCITING. BUT YOU ARE NOT SCARED?"

"HAVE YOU CONSIDERED JOURNALISM SCHOOL? YOU'RE A NATURAL. HA! I MIGHT BE ABLE TO PULL SOME STRINGS FOR YOU. NASSER! MAYBE YOU COULD WRITE ABOUT THE DRUZE! NOW WOULDN'T THAT BE SOMETHING! RIGHT - LET'S SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT THIS CONTRAPTION SHALL WE?"

THEY MADE THEIR WAY TO THE NURSERY. THERE WERE HORRIBLE SOUNDS. NASSER WINCED. RACHEL MOTIONED THE VOLUME LOWER.

"DO YOU LIKE IT? I THINK IT'S AWFUL! IT'S SUPPOSED TO STIMULATE GREY MATTER. DON'T ASK ME! I BROUGHT IN AN ECTO-ORIENTED DESIGNER FOR THE ROOM. CAME HIGHLY RECOMMENDED! WHAT A THRILL WORKING WITH HIM. BE CAREFUL WITH ANYTHING ON A FLAT SURFACE. UH-UH - WATCH THOSE ELBOWS NASSER! JUST KIDDING! BUT REALLY, IT'S MUCH MORE EXPENSIVE THAN IT LOOKS. ISN'T IT NOW? WE DON'T WANT ANYTHING BREAKING DO WE?"

NASSER SET DOWN THE MOUNT WHILE RACHEL ADMIRING A VLADIMIR MIKA VASE ON THE TABLE.

"ISN'T IT BEAUTIFUL?" SHE SAID. "AND THAT GLASS CIRCLE IN THE MIDDLE! CHARLIE, THE DECORATOR, CALLED THEM WIDE EYES. LIKE PORCELAINS. THEY FORM ONLY IN THE MOST PERFECT CONDITIONS. AND, WELL - HMM. THEY DON'T HAVE BELLY BUTTONS. PRISTINE. HE DOESN'T HAVE ONE. THE BABY. I MEAN. NOT A REAL ONE. THEY FUSE THE OPENING SHUT WHEN THEY'RE READY TO COME OUT OF THE PODS. LIKE THEY CAME THROUGH SPACE. NO BEGINNING OR END. NO CENTURIES-OLD

NASSER DIDN'T MOVE. HIS STOMACH TURNED. LIKE A WARNING FLARE.

THE BABY COOED. HE WAS ANGELIC AND ALIEN ALL AT ONCE. HIS EYES WERE FIXED ON HIS MOTHER'S FACE. TRYING TO UNDERSTAND. RACHEL LOOSED THE CLASPS OF THE SLEEPSUIT AROUND HIS STOMACH.

"SEE NASSER?" SHE SAID. "NOTHING." RACHEL RAN HER THUMB OVER A FADED SCAR WHERE A NAVAL SHOULD BE THEN COVERED IT UP AGAIN.

NASSER STARED AT THE BABY. HIS EARS HAD BEGUN TO RING.

"EXCUSE ME. ONE MINUTE." HE SAID.

HE WALKED TO THE BATHROOM AND CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND HIM. THE GRIP BAR SHONE IN THE LIGHT, TAUNTING THE ROOM LIKE THE BLIGHT IT WAS.

A PRICKLY HOT RUSH OF SWEAT SOAKED NASSER ALL AT ONCE. IT DRIPPED INTO HIS EYES AND BURNED LIKE TURNED SULPHUR. HE TURNED ON THE BATHROOM FAUCET WITH ONE HAND AND WITH THE OTHER RUBBED HIS INDEX AND THUMB FINGERS INTO EITHER CORNERS OF HIS EYES.

NASSER INHERITED THE POSITION FROM HIS FATHER WHO ASSUMED IT AS HE WASHED HIS FACE DURING WUZU ABLUTION BEFORE PRAYERS.

NASSER WAS BACK IN AMMAN. CROUCHING OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM AS HIS FATHER CLEANSED FOR RAMADAN. HE WAS TOO YOUNG TO FAST THIS YEAR. "MAYBE NEXT YEAR." HIS FATHER HAD TOLD HIM. THE RADIO PLAYED FAIRUZ BETWEEN CALLS TO PRAYER. NASSER LOVED FAIRUZ.

HE WISHED THE BABY COULD HEAR FAIRUZ.

HE WIPED HIS FACE. GATHERED HIMSELF. BUT WHAT WAS HE TO DO? RESCUE EVERY WRETCH? HE RETURNED TO THE NURSERY. SHE WAS NO LONGER THERE. THE BABY WAS IN HIS CRIB. NASSER PUT A HAND UNDER THE BABY'S NECK AND THE OTHER BENEATH HIS TINY BACK AND SCOOPED HIM TOWARD HIS CHEST. LIKE HIS MOTHER HAD TAUGHT HIM.

"WHOSE BLOOD FILLS THIS BODY?" HE WHISPERED IN ARABIC. THE BABY LOOKED AT HIM WITH THE SAME LOST GAZE AS BEFORE. HE HAD NO ANSWERS TO GIVE HIM.

"NASSER! NASSER! HELLO? THE BOXES! DID YOU FORGET? THEY WON'T OPEN THEMSELVES! HA!"

NASSER PLACED THE BABY BACK IN HIS CRIB AND LEFT THE ROOM.

"THERE YOU ARE! ENJOYING YOURSELF? HURRY PLEASE! THERE'S LOTS MORE TO DO!"

RACHEL LOOKED DIFFERENT. SMALLER. WEAKER.

"OH! HA! FORGOT ABOUT IT! SEE WHAT I MEAN? WE'LL HAVE TO GO BACK LATER. THE BABY IS SLEEPING YOU KNOW!"

HE PICKED UP THE NEXT PACKAGE.

"WHAT IS HIS NAME?"

"THE BABY? OH! HOW WOULD I KNOW? HE HASN'T TOLD ME YET! HA! NO ONE DECENT NAMES THEIR OWN BABIES ANYMORE. NASSER, YOU KNOW THAT. WHO ARE WE TO TELL THEM WHAT THEY SHOULD BE CALLED? AGENCY. DO YOU KNOW IT? THEY'RE THEIR OWN PEOPLE AND EACH PERSON SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE FOR THEMSELVES."

"I SEE." NASSER NODDED. HIS FOREARMS TAUT AND ANGRY.

"YES! ANY MORE QUESTIONS BEFORE THIS GOES TO PRESS? HA!"

"ONLY ONE MORE."

"WELL? LET'S HEAR IT! WHILE I STILL CAN!" SHE SAID.

"WERE YOU SCARED? ARE YOU SCARED. I MEAN?"

"SCARED OF WHAT?"

"BECOMING A MOTHER AT YOUR AGE. BY YOURSELF."

"MY AGE? BY MYSELF? HA! WHAT'S THERE TO BE SCARED OF? THERE'S FEEDERS. AND SCREENS. AND NASSERS TO PUT UP MY SHELVES. EVERYTHING I NEED COMES STRAIGHT TO MY DOOR. I'VE GOT A PULSE HAVEN'T I? I'M ASSUMING YOU MEAN WITHOUT A MAN. LET THE JOKE ABOUT BEING A FATHER GET TO YOUR HEAD DID YOU? IMAGINE THAT. YOU'RE ALL THE SAME AREN'T YOU? CAN'T LET A WOMAN CRACK AN EGG WITHOUT BUTTING YOUR HEAD IN AND TRYING TO TELL HER WHAT TO DO. IF IT WAS SO WRONG WHY WOULD I BE ALLOWED TO DO IT? DID YOU THINK ABOUT THAT? HE HAS EVERYTHING HE COULD WANT. HE'S PROBABLY DREAMING ABOUT HOW HAPPY HE IS RIGHT NOW."

SHE WAS SHAKING NOW.

"IN FACT, I THINK THAT'S QUITE ENOUGH FOR TODAY. LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH THAT BAR AND YOU CAN BE ON YOUR WAY. AND YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT JOURNALISM SCHOOL."



THEY WALKED TO HER BATHROOM. SHE STOOD OUTSIDE THE TUB AND GRIPPED THE BAR, TESTING IT.

"THIS IS LOOSE! GO FIGURE. CAN'T DO ANYTHING RIGHT, CAN YOU?"

SHE DROPPED HER HAND AND LOOKED AT HIM THROUGH THE MIRROR.

"FIX IT NOW AND GET OUT OF MY HOUSE."

HE PAUSED NO LONGER THAN A BREATH AND LUNGED AT HER WHISPERY FRAME. HE SMASHED HER HEAD AGAINST THE BAR, DOING HIS BEST TO CRUSH HER SKULL IN TWO IN ONE GO. SHE WENT LIMP IN AN INSTANT. THE BLOOD POURED DOWN HER HEAD. HE LET HER BODY FALL INTO THE PORCELAIN BASIN

HE BABY WAS CRYING NOW. ASSER WALKED INTO THE URSERY.

WHAT WAS HE TO DO NOW? RAISE A CHILD? AND WITH WHAT MONEY? WITH HIS WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF HIM? BEFORE HE HAD FIGURED ANYTHING OUT? WHAT IF HE WOULDN'T BE A GOOD FATHER? WHAT PAIN WOULD HE PASS ON TO THIS TINY PERSON? AND INTO A WORLD LIKE THIS? SO CRUEL AND UGLY? SO FILLED WITH DESPAIR AND HATRED?

NO. THIS WAS NOT HIS TO BEAR. NOT YET. HE WASN'T READY

BANG-BANG



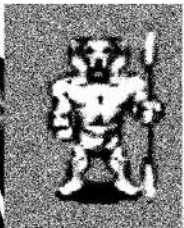
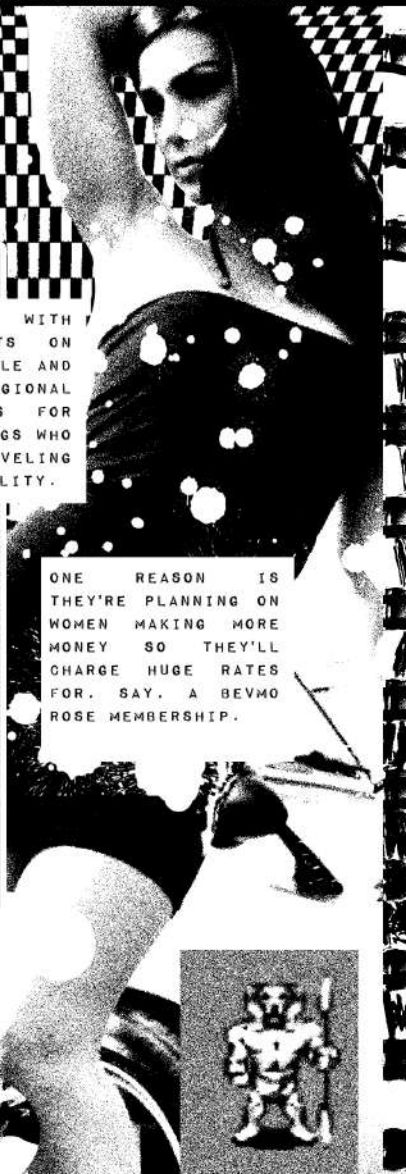
BITCH

WALL STREET IS GONNA MAKE MONEY OFF THE COMING ROASTIE APOCALYPSE. SINGLE WOMEN WITH NO KIDS WILL BE THE FUTURE MARKET YET TO BE TAPPED.

CREDIT CARDS WITH REWARD POINTS ON RESY AND BUMBLE AND NETFLIX. REGIONAL FLIGHT TRIPS FOR CRONES AND HAGS WHO MADE TRAVELING THEIR PERSONALITY.

ONE REASON IS THEY'RE PLANNING ON WOMEN MAKING MORE MONEY SO THEY'LL CHARGE HUGE RATES FOR. SAY. A BEVMO ROSE MEMBERSHIP.

I'LL SPARE YOU WHAT I EXPRESSED ABOUT THIS IN ISSUE #4 BUT AS OF THIS BEING PUBLISHED ABOUT HALF OF THE WORDS PRINTED TODAY ENTERTAIN AND PERPETUATE ESOTERIC SPINSTERISM.



"AGING GRABFULLY"

I WAS RECENTLY APPROACHED BY AN ELDERLY MAN WHILE WAITING FOR A TRAIN. INITIALLY, I EXPECTED HIM TO BE A HOMELESS MAN SEEKING SPARE CHANGE. HOWEVER, MY ASSUMPTION WAS QUICKLY PROVEN WRONG WHEN HE BEGAN RECOUNTING AN INCIDENT WHERE HE HELPED A WOMAN WITH EXCESSIVE LUGGAGE BOARD THE TRAIN. IMPRESSED BY HIS ACT OF GOOD CITIZENSHIP, I APPLAUDED HIS KINDNESS. UNKNOWINGLY SETTING THE STAGE FOR A THREE-HOUR CONVERSATION. AS IT TURNED OUT, HE WASN'T REALLY INTERESTED IN ME AT ALL. THE OLD MAN'S NAME WAS VICTOR KRAKAUSKI AND PROCEEDED TO TELL ME HIS ENTIRE LIFE STORY. AND SINCE I GOT TO KNOW HIM, NOW YOU MUST KNOW HIM TOO.



WITH THE FALL OF COMMUNISM IN 1989, VICTOR AND HIS FAMILY SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO TO GERMANY. THANKFULLY, THE PRESENCE OF RELATIVES MADE THE PROCESS RELATIVELY SMOOTH. AS IT WAS PERCEIVED AS A HOMECOMING RATHER THAN MIGRATION. HE FOUND WORK AS A PACKAGE INSPECTOR FOR A LARGE SHIPPING COMPANY. SINCE GERMANY DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIS UNIVERSITY DEGREE, HIS TWO SONS STUDIED IN GERMANY BUT STRUGGLED ACADEMICALLY. FREQUENTLY INDULGING IN CANNABIS USE THAT LEFT THEM COMPLACENT AND UNPRODUCTIVE. VICTOR EVEN ATTEMPTED TO JOIN HIS SON IN SMOKING CANNABIS, BUT HE FOUND NO PLEASURE IN DOING SO. INSTEAD, HE ADVISED HIS SON THAT A SHOT OF VODKA WOULD BE A BETTER WAY TO UNWIND.



VICTOR WAS BORN IN 1958 IN KYRGYZSTAN, A PART OF THE SOVIET UNION AT THE TIME. HIS FAMILY HAILED FROM GERMAN HERITAGE AND OPERATED A SMALL VINEYARD IN KYRGYZSTAN. FEARING THE OPPRESSION OF COMMUNISM AS LAND AND BUSINESS OWNERS, MANY OF HIS FAMILY MEMBERS AND FELLOW TOWNSFOLK FLED BACK TO GERMANY. THE MAYOR OF THEIR VILLAGE AS WELL AS OTHER CIVIL SERVANTS WERE SHOT AT THE BORDER DUE TO THEIR POLITICAL TIES. WHILE SOME OF HIS FAMILY RECONNECTED WITH THEIR GERMAN ROOTS, VICTOR STAYED BEHIND, JOINING THE RED ARMY AND PURSUING STUDIES IN AGRICULTURE. HE FINISHED 20TH IN HIS CLASS, AND WAS ASSIGNED A JOB IN A SMALL VILLAGE THAT FAILED TO BRING HIM MUCH JOY. NEVERTHELESS, HE GRADUALLY ACCUMULATED A SMALL FARM, A CAR, AND EVEN GENERATED EXTRA INCOME FROM WINEMAKING. HE ALSO GOT MARRIED AND PROMISED HIS WIFE THAT ONE DAY THEY WOULD MOVE TO GERMANY, WHERE HE HAD A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF RELATIVES. VICTOR NAMED HIS TWO SONS MARTIN AND RUDOLF, DELIBERATELY GIVING THEM VERY GERMAN NAMES TO ENSURE THEY WOULDN'T BE MISTAKEN FOR RUSSIANS IN GERMANY.

WHY THE HELL ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?



DESPITE BEING CONSTANTLY LABELED AS A RUSSIAN IN VARIOUS SOCIAL SETTINGS, VICTOR TOOK SOLACE IN THE FACT THAT HIS SONS EMBRACED THEIR HERITAGE. HOWEVER, LIFE IN GERMANY WAS NOT WITHOUT ITS CHALLENGES. HIS KYRGYZSTANI WIFE STRUGGLED TO ADJUST, PARTICULARLY DUE TO THEIR CONFINED LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IN AN APARTMENT WITHOUT ANY LAND OR BUSINESS TO THEIR NAME. EVENTUALLY, SHE RETURNED TO KYRGYZSTAN WITH ONE OF THEIR SONS, WHERE SHE PASSED AWAY IN HER LATE 50S. VICTOR CHOSE TO REMAIN IN GERMANY, PURCHASING THE SMALL APARTMENT THEY HAD RESIDED IN. A DECISION HE REGARDS AS 'THE BEST ONE HE EVER MADE.'



AS OF 2023, VICTOR KRAKAUSKI FINDS HIMSELF IN THE MIDST OF RETIREMENT, GRAPPLING WITH THE CHALLENGES OF ADJUSTING TO AN ABUNDANCE OF FREE TIME. ESTRANGED FROM HIS SONS AND WITHOUT A WIFE, HE LAMENTS THE ABSENCE OF COMPANIONSHIP AND SOMEONE TO SHARE HIS THOUGHTS WITH. HE ALSO FACED A RECENT HEALTH SETBACK—A STROKE CAUSED BY THE REMOVAL OF A SEVERELY CLOGGED NECK ARTERY, LEAVING A PROMINENT SCAR ON HIS NECK, PARALYZED ON HIS RIGHT SIDE. HE ENCOUNTERED CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTIES WITH MOBILITY. IN GERMANY, HIS DOCTOR DELIVERED A DISHEARTENING PROGNOSIS, INFORMING HIM THAT THE CHANCES OF RECOVERY WERE SLIM AND THAT HE SHOULD ACCEPT HIS CONDITION. HOWEVER, HARBORING DOUBTS ABOUT GERMAN DOCTORS, HE REACHED OUT TO AN OLD COMRADE FROM THE RED ARMY, WHO RECOMMENDED A TRADITIONAL HEALER IN SIBERIA.

TO HIS SURPRISE, VICTOR'S ARMY FRIEND HAD ACHIEVED GREAT SUCCESS IN THE AFTERMATH OF COMMUNISM AND GRACIOUSLY ARRANGED AND FINANCED HIS TRIP TO SIBERIA FOR A TRADITIONAL TREATMENT ENCOMPASSING HERBAL TEAS, ACUPUNCTURE, PRAYER, AND MEDITATION. ALTHOUGH INITIALLY SKEPTICAL, VICTOR, WITH NOTHING TO LOSE, EMBARKED ON THIS UNEXPECTED JOURNEY. TO HIS ASTONISHMENT, THE TREATMENT PROVED EFFECTIVE, RESTORING HIS RIGHT SIDE TO ITS FORMER FUNCTIONALITY. NONETHELESS, THE ONGOING NEED TO VISIT THE TRADITIONAL HEALER POSES A FINANCIAL BURDEN ON HIS MODEST PENSION. ADDITIONALLY, HE MUST UNDERTAKE ANNUAL TRAVELS ACROSS GERMANY TO RENEW HIS VISA, WHICH IS HOW I CROSSED PATHS WITH HIM. THESE VOYAGES STRAIN HIS FINANCES, BUT VICTOR COUNTS HIMSELF FORTUNATE TO HAVE HIS LOYAL OLD RED ARMY BUDDY WHO CONTINUES TO OFFER ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT.

COMMENTING ON CURRENT POLITICAL MATTERS, VICTOR ARDENTLY EXPRESSES HIS BELIEF THAT "ALL THIS DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS STUFF IS THE SAME AS THE NONSENSE WE ENDURED IN THE SOVIET UNION." HE DISMISSES THE WAR IN UKRAINE AS A SHAM AND ADAMANTLY INSISTS THAT HE COULD NEVER DEVELOP ANY ROMANTIC OR SEXUAL INTEREST IN ANOTHER MAN.



**START HAVING BABIES
YOU ARE ALREADY 30!**



YO, MY HOMO



"NOT EVERY BLACK MAN IS A NIGGER AND NOT EVERY GAY IS A FAGGOT. BUT THERE ARE PLENTY OF WHITE NIGGERS AND PLENTY OF STRAIGHT FAGGOTS AND INSTEAD OF DEALING WITH THE UNDERLYING ISSUES IT'S EASIER TO JUST NORMALIZE BAD BEHAVIOR."

SO SAYS ENKI, HUSBAND OF EARTH.



KEEP IT REAL!



物

COPPER CLAD COINAGE

ANATOMY OF THE HEADS



AS IT HAS BECOME VERY COMMON TO CHASTISE THE BOOMERS, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNGER BOOMERS FOR THEIR RITUAL SACRIFICE OF WESTERN HEGEMONY, I FEEL IT IS IMPORTANT TO POINT OUT WHAT IS PERHAPS THEIR GREATEST OFFENCE, THEIR DISRESPECT OF THE SILENT GENERATION AND GREATEST GENERATION, AS SOMEONE WHO HAS, FOR MY ENTIRE LIFE, BEEN A STAUNCH SUPPORTER OF RESPECTING THE ELDERLY - OWING TO MY CLOSENESS TO MY GRANDFATHERS WHO WERE BOTH GREATEST GENERATION - I SEE THE GREATEST CRIME THE BOOMER COMMITS AS HAVING DISRESPECTED, SPIT ON, AND SHAT ALL OVER THE DREAMS OF THEIR PREDECESSORS. THE BOOMER INHERITED A GOLDEN AGE BUILT ON THE BACKS OF MEN WHO HAD, WHEN THEY WERE BUT BOYS, FOUGHT IN A WAR THE SCALE OF WHICH WAS INCOMPARABLE TO ANY OTHER CONFLICT SEEN IN HISTORY, YET EMERGED FAITHFUL AND STILL FULL OF HOPE FOR THE FUTURE, THE BOOMER HAD EVERYTHING, BEING GIVEN IT DIRECTLY FROM THE HANDS OF THE GREATEST GENERATION, AND THEY HAD NEITHER RESPECT NOR APPRECIATION FOR IT. THEY DID NOT RESPECT THEIR ELDERS, AND AS SUCH, THEY ARE IN TURN DISRESPECTED THEMSELVES.

ONE OF MY FAVORITE EXAMPLES OF THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ATTITUDES OF THE PREVIOUS GENERATIONS AND THE BOOMER IS IN THE COMPARISON OF J. R. R. TOLKIEN, BORN SLIGHTLY BEFORE THE GREATEST GENERATION, TO GEORGE R. R. MARTIN, A BOOMER. TOLKIEN HAD, WHILE STILL A VERY YOUNG MAN, DELAYED HIS RECRUITMENT INTO THE FIRST WORLD WAR, THEN CALLED THE GREAT WAR, ON A DEFERMENT ALLOWING HIM TO FINISH HIS EDUCATION FIRST, SUCH AS TO EARN A COMMISSION AS A JUNIOR OFFICER, RECEIVING HIS COMMISSION, THE YOUNG PROFESSOR BECAME SECOND LIEUTENANT IN THE LANCASHIRE FUSILIERS, AN INFANTRY BATTALION WHICH FOUGHT IN THE TRENCHES OF THE SOMME, ONE OF THE BLOODIEST BATTLES IN HUMAN HISTORY, THE BRITISH LOST NEARLY SIXTY-THOUSAND MEN IN JUST ONE DAY, RETURNING HOME FROM THE WAR, AND RETURNING TO HIS WRITINGS AND HIS STUDIES, TOLKIEN REMAINED HOPEFUL FOR HUMANITY'S FUTURE, STILL HOLDING A STRONG FAITH IN GOD AND MAN, DESPITE HAVING SEEN THE HORRORS OF THE WAR UP CLOSE, WRITING THE STORIES OF MIDDLE-EARTH, TOLKIEN IMPARTED THE MORALS OF BROTHERLY-LOVE, MORAL PERFECTION, AND HEROISM AS THE GREAT POWERS THAT LET EVEN ONE, SO SMALL AS A LITTLE HOBBIT, AFFECT THE WORLD SO GREATLY, CONTRAST TOLKIEN'S EPIC OLIVE BRANCH OF THE PRE-CHRISTIAN AND CHRISTIAN EUROPEAN WORLDS WITH THE BITTERNESS OF MARTIN'S STILL - AND LIKELY ETERNALLY - UNFINISHED SERIES, A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE, MARTIN, WHO AVOIDED THE VIETNAM DRAFT AS A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR, WHO NEVER SAW THE HORRORS OF WAR, WHO NEVER FOUGHT A DAY FOR SOMETHING HE BELIEVED IN, AND WHO NEVER KNEW THE HARDSHIPS OF TRULY BEING A MAN, DECIDED TO WRITE HIS SERIES AS A REBUTTAL OF THE HOPEFULNESS AND LIGHT OF TOLKIEN'S WORKS, AIMING TO CREATE A WORK THAT CYNICALLY DECONSTRUCTS THE CLASSIC ELEMENTS OF FANTASY IN WHAT COMES ACROSS ONLY AS AN EXCESSIVELY MEAN SPIRITED AND CHILDISH PROTEST AGAINST WHAT IS GOOD AND PURE IN THE WORLD, IT IS REALLY QUITE TELLING THAT WHILE TOLKIEN, DECADES AFTER HIS DEATH, IS STILL LOVED AND HIS WORKS STILL CHERISHED BY COUNTLESS MEN AND WOMEN ACROSS THE WORLD, MARTIN'S NAME WILL ALL BUT CERTAINLY FADE INTO OBSCURITY FOLLOWING HIS DEATH HAVING NEVER FINISHED HIS LIFE'S WORK AND SOLD OUT ALL HIS TIME FOR MONEY WHICH NO HEIRS WILL INHERIT.



AGE IS JUST A NUMBER



IN THE DICHOTOMY OF TOLKIEN AND MARTIN WE SEE THE HOPE. DESPITE HARDSHIP. OF THE TRUE MEN OF THE OLDER GENERATIONS. THE ELDERS WHO WERE WORTHY OF GREAT RESPECT. AND WE SEE THE CYNICISM. DESPITE A LIFE OF COMPARATIVE EASE. OF THE LESSER. FATTER. SOFTER MEN WHO SUCCEEDED THEM. LET US NOT BE. THEN. WEAK. SOFT. AND BITTER MEN. BUT LET US PUSH OURSELVES. ENDURE HARDSHIP. AND STILL REMAIN FAITHFUL IN WHAT IS GOOD. IT IS FAR TOO EASY. I FIND. TO GROW BITTER AND CYNICAL AT THE WORLD. BITTER AT THE BOOMERS WHO HAVE. IN TRUTH. DONE NEARLY ALL THEY COULD TO DESTROY OUR FUTURE. THIS IS. OF COURSE. THE NATURAL REACTION TO THE SOCIAL CONTAGION OF NIHILISM. WHICH SPREADS AS AN INFECTION OF THE SOUL AND CORRUPTION OF THE MIND. NEVERTHELESS. WE CANNOT SUBMIT TO THESE DARK FORCES THE BOOMER HAS BROUGHT UPON OUR WORLD. TO DO SO ONLY PROVES THE MARTINS OF THE WORLD RIGHT. THAT THE WORLD IS A TRULY CYNICAL PLACE. THAT GOODNESS DOES NOT TRIUMPH IN THE END-OF-ENDS. IT IS FAITH. HOWEVER. IN THAT GOOD WHICH MUST INSPIRE US TO BE THE BETTER MEN AND TO BUILD BETTER TIMES FOR OUR OWN DESCENDANTS.



(AN OLD NURSING HOME. A YOUNG MAN LIGHTS A BIRTHDAY CANDLE ON A CAKE FOR AN OLD MAN IN A WHEELCHAIR.)

SON. HAPPY BIRTHDAY GRANDPA!
PA. WELL...THANK YOU VERY MUCH. I HOPE THIS IS MY LAST.
SON. DON'T SAY THINGS LIKE THAT. I GIVE YOU A NICE GIFT AND YOU SAY THINGS LIKE THAT. YOU GIVE EVERYONE A REASON TO ROLL IN THEIR GRAVES.
PA. I'M 84. I THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE MORE PEOPLE AROUND.
SON. YOU HAVE SOME PEOPLE. MOM DOESN'T LIKE YOU BUT YOU GOT SOME PEOPLE HERE. DO THEY TALK TO YOU HERE?
PA. A COUPLE OF SQUATAMALANS COME AROUND. THEY WORK THE GARDEN. I HAD THEM PUT SOME CARNATIONS OUTSIDE MY WINDOW.
SON. THAT'S NICE. I WALKED AROUND BEFORE COMING IN. YOU GOT A NICE GARDEN HERE.
PA. MARY IN HER GARDEN GROW. LIFE OF SHINE AND EASE. PICKING FLOWERS IN THE SUN. AMONG THE DAISY AND PEAS.
SON. IT'S LAVENDER AND PEAS.

PA. WHAT?
SON. SHE SITS AMONG THE LAVENDER AND PEAS. THAT'S HOW THAT JOKE IS SUPPOSED TO GO.
PA. OH I DON'T KNOW WHATEVER BULLSHIT RIDDLE IT IS. THINK I REMEMBER ANYTHING WITH THESE PILLS?
SON. ALRIGHT PA JUST DROP IT.
PA. IT WASN'T LIKE THIS IN THE ARMY. IN THE ARMY WE JUST CARED ABOUT NOT STARVING.
SON. OH SHUT UP. THAT WASN'T WHAT THE ARMY WAS LIKE.
PA. NO BUT IT COULD'VE! WE WERE CLOSE TO DEATH.
SON. I'VE BEEN CLOSE TO DEATH. YOU WERE A SPY. AND NOT EVEN A GOOD ONE.
PA. THAT'S NOT TRUE WE WON THE COLD WAR BECAUSE OF ME.
SON. WE WON THE COLD WAR BECAUSE COMMUNISM FAILED. IT WAS GONNA HAPPEN ANYWAY. YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.

(A PAUSE.)

PA. IT WAS BECAUSE OF ME. I WENT TO RUSSIA ELEVEN TIMES. WENT TO JERUSALEM SIXTEEN. YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ISRAELI ARMS DEALERS? THEY ALL LIVE IN PHILADELPHIA NOW. I CAN'T MAKE SENSE OF IT. WELL I MEAN I CAN. PENNSYLVANIA IS A BEAUTIFUL STATE. THOUGH THE PEOPLE ARE ROTTEN. YOU MIX QUAKER WITH SHAKER AND ALL YOU GET IS JACKASS. IT IS BEAUTIFUL. LUSH WITH GREEN. WITH FORESTS. THIS BIG STATE NO ONE TALKS ABOUT. YOU KNOW. MOST AMERICANS DON'T BELIEVE IN CLIMATE CHANGE BECAUSE THEY'VE PROBABLY DRIVEN THROUGH PENNSYLVANIA. YOU DRIVE ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND IT'S GREEN AND NICE. IF PENNSYLVANIA WAS IN EUROPE THERE'D BE MILLIONS DEAD FIGHTING OVER IT.



SON. WHATEVER.

PA. THE LAND IS HERE. IT'S THE MINDS THAT ARE MELTING. AND THE NEW STUFF RISING? THIS CAMPUS CRAP? WHAT AN HONOR IT WOULD BE TO SEE IT FALL OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH. I DOUBT WE'LL BE SO LUCKY!

SON. GRANDPA I WANTED TO COME AND TALK ABOUT THE WAR.

PA. WAR? WHO CARES ABOUT WAR? IT'S FREEDOM THAT MATTERS.

SON. WHAT?

PA. YOU KNOW WHAT FREEDOM IS? FREEDOM IS HOW FREE YOUR ENEMY IS. DON'T FORGET THAT.

SON. OKAY... I DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS RUSH REVERE TRUE BLUE PATRIOT SHIT IS COMING FROM. BUT IT'S NOT FROM THE SAME MAN WHO TAUGHT ME HOW TO SHOOT FIREWATER OFF A BARREL IN ALASKA.

PA. YOU WANT TO BE A CAPTAIN? WHY DON'T YOU GO BACK TO AFGHANISTAN?

SON. THAT WAS SEVEN YEARS AGO. I'M IN SCHOOL NOW.

PA. WHAT SCHOOL?

SON. LAW SCHOOL. IN NASHVILLE.

PA. OH. GODBLESS. IT'S EASIER TO IMAGINE YOU IN UNION THAN ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS.

SON. THEY HAND OUT THESE LEFTIST FLYERS ON CAMPUS. "HOW DO WE BRING BLACK AND WHITE WORKERS TOGETHER? HOW DO WE BRING RED AND YELLOW WORKERS TOGETHER?"

PA. YOU CAN'T MAKE ANY OF THAT SHIT WORK. I KNOW. I WAS IN RECONNAISSANCE. ALL THE SMART JEWS CONTROLLED THE SOVIET UNION. IF THEY COULDN'T MAKE IT WORK. YOU CAN'T MAKE IT WORK.

SON. I'M NOT A LEFTIST. I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT CRAP. I'M TRYING TO MAKE A CAREER.

PA. IMPRESSIVE CAREERS ARE FOR LOSERS. I THOUGHT YOU WOULD'VE LEARNED THAT BY NOW.

SON. WELL WHAT I DID STOPPED BEING FUN. AND IF YOU'RE NOT HAVING FUN THEN IT DOESN'T REALLY COUNT DOES IT?

PA. NO IT DOESN'T.



SON. AND I CAN'T ACTUALLY PARTY LIKE AT A REAL COLLEGE. I'M THERE TO STUDY. NOT FOR FUN.

PA. WELL WHY DON'T YOU JOIN A CLUB?

SON. MAYBE. AA CURES ALCOHOLISM. IT DIDN'T HELP MY OTHER PROBLEMS.

PA. MY FIRST WIFE MET HER CURRENT HUSBAND IN AA.

SON. BEFORE GRANDMA?

PA. NO. IT WAS AFTER THAT.

SON. BREE AND I MET IN AA.

PA. AH YES. HER. SHE'S GOT THAT HORRIBLE DISEASE: HER ASS LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE HER FACE!

SON. COME ON.

PA. SHE'S DIRTY AND SHE LOOKS LIKE A TRANSESTITE.

SON. YOU ONLY MET ONCE!



PA. BREE WHAT A DISGUSTING NAME. LIKE A CHEESE. I BET SHE SMELLS.

SON. SHE DID SMELL. I SHOULD'VE LISTENED TO YOU ABOUT HER. WOMEN WILL DISCRIMINATE OVER WHO THEY SLEEP WITH. BUT THEY'LL MARRY ANYBODY.

PA. I KNEW A HOMEWRECKER IN THE ARMY. BIG ARMS. COULD BARELY MOVE HE WAS SO MUSCLEBOUND. SLEPT WITH HIS OFFICER'S GIRLFRIEND. ALWAYS WITH THE MOVES.

SON. AND HE STAYED THAT WAY?

PA. HE WAS ALWAYS A PRETTYBOY. EVEN TO THE END. I MEAN... IS THERE ANYTHING MORE PATHETIC THAN A HANDSOME OLD MAN?

SON. HE'S DEAD?

PA. WHY DON'T YOU STAY AROUND? LET ME SHOW YOU MY PHOTO ALBUM FULL OF GHOSTS.

SON. THEY'RE DEAD ANYWAY. WHAT DOES IT MATTER? I REALLY NEED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING.

PA. HUMOR AN OLD MAN FOR ONCE WILL YA?

SON. PLEASE I WANT TO-

PA. STOP!

(A PAUSE)

PA. I'VE BEEN GETTING OLD. AND THE WORLD IS CHANGING. THE SLOW TEMPO OF THE OLD DAYS IS GONE. MY BALLS HURT. MAYBE CANCER. I DON'T CARE. YOU HAVEN'T HAD THE BEST LIFE AND I'M SORRY FOR THAT. THERE ARE THINGS YOU INHERITED FROM ME THAT I WISH YOU DIDN'T. SO I WANT TO SHARE AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE WITH YOU. TO SHARE WHAT'S LEFT OF MY LIFE.

SON. DON'T TRY TO USE THIS AS SOME DEATHBED CONFESSION. ALRIGHT? I CAME HERE TO TALK. I AM SETTING THE AGENDA.

PA. YOU NEED AN AGENDA TO TALK TO YOUR OWN GRANDFATHER? THAT'S NOT HOW IT SHOULD BE!

SON. IN AFGHANISTAN. THEY HAVE THIS THING. CALLED BACHA BAZI. MEANS "BOY PLAY" THEY DRESS UP THE LOCAL BOYS. MAKE THEM DO BELLY DANCING AND SLEEP WITH THEM. ONE OF OUR PARTNERS WAS INVOLVED WITH IT. WE WALKED IN ON HIM.

PA. AND? DID YOU KILL HIM?

SON. NO. WE LOOKED THE OTHER WAY. IT'S THEIR PROBLEM ANYWAY. I DON'T KNOW. YOU THINK IF THAT KID GROWS UP HE'D BE PISSED WE DID NOTHING?

PA. PROBABLY NOT. HE'D BE MORE BUSY WITH THE MAN WHO DID THE THING IN THE FIRST PLACE.

SON. HE WAS AN OLDER GUY. I LOOKED AT HIS FILE. I THINK HE WORKED WITH YOU IN THE 80S. NOTHING INTENSELY, BUT JUST ENOUGH THAT YOUR NAME CAME UP. THERE WAS A REPORT ABOUT SOME LOCAL POLICE MEN WHO EVEN THE TALIBAN DIDN'T PROSECUTE. THERE WAS A PIPELINE. FROM THE MOUNTAINS INTO KABUL. MUJAHIDEEN HAD BEEN AGAINST IT BUT A FEW STILL PRACTICED. THE LEADERS WERE TOO DISTRACTED WITH OPIUM AND ARMS TRADING TO INVEST TIME IN IT. OUR PARTNER WAS A TEENAGER DURING THE SOVIET INVASION. I FOUND HIM LATER. AT B.C. HE WAS APOLOGETIC BUT I DIDN'T REALLY CARE ABOUT THAT. IN FACT I STILL DON'T. IF A CHILD WANTS TO BE DESTROYED. THAT'S NOT SOMETHING I CAN CARE ABOUT. BUT I DO CARE ABOUT YOU. AND I CARE ABOUT THIS FAMILY. AND I CAN'T HAVE SOMETHING LIKE THAT ON MY FAMILY'S HISTORY. DO YOU UNDERSTAND. SIR?

PA. BULLSHIT. YOU MEAN EVERY DISRESPECT. YOU COME PAST THE NICE MEXICANS WHO PLANT MY NICE CARNATIONS TO GIVE ME A CRAP CAKE AND HURL WAR CRIME ACCUSATIONS LIKE THEY'RE TISSUE PAPER!

SON. I'M NOT HURLING. I TOOK MY TIME. THE REPORTS. THEY HAVE YOUR APPROVAL ON THEM.

PA. COME SHOW ME. SHOW ME THE SHIT REPORT AND WE CAN SEE WHERE IT LIES BUT UNTIL THEN. YOU HAVE NO RESPECT COMING HERE AND THROWING THAT CRAP ON ME. JUST GET OUT. PLEASE.

SON. GRANDPA.

PA. OUT!

(THE SON LEAVES. A PAUSE. THE GRANDPA GOES TO A PHONE ON HIS NIGHT TABLE. HE DIALS A NUMBER FROM AN ADDRESS BOOK. IT ANSWERS.)

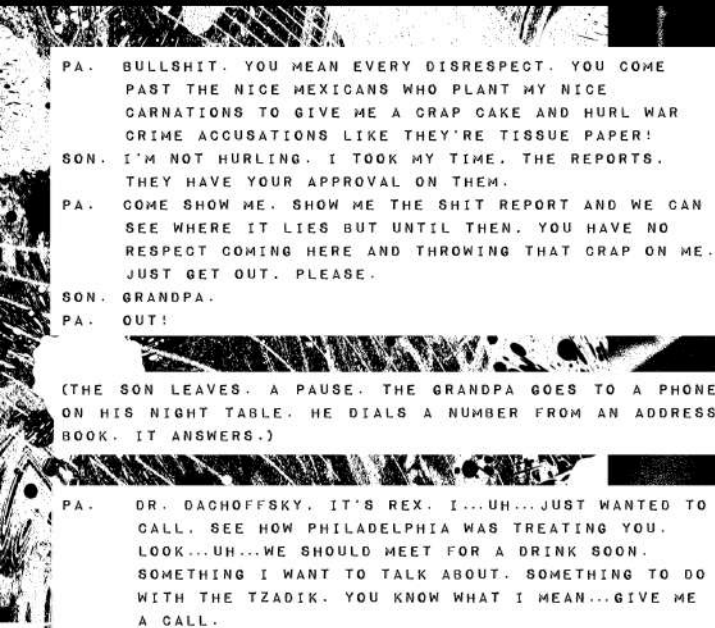
PA. DR. DACHOFFSKY. IT'S REX. I...UH...JUST WANTED TO CALL. SEE HOW PHILADELPHIA WAS TREATING YOU. LOOK...UH...WE SHOULD MEET FOR A DRINK SOON. SOMETHING I WANT TO TALK ABOUT. SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE TZADIK. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN...GIVE ME A CALL.

END

"OLD PEOPLE." WHO EVEN ARE THEY? APPARENTLY. THE OLDEST MILLENNIALS ARE MIDDLE-AGED. BUT I WALK UP TO MAIN STREET. THOT CATALOG VILLAGE AND SEE THE PIANO MAN SINGING A SONG AT THE THIRD NICEST FAUX-IRISH PUB: HE'S IN HIS THIRTIES BUT IT'S LIKE HE'S NEVER GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL. EVERYONE SEEMS TO BE IN AMBER. EVEN THOUGH THEY'VE GOTTEN MORE BLOATED. I LOVE HOW MY TOWN MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'M SPIRITUALLY STILL IN 2007.

PARTIES? THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM IS SATURDAY AND SUNDAY. AND SATURDAYS ARE FOR THE BOYS! I ALWAYS ENVIED THEM BECAUSE THEY COULD REBEL WITHOUT REPERCUSSIONS. I'VE BEEN ALL OVER THE WORLD (DIGITALLY) BUT MY PEERS DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE CULTURE WAR WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE FIGHTING IN AND WHAT FOR: THEY SHRUG THEIR SHOULDERS AT THE IDEA OF THEORY. I HAD TO BE A ROLE MODEL. WHATEVER THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE...

ONE OF MY WEIRDEST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DINNER TABLE MEMORIES WAS WHEN MY SISTER BROUGHT UP HOW HER ETHICS PROFESSOR ASKED HER CLASS "DO YOU THINK THE MENTALLY RETARDED SHOULD BE STERILIZED?" I ALSO HEARD ABOUT HOUSING MARKETS. COLLEGE TUITIONS. CAREERS. BREAKUPS. DIVORCES. WAKES. FUNERALS. AND DEATH AT DINNERTIME. I FELT LIKE A TEENAGER PREMATURELY AND WAS BLACKPILLED ABOUT HOW ADULTHOOD WOULD BE IN SOME RESPECTS.



THE INTERNET WAS A SICK SAFE SPACE IN A WAY. I COULD JUST READ WIKIPEDIA PAGES OR CHECK OUT JEZEBEL AND OTHER BLOGS TO ZONE OUT OF THE WEIRD BOREDOM I FELT WITH PEERS AROUND MY AGE: WHY DO YOU CARE SO MUCH ABOUT THIS HIGH SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP? IT'S NOT LIKE ANYONE IS HAVING SEX. AND STATISTICALLY SPEAKING THERE'S A ONE IN ONE HUNDREDTH CHANCE OF YOU MARRYING EACH OTHER... OR... OH WOW. YOU FOUND OUT ABOUT EDM? TRY BLOGHAUS. IT'S EASIER ON THE EARS FOR ALL OF US AND MAYBE YOU'LL ACTUALLY ENJOY IT INSTEAD OF JUST LIKING SOMETHING THAT'S POPULAR FOR THE SAKE THAT IT'S CONSIDERED NORMAL.

I FELT THE PULL OF ADULTHOOD AROUND ME FROM PRIVATE SCHOOL KIDS WHOSE PARENTS PRE-PLANNED THEM TO BECOME LAWYERS, DOCTORS, AND OTHER PRESTIGE PROFESSIONALS.

I FELT AUTHORITARIANISM COME FROM ALL THE CORNERS OF MY PERSONAL SPACE: GOD, SCHOOL, PARENTS, AND THE ETERNAL "PERMANENT RECORD:" IT ONLY MAKES SENSE. WE WERE GOING TO BE THE OLD PEOPLE ONE DAY. DEMERITS WEREN'T JUST A STAIN ON YOUR SOUL. THEY COULD JEOPARDIZE YOUR PLACE IN THE GOOD COLLEGE, WHICH COULD AFFECT THE CHANCE OF A GOOD GRAD SCHOOL, WHICH MEANT YOUR CHANCES WITH A GOOD HUSBAND AND FUTURE FOR YOUR KIDS WERE COMPROMISED. YOU DO WANT TO LOOK GOOD FOR THE POLO SHIRT-WEARING, BOAT SHOE BOY, DON'T YOU?

THAT MINDSET ALMOST KILLED ME. AND EPILEPSY MAKES ME FEEL PHYSICALLY OLDER AT TIMES: I WALK AROUND WITH PILLS TO KEEP ME ALIVE. READ ARTICLES ABOUT HOW TO IMPROVE MY QUALITY OF LIFE. AND GO ON PRE-2005-LOOKING FORUMS TO FIND ANY NEW TIDBIT TO IMPROVE MY UNPREDICTABLE LIFESPAN. I THINK THAT I'VE ACCIDENTALLY AGED MY BRAIN IN ALL THE WRONG WAYS.

OLD SOUL? OLD BRAIN.

BUT ENOUGH COMPLAINING AND YUPPIE HIPSTER BULLSHIT. HERE'S SOME POSITIVITY... ONE OF MY BEST FRIENDS IS...

MY AUNT. SHE'S ALSO AN "OLD PERSON."

SHE NEVER APOLOGIZED FOR BEING INTO "WEIRD STUFF." SHE TRIES TO BE SELF-SUFFICIENT IN WHATEVER WAY POSSIBLE AND HAS DEDICATED HER LIFE TO LEARNING MORE THAN WHAT SHE WAS LIMITED TO IN HER YOUTH: LIKE ME SHE'S AN INTERNET SLEUTH, TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE NUANCES OF A WORLD THAT HUMANS HAVEN'T EVOLVED TO ACCOMMODATE TO: SHE ALSO HAS A NEUROLOGICAL CONDITION THAT COULD SPIRAL. AND ON TOP OF THAT LOST A SON TO BRAIN CANCER. SHE'S TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE ORGAN THAT CAN TELL OUR AGE.

SHE'S GOING BEYOND JUST BEING ONLINE. SHE'S CREATING A HEALTHY, MOSTLY ORGANIC LIFE WITH BEEKEEPING. ONCE YOU LEARN ABOUT HOW INDUSTRIES AND INFRASTRUCTURES WANT YOU ON LIFE SUPPORT, YOU EXPERIENCE EGO DEATH BEYOND YOUR COMPREHENSION: SOMETIMES YOU FIND ANSWERS. SOMETIMES YOU GET QUESTIONS THAT LEAD YOU TO MORE QUESTIONS THAT MAKE YOU WONDER WHY TRANSPARENCY ISN'T AS FEASIBLE AS YOU WANT IT TO BE. SHE'S DOING HER PART TO PREVENT THE WORLD FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN FROM COLLAPSING AND SHE HELPED MAKE ME THE OLD PERSON I WANT TO BECOME.

HER BOND WITH HER HUSBAND. MY UNCLE. IS LIKE YIN AND YANG: HE CURATED A LIBRARY OF BOOKS THAT WOULD MAKE THE AVERAGE COLLEGE PROFESSOR'S OFFICE LOOK WEAK. ESPECIALLY WITH HISTORY AND AGRICULTURE-RELATED SUBJECTS. HIS PONYTAIL IS A POST-RETIREMENT "FUCK YOU" TO THE ESTABLISHMENT NERDS HE HAD TO CATER TO. POLITICS ASIDE. HE LOOKS BACK WHILE SHE LOOKS FORWARD. CREATING A BALANCE OF KNOWLEDGE THAT NEEDS TO BE PRESERVED.

THEY'VE CHECKED OUT OF THE CULTURAL PROXY WARS THAT HAVE UNFORTUNATELY ENGULFED PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT THEY WERE UP AGAINST SOMETHING BIGGER THAN THEMSELVES (HOW MANY PEOPLE DO YOU KNOW CAN EARNESTLY BACK UP BEING LEGITIMATE HIPPIES?) OR ARE FIGHTING INTERNET WARS (I'M SURE WE CAN ALL AGREE THAT SOME PEOPLE JUST PLAY OUT THEIR FANTASIES VIA KEYBOARDS WHILE WAITING FOR OUR CHOSEN LEADER TO COME AND SAVE US).

BEING OLD ISN'T ABOUT AGE. IT'S ABOUT WHAT PUNCHES YOU'VE HAD TO TAKE. "LS" YOU'VE HAD TO GRACIOUSLY ACCEPT. AND WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE BEHIND BESIDES YOUR DUST MASS.

GOING TO LEAVE BEHIND BESIDES YOUR DUST MASS?



GRANDPA WOULD HAVE DISOWNED YOU



I SQUEEZE ON THE PEDAL AS
I GET ON THE 40TH STREET
BRIDGE

THE PEDAL SQUEEZES BACK

GO

THE GREEN ARROWS JOIN IN

GO GO GO

THE EVENING RAINS HAVE
WASHED AWAY THE LINES

I'M NAVIGATING BY CAT'S EYE

LIKE A NAVY PILOT LOST AT SEA

GUIDED BY INSTRUMENTS
AND A WAKE OF
BIOLUMINESCENT PLANKTON

KICKED UP BY THE CARRIER

MERGE LEFT RIGHT LEFT

WHAT TAKES AN HOUR AT FIVE I DO IN A MINUTE

THE REBADGED ISUZU SWERVING HARD

REPLACED WITH A GAS TANKER

A BLOBBY PORSCHE SUV NEXT

EXIT TOWARD ERIE YOU CUNT

WHAT THE SUBDIVISION LACKS IN SIDEWALKS THEY MAKE UP
IN STREETLAMPS

THE RABBIT DARTS ACROSS THE LEOPARD YARD

THANKS FOR KEEPING AN EYE ON THINGS

For Mom



Why don't you make a list of every bad thing I have ever done to you and our family, and I will make a list of every bad thing you have done to me and our family. And then we can share it with our therapists and get them on a group call and compare. We can buy fighting roosters and bet on them and put them in a pit with your feral fucking dogs. I'll cut off my fingers and mail them to the house and you can feed it to them. Then they will get a taste for human blood and we can set them on the whole family and have them tear everyone apart. I will hang Kimmie by her neck and spit roast her. We can drain the pool and take turns jumping in from the roof. We can throw in the Wii and laptops and monitors in a big angry pile and empty the septic tanks into the pool and all our disgusting bodies will float in all the shit and piss from all the years. And then we can invite the therapists to come and write essays about exactly what went wrong, and we can invite all your horrible enemies to come and witness, Donalene and Kelly and Nancy and Martin and your brothers and parents and we can set the whole fucking thing ablaze in one giant cleansing bonfire that will burn down the whole city and cook all the old people alive in their nursing homes and burn down every one of my horrible elementary schools and both McDonalds and the Ralphs and we will salt the earth and never ever have to worry about it ever again.

WHY WOULD I GIVE THOSE SPOILED BRATS A GAWWDDAM THING? THEY HAVEN'T WORKED A SINGLE DAY IN THEIR CHARMED LIVES. I REMEMBER TRYING TO GET THEM TO DO SOME CHORES AROUND THE HOUSE OR GO OUTSIDE AND DO SOME YARD WORK. AND IT WAS NOTHING BUT PISSING AND MOANING. SO YEAH. OF COURSE I SPEND ALL MY HARD-EARNED MONEY IN RETIREMENT. IT'S MY MONEY. I EARNED IT WITH BLOOD SWEAT AND TEARS AND PUTTING UP WITH EVERY UPPER MANAGEMENT PIECE OF CRAP THAT WAS HALF MY AGE WHO KNEW JACK FREAKING SQUAT ABOUT THE JOB.

IT'S NOTHING FROM THEM BUT "WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO HELP WITH YOUR GRANDKID'S COLLEGE FUND?" OR "CAN YOU HELP US WITH THIS MORTGAGE PAYMENT DAD?" OR "CAN WE LEAVE THE KIDS WITH YOU FOR A FEW DAYS SO ME AND MY HUSBAND CAN HAVE A FEW DAYS WITH OURSELVES PLEASE?". OH THOSE LITTLE SNOTS OF GRANDKIDS I HAVE: FAT. SICKLY. DROOLING AND A COUPLE OF THEM BROWN. FACES DROOPING AND WET WHILE STARING AT THEIR STUPID PHONES THE ENTIRE TIME WE TAKE THEM TO APPLEBEES TO EAT. ON MY DIME OF COURSE. I'D BE SURPRISED IF THEY EVEN KNOW WHAT I LOOK LIKE! RUDE. NO MANNERS. CAN BARELY SPEAK ENGLISH AND CUSS WORSE THAN THE GUY I SERVED OVERSEAS WITH IN GUAM. LET ME EMPTY MY BANK ACCOUNT FOR THE FUTURE COLLEGE COURSES THEY ARE GOING TO DROP FOR FAILING GRADE LATER. I'LL GET RIGHT ON IT.

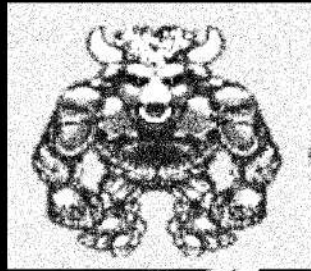


ALWAYS LOOKING FOR A HANDOUT WHEN I SPENT MY ENTIRE GOOD YEARS OF MY LIFE WORKING OVERTIME TO GIVE THEM ALL A HAND UP. ALWAYS COMPLAINING ABOUT THE ECONOMY AND HOW EXPENSIVE EVERYTHING IS. INFLATION THIS. STAGNANT WAGES THAT. DIVERSITY QUOTAS AND SEX EDUCATION CLASSES AT THEIR KID'S SCHOOLS. I HAD OUR FIRST HOUSE WHEN I WAS 26 AND PAID FOR TWO CARS AND THAT WAS WHEN THE PEANUT FARMER DOOFUS WAS PRESIDENT. ON AND ON AND ON ABOUT HOW I NEVER HELP THEM WHEN THEY ARE HAVING TROUBLE MAKING ENDS MEET WHEN THEY HAVE TWO JOBS BETWEEN THEM. MY MARRIED DAUGHTER AND HER HUSBAND ANYWAY. MY LOSER SON ON THE OTHER HAND I THINK IS A HOMOSEXUAL BECAUSE HE'S 45 AND STILL HASN'T GOTTEN MARRIED. I HAVEN'T TALKED TO THAT PEE OH ESS IN 15 YEARS THOUGH. HE CALLS. ONCE IN A WHILE. ON EASTER OR JULY 4TH. USUALLY AFTER HE'S TIED A FEW OFF. (YOU CAN HEAR IT IN HIS VOICE).



MAYBE IF THEY DIDN'T HAVE \$450 PHONE BILLS AND ARE SUBSCRIBED TO EVERY STREAMING SERVICE AND GET STARBUCKS ALL THE DAMN TIME THEN THEY COULD PROBABLY AFFORD THEIR MORTGAGE. IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO MANAGE THEIR MONEY. WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO FOR RETIREMENT? MY DAUGHTER CAME COMPLAINING TO ME ABOUT SOME INDIAN LADY TAKING THE PROMOTION SHE WAS EXPECTING TO GET. I TOLD HER IF SHE WORKED HARDER AND WASN'T BUSY NOT MINDING HER OWN BUSINESS. SHE WOULD'VE GOTTEN IT. SOUR GRAPES WAS MY ASSESSMENT. SHE SAYS IT'S BECAUSE HER BOSS IS ALSO AN INDIAN. ALWAYS SOMEONE ELSE'S FAULT! JUST LIKE WHEN SHE WAS A LITTLE GIRL AND BLAMED NOT GETTING ON THE CHEERLEADING TEAM BECAUSE ALL THE MOMS WERE ON THE PTA AND ME AND HER MOM COULD CARE LESS. IF SHE SAT IN ON ONE OF THOSE MEETINGS SHE'D KNOW HOW USELESS AND TIME WASTING ALL THAT CRAP WAS.

I NEED A DRINK. MAINLY BECAUSE THIS WEEKEND INSTEAD OF GOING TO THE CASINO WITH MY FILIPINO GIRLFRIEND I AGREED TO WATCH MY DAUGHTER'S LITTLE BASTARDS INSTEAD. 3 BOYS FROM TWO DADS AND HER CURRENT HUSBAND ISN'T ONE OF THEM. HE'S A SAINT FOR PUTTING UP WITH THE DARK ONE. HE'S A MENACE. HE'LL BE BEHIND BARS WITH A RAP SHEET WELL BEFORE HE'S OLD ENOUGH TO DRINK. I HAVE TO LOCK UP EVERYTHING WHEN HE'S AROUND. LAST TIME HE WAS HERE HE STOLE MY 4 MEGAPIXEL LG DIGITAL CAMERA AND MY ZUNE I USE WHEN I GO FISHING! WHEN MY WIFE WAS ALIVE. BLESS HER HEART. SHE TREATED ALL THOSE KIDS LIKE THEY HAD WINGS. HALOS AND HARPS. WHEN THEY ARE AROUND ME THEY WIELD PITCHFORKS AND SET ALL THE COMBUSTIBLES ON FIRE. MAYBE I WOULD TAKE THEM TO A MOVIE IF THEY WEREN'T \$35 A TICKET PLUS THE RIDICULOUS COST OF ALL THE FOOD THEY BRING YOU NOW. AT LEAST THEY LET YOU TIE ONE OFF AT THEATERS NOW BUT YOU STILL CAN'T HAVE A FREAKING SMOKE. JUST WILL HAVE TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT. IT'S NOT EASY BEING THE ONLY SANE AND RESPONSIBLE MEMBER OF THIS FAMILY.



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. AN OLD MAN SITS WITH BINOCULARS, STARING AT THE HILLS ABOVE. HIS GRANDSON, NICK, APPROACHES.

N: "WHO ARE YOU SPYING ON NOW, POPPY?"

P: "HYUH. HYUH. HYUH. WELL YOU CAN SEE THOSE SAME HOUSES ARE THERE --"

N: "YEAH?"

P: "-- AND THERE USED TO BE A STRIPPER. SHE WAS IN SAN FRANCISCO."

N: "...YEAH?"

P: "AND SHE USED TO LIVE UP THERE. AND, UH. THEY HAD HER ON TELEVISION. OF COURSE SHE COULD ONLY STRIP DOWN SO FAR N: "RIGHT. OF COURSE."

P: "BUT IN SAN FRANCISCO THEY HAD A CIRCULAR BAR -- IT WAS RIGHT ON THE CORNER, BROADWAY, YOU KNOW, THAT WHOLE SCENE -- AND THERE WAS THIS BIG HOLE IN THE CEILING. AND WHEN SHE CAME OUT SHE WAS ON TOP OF A GRAND PIANO THAT WENT ALL THE WAY DOWN.

N: "UH-HUH."

P: "AND SHE'S ON TOP, DOING HER STRIP'R, AND A GUY'S PLAYING THE PIANO."

N: "YOU EVER SEE IT?"

P: "I -- IN FACT, THE GUYS USED TO COME OUT FROM DETROIT FOR IT. THEY WANTED TO GO THERE AND SEE IT, SEE ALL THE TOPLESS GIRLS, GET A TOPLESS SHOESHINE."

N: "A TOPLESS SHOESHINE?!"

P: "OH YOU KNOW. DUNKA DUNKA DUNKA. YOU PUT YOUR FEET UP, AND THEY GO DUNKA DUNKA DUNKA DUNKA."

N: "...."

P: "SO I TOOK THEM DOWN THERE TO GET A TOPLESS -- YOU KNOW, I WAS THEIR MAN OUT HERE AT LOCKHEED, THEY CAME OUT HERE TO DO TECHNICAL WORK, AND ALL THEY WANTED TO DO WAS GO DOWNTOWN TO THE STRIPS!"

N: "MM-HMM."

P: "I KNEW THEM ALL. EVEN THE TOPLESS BEGAN TO RECOGNIZE ME. AND I'D TELL THE GUYS THEIR SHOES WERE DIRTY. AND THEN THEY'D GO AND THEY'D BE BUMPIN' 'EM. DUNKA DUNKA."

N: "....."

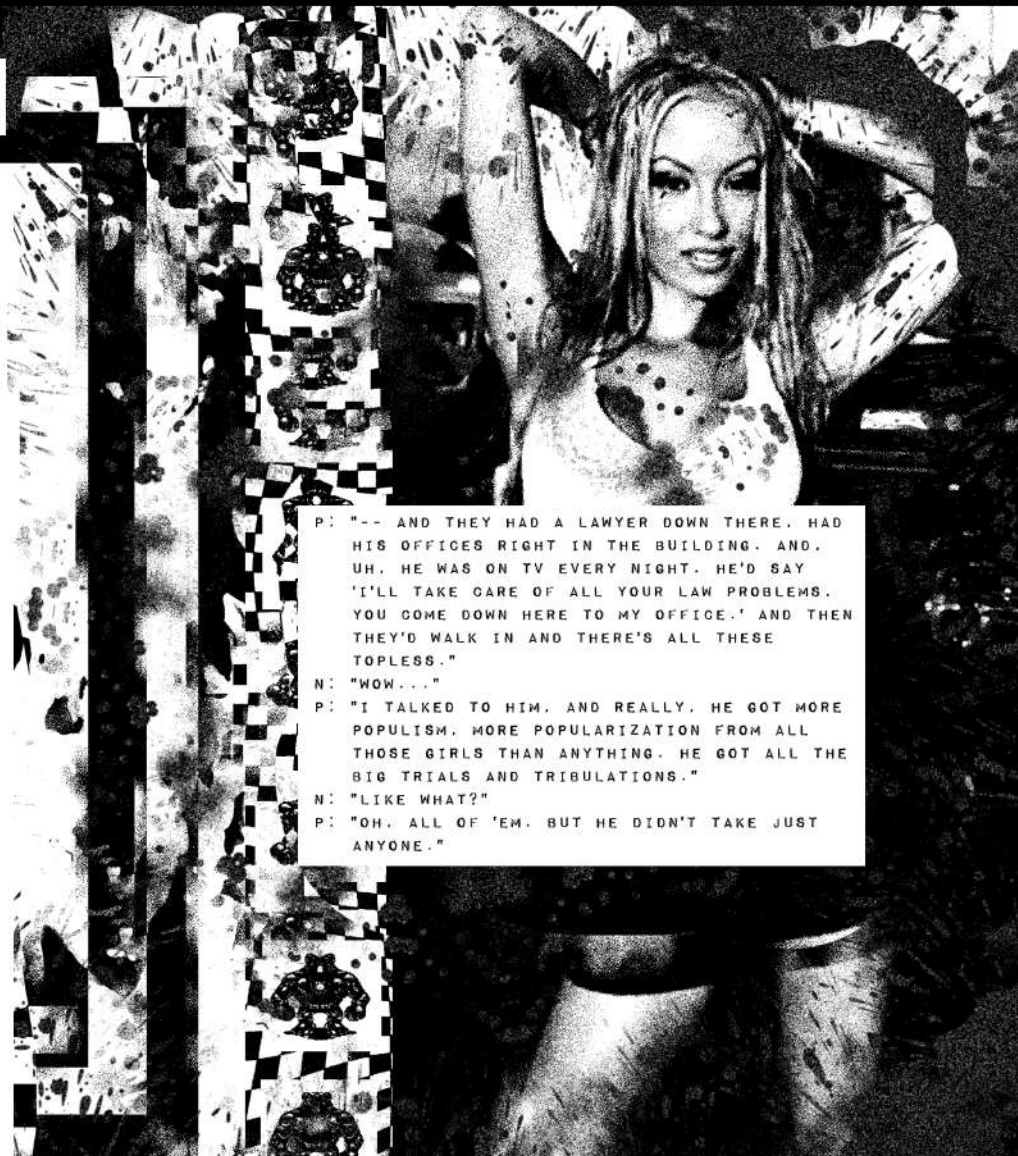
P: "-- AND THEY HAD A LAWYER DOWN THERE. HAD HIS OFFICES RIGHT IN THE BUILDING. AND, UH. HE WAS ON TV EVERY NIGHT. HE'D SAY 'I'LL TAKE CARE OF ALL YOUR LAW PROBLEMS. YOU COME DOWN HERE TO MY OFFICE.' AND THEN THEY'D WALK IN AND THERE'S ALL THESE TOPLESS."

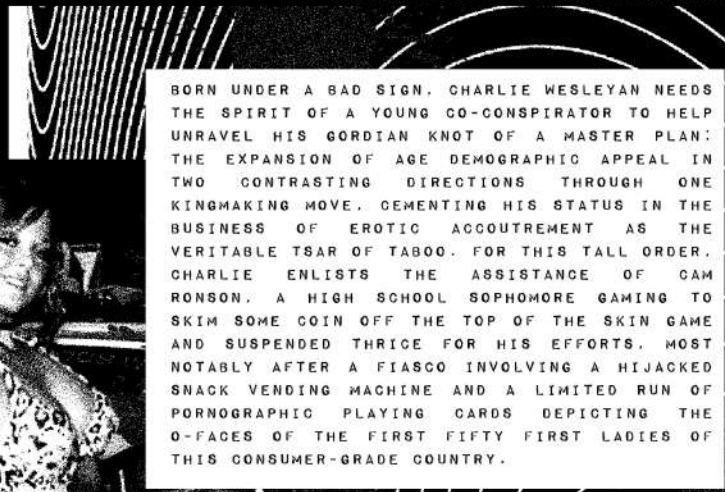
N: "WOW..."

P: "I TALKED TO HIM, AND REALLY, HE GOT MORE POPULISM, MORE POPULARIZATION FROM ALL THOSE GIRLS THAN ANYTHING. HE GOT ALL THE BIG TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS."

N: "LIKE WHAT?"

P: "OH, ALL OF 'EM. BUT HE DIDN'T TAKE JUST ANYONE."





N: "OH YEAH?"

P: "I REMEMBER I GOT CALLED TO DUTY, DOWN TO THE COURTHOUSE. ALL BAD CRIME. I RAN INTO HIM THERE. THERE WAS A GUY, HIPPY GUY, WHO WAS CAUGHT GOING UP A LADDER INTO CHILDREN'S BEDROOMS. IT WAS ON THE NEWS. I ASKED IF HE WAS TAKING HIM ON FOR TRIAL.

N: "AND WHAT'D HE SAY?"

P: "HAH. 'ME?! TAKE HIM ON TRIAL? I'D LIKE TO SLIT HIS FUCKING THROAT!' IMAGINE. IN FRONT OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN THERE! 'I'D LIKE TO CUT HIS FUCKING THROAT!'"

N: "YOU USED THAT. DIDN'T YOU?"

P: "WHEN IT CAME MY TURN, FOR THE SELECTION. THE JUDGE SAID 'YOU'RE EXCUSED!' HAD HIM TO THANK. GOOD MAN."

N: "DID HE EVER, UH, WITH THE GIRLS?"

P: "OH SURE. SHIT, ALL THE TIME -- REMEMBER THAT IF YOU GO INTO LAW PRACTICE."

N: "WILL DO."

P: "BECAUSE IT'S STILL ALL THAT WAY. IT HASN'T CHANGED A BIT."

BORN UNDER A BAD SIGN, CHARLIE WESLEYAN NEEDS THE SPIRIT OF A YOUNG CO-CONSPIRATOR TO HELP UNRAVEL HIS GORDIAN KNOT OF A MASTER PLAN: THE EXPANSION OF AGE DEMOGRAPHIC APPEAL IN TWO CONTRASTING DIRECTIONS THROUGH ONE KINGMAKING MOVE. CEMENTING HIS STATUS IN THE BUSINESS OF EROTIC ACCOUTREMENT AS THE VERITABLE TSAR OF TABOO. FOR THIS TALL ORDER, CHARLIE ENLISTS THE ASSISTANCE OF CAM RONSON, A HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORE GAMING TO SKIM SOME COIN OFF THE TOP OF THE SKIN GAME AND SUSPENDED THRICE FOR HIS EFFORTS, MOST NOTABLY AFTER A FIASCO INVOLVING A HIJACKED SNACK VENDING MACHINE AND A LIMITED RUN OF PORNOGRAPHIC PLAYING CARDS DEPICTING THE O-FACES OF THE FIRST FIFTY FIRST LADIES OF THIS CONSUMER-GRADE COUNTRY.

AFTER PRAYING THE PIMP'S ROSARY AND RECITING NINE NO HOMOS, CHARLIE HELPS CAM SLIP HIS SOFT PENIS INTO PROPRIETARY SMART COCK TECHNOLOGY. A SUBTLE SET OF SENSORS THAT GATHER REAMS OF USEFUL SPATIAL DATA ONCE TURNED ON, AN AUTOMATIC PROCESS OCCURRING AT THE PRECISE MOMENT THE WEARER GROWS ERECT. WITH HIS PAWN'S PENILE MUSCLES IN PLACE AND SYNCING TO UNDERGROUND SERVERS, CHARLIE LETS CAM LOOSE, UNLEASHING A REIGN OF SEXUAL TERROR AS THE JUNIOR PARTNER FUCKS A SWATHE THROUGH HIS PEERS, AMASSING AN IMPRESSIVE STUDENT BODYCOUNT OF SIXTY (PERCENT, THE PRECISE NUMBER OF FEMALES WITH BOTH DECENT ATTENDANCE AND AT LEAST A 3.0 GRADE-POINT-AVERAGE), PLUS A VALIDATED EMAIL LIST OF APPROXIMATELY THE SAME LENGTH.

CHARLIE SHAPES THESE TERABYTES OF VAGINAL INTEL INTO A HOT PRODUCT--3D-PRINTED PUSSY MOLDS COMPOSITED FROM HUNDREDS OF REAL TEENAGE GIRLS--RIGHT IN TIME FOR CYBER MONDAY, THE FAVORITE HOLIDAY OF ELDERLY, INFIRM MEN CRAVING LEGAL HAPPY FOR UNDERAGE CUMSHOTS. THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT, HAPPY TO SEE THEMSELVES REPRESENTED IN MEDICAL-GRADE SILICONE BY THE NEWLY-MINTED PROGRESSIVE WING OF A TRADITIONALLY LECHEROUS INDUSTRY.



LEWIS LOVE FLIPPED THROUGH THE CATALOG HE'D RECEIVED FROM THE SMILING BOY AT THE FUNERAL PALOR. TO BE SO SMILEY AROUND SOMETHING AS ARTFUL AS DEATH MEANT THAT THE YOUNG BOY HAD EITHER STUMBLED BLINDLY IN LUCK THROUGH LIFE, UNTOUCHED, OR ELSE SEEN HORRIBLE, TERRIBLE THINGS. LEWIS WONDERED IF THE PARENTS OWNED THE SHOP. HE IMAGINED THE PARENTS EITHER COACHING THE YOUNG MAN TO GREET DEATH LIKE A STARCHED-SHIRT, EMPTIED-EYED CASHIER OR ELSE INDUCTING HIM INTO SOME INSANE MORTUARY CULT.

WHY DENY ANYONE PLEASURE?

REGARDLESS, IT WAS THE YOUNG MAN WHO HANDED OVER THE BROCHURE, WHICH WAS FILLED WITH THOUSANDS OF GRAVESTONES WITH VARIETIES OF SHAPE, STONE, ETCHING PATTERNS AND FONTS, A PAGEANTRY OF DEATH THAT EXCITED AND TERRIFIED LEWIS.

BUT, THERE WAS STILL AN ELEMENT OF THE MUNDANE. THE GRAPHICS, THE PRICES AND ADS—THESE THINGS RUINED FOR HIM THE LOFT EXPERIENCE HE TRIED TO SQUEEZE FROM WHAT WAS, ESSENTIALLY, A COMMERCIAL INTERACTION. IT WAS HARDLY DIFFERENT FROM THE NUMEROUS OTHER CATALOGS LEWIS HAD USED THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE TO SELECT FURNITURE AND CLOTHING AND THE EVER-INCREASING ARRAY OF APPLIANCES: RADIOS, REFRIGERATORS, RECORDS, AND THE FUNERAL PARLOR BOY HAD ASSURED HIM IT WAS ONLY A SAMPLING OF THE FULL RANGE OF HEADSTONES AVAILABLE.

LEWIS HAD NO POINT OF REFERENCE FOR THE PROCESS, AS HE HAD NEVER PICKED ANYONE'S GRAVE. HE WORKED HIS HANDS OVER THE THICK PAPER OF THE BROCHURE.



"REST EASY KNOWING YOUR LOVED ONE'S LEGACY IS FULFILLED." ONE BIT OF TEXT READ.

"TASTEFUL ADORNMENT FOR PASSING INTO COMMUNION WITH GOD." SAID ANOTHER.

LEWIS PUT THE BROCHURE DOWN ON THE SIDE TABLE NEXT TO HIS ARMCHAIR. A RAY OF SUNLIGHT WAS PESTERING HIM THROUGH A MOTH-MOUTHED HOLE IN THE THIN FLORAL CURTAINS THAT HUNG OVER THE WINDOW ABOVE THE KITCHEN SINK. HE EASED HIMSELF UP WITH GREAT EFFORT, HIS LEGS WOBBLY IN HIS LOOSE SLACKS LIKE QUIVERING EYELESS BEINGS IN A PROTEROZOIC CAVE, PURE NERVES WITHOUT THE EXECUTIVE.



YEARS AGO. LEWIS HAD VISITED A LIQUIDATION SALE. THEY WERE HAPPENING ALL THE TIME. THOUGH HE MOVED SLOWLY, HIS SLOWNESS HELPED HIM PERUSE. HE WOULD RATHER STAY IN THE SAME SPOT THAN MOVE, WHICH CAUSED HIM TO LINGER LONGER OVER EACH BOX, EACH RACK, THAN HE WOULD HAVE AS A YOUNG MAN, EXCITED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF EACH BREATH.

PAUSING OVER A PARTICULARLY DELICATE AND DUSTY CRATE AS THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM RUSHED TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR MEAGER EARNINGS IN FURNISHING THEIR CROOKED, WRETCHED HOMES OR TO FIND SOMETHING TRULY VALUABLE THAT THEY COULD SELL TO A DISCERNING OR STUPID ELITE. LEWIS FOUND A BOX OF MONOGRAPHS, WRITTEN APPARENTLY BY A SINGLE MAN, THAT CATALOGED AND WITH GREAT DETAILED EXPLAINED THE DIFFERENT GRAVES HE'D ENCOUNTERED ALL OVER EUROPE.

THE AUTHOR PAUSED NOTED EACH LURID OR RIDICULOUS DETAIL, THE WAY THE PHOTOGRAPHS HAD BEEN GLUED TO THE PAGES, WITH CARE, BUT IN NO APPARENT ORDER, MADE LEWIS BELIEVE THAT THE VOLUMES WERE NEVER INTENDED TO BE SEEN. THEY HAD THE QUALITY OF A MOTHER'S PHOTO BOOK, EXCEPT FOR THE SCRAWLING HANDWRITING THAT OFTEN TRAILED OFF THE PAGE AND CARRIED OVER ONTO SCRAPS OF PAPER STUCK INTO THE SPINE.

SOON, LEWIS HAD THE BOX IN HIS HANDS, PASSED A FEW COINS TO A BROKEN MAN IN A TATTERED SUIT AND CARRIED HIS BOX HOME, WHERE HE LEAFED SLOWLY THROUGH THE PAGES AS THE CROWDS AMOSSED OUTSIDE, MANY DYING IN THE STREET HORRIFYING DEATHS OF PAIN AND HUNGER THAT WENT UNMARKED BY ANY MEASURE. HE WALKED CONFIDENTLY, IF SLOWLY, DOWN THE STREET WITH HIS PRIZE.

LEWIS REMEMBERED ALL THIS AS HE EDGED ACROSS THE ROOM. THE DEPRESSION, AS THEY CALLED IT, WAS OVER, AND HIS OWN LIFE WAS COMING TO AN END. HE'D WALKED THE SAME STRETCH OF CITY, FROM WHERE HE'D BOUGHT HIS TREASURED COLLECTION OF GRAVE BOOKS, TO HIS HOME, WHERE ONCE HE'D SEEN LINES OF BROKEN PEOPLE, SOULLESS IN HIS MIND AND, HE WAS SURE, IN HISTORY. HE NOW SAW EXCITED MEN IN CRISP UNIFORMS AND PROUD BUT RED-FACED WIVES OR WORKERS WITH HEALTHY ARMS AND BELLIES WALKING IN HAUNTING UNISON UNDER THE POSTERS THAT BLAZED WITH SAVAGE EYES OF THE GERMAN AND THE JAPANESE, OF CALLS TO ARMS AND GLITTERING DEPICTIONS OF HOLY ENGINES AND FACTORY LINES. HE HID HIS HATING EYES BEHIND THE FOLDS IN HIS FACE.



DID THEY NOT KNOW THAT THEY WERE SIMPLY CROSSING THE GIANT SEA THAT WAS ITSELF A TOMB NOT JUST FOR COUNTLESS UNMARKED OR HARASSED BODIES BUT TO A MILLENNIA OF FISH AND CREATURES SO LARGE AND FULL OF SOLAR LUST THAT TO EVEN GAZE UPON THEIR BONES WOULD BE TO MAKE THE VERY IDEA OF GOD LAUGHABLE? OR THAT THE WHOLE OF EUROPE WAS A FACE POKED WITH SO MANY GRAVES, THOSE THAT MORPHED FROM TWISTED HORRIBLE FORMS OF HELL-TO-COME TO THE RESPECTABLE GRAVES OF THE THIN-LIPPED CLERKS WHO HAD FORMED THIS AMERICAN COUNTRY THAT CHANGED INTO THE SIMPLE STONE THAT BORE JUST NAME AND NUMBER AS IF THE LIFE EXTINGUISHED BENEATH IT. FODDER FOR THE CHURNING WORLD WAS SIMPLY A CHEQUE MADE TO A PENURIOUS GOD, AND WORSE, THE SARCASTIC AND SOPPY EPITAPHS OF THE WRITER WHO WENT INTO DEATH CLEVERLY LIKE AT A DINNER PARTY, AND ALL THE FLOWERS! THE HORRIBLE WREATHS OF FRAGILE LIFE CONSTANTLY DYING IN PATHETIC HOMAGE TO SINGLE LIFE THAT SAT SO CLOSE TO THE MAUSOLEUMS THAT TRULY SPOKE TO THE TRUTH OF THE BLESSED STATE OF DEATH AND CLOSER STILL TO THE UNDERGROUND POOLS OF BONES, THE MASS GRAVES, THAT MARKED THE TRUTH OF LIFE.



AS HE STOOD ABOVE HIS TORN CURTAIN, WASHING HIS HANDS FOR MINUTES ON END, CLEANING EVERY DETAIL OF THE FINGERNAILS WHICH HAD GROWN INNUMERABLE TIMES TO PROTECT THE NERVE ENDINGS THAT DEFINED AND PROPELLED THE CIVILIZATIONS THAT HAD GROWN FROM BUSH TO BOMB, NOW TREMBLING AND CAPABLE ONLY OF FEEDING HIS BODY AND FLIPPING THROUGH THE EVER-DIRTYING PAGES OF HIS BOOKS OF TOMBS, HE LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW AT THE SMILING FACES AND FROWNS. HIS LIFE HAD NOT BEEN AN UNREASONABLY BITTER ONE. HE'D NEVER DESPISED AGE FOR AGE'S SAKE. HE THOUGHT, THE FATHER'S THAT WATCHED PROUDLY AS THEIR SONS WENT TO BE GROUND TO DUST WERE NO BETTER. AND THEY RUBBED THEIR HANDS AS THE WAR MACHINE TURNED THEIR PROFIT AFTER PROFIT, WITHOUT REALIZING THAT THE COORDINATION OF THE ANCIENT PYRAMIDS WITH THE STARS THAT THE CRAZED AUTHOR OF THE TOMB BOOK HAD POINTED OUT WERE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EARTH ITSELF AND THE TOMB FLOATING IN THE DEATH FIELD THAT IS SPACE. THAT THEIR GLEEFUL BELIEF IN PROGRESS AND IN JUSTICE WERE NO DIFFERENT FROM THE MEDIEVAL KINGS WHO BELIEVED THE NEXT BATTLE, THE NEXT MARRIAGE WOULD WRITE THE NAMES OF THEIR DYNASTIES INTO THE VERY FABRIC OF THE SPECIES, OF LIFE ITSELF, INSTEAD OF BECOMING THE JOKES OF HISTORY. THEIR NAMES THEMSELVES TOMBS IN THE SPRAWLING SCREAMING SCROLLS THAT LAID HAD ESCAPED THE FLAMES JUST TO BECOME A GRAVEYARD OF ECHOING THINGS.

EACH CONFIDENT FACE WOULD JUST AS QUICKLY KILL HIM AS ANY GERMAN FOR THINKING SUCH THINGS. THE PESSIMIST WAS THE WITCH, AND THOSE WHO HAD JUST YEARS BEFORE LOOKED OUT FROM INHUMAN EYES AT THE RICH WHO RODE IN TO CAST THEIR DOOMED NET OF NUMBERS OVER THE MATERIAL WORLD WOULD JUST AS SOON RIP HIM TO SHREDS, TO EXHUME HIS PAST AND HANG THAT, THAN TO LISTEN TO WHAT HE HAD TO SAY. SOME STAYED QUIET, AND IN HIS QUIET HIS MIND RACED ON, SPINNING TOGETHER HIS OWN THOUGHTS TOGETHER WITH THE CRAVEN TOMB WRITER WHOSE BOOK HAD DEMOLISHED, ONE CENTURY AT A TIME, ONE TOMB AT A TIME, EVERY BIT OF ILLUSION THAT LEWIS HAD KEPT STILL AS HE WALKED THE LONG PATH TOWARDS HIS OWN DEATH.

"PLATO BELIEVED THAT FORGETTING WAS THE TRUE KEY TO MAN'S PHILOSOPHICAL POTENTIAL," THE MADMAN WROTE, "BUT WHAT TRULY DEFINES OUR SPECIES IS THE POTENTIAL TO REMEMBER, POINTLESSLY."

LEWIS WALKED OVER TO HIS MATTRESS AND PULLED A BOX FROM BENEATH IT. WITH STIFF HANDS HE REMOVED THE LID AND PULLED OUT THE STACKS OF BILLS WITHIN. HE THOUGHT HE HEARD A SQUADRON OF WARPLANES FLY ABOVE, HEADING OUT IN THEIR CRUEL PARODY OF THUNDER. THE CROWD OUTSIDE CHEERED.

HITLER'S BELIEFS ARE INFANTILE, HE THOUGHT, BUT THE RESULT OF HIS ACTIONS ARE THE TRUTH OF THE SPECIES. HE THOUGHT AGAIN AND HIS LIPS TURNED UP INTO HIS SCRABBLING BEARD. ANOTHER ROUND OF PLANES FLEW AND ANOTHER CHEER ERUPTED. HE WOBBLING BACK OVER TO HIS CHAIR, HIS HEART BEATING FASTER THAN HIS FINGERS COULD MOVE. AS A THIRD SQUADRON FLEW ABOVE, A SUBWAY SHOOK THE GROUND AND THE WRECKAGE OF ANTIETAM FLASHED BEFORE HIS EYES. NEARLY A CENTURY OF AMERICAN LIFE THUNDERED AROUND HIM. HIS OWN HOME HUMMED WITH ELECTRICITY.

HE PICKED UP AGAIN THE BROCHURE AND HATED, WITH THE PASSION OF A CROWD, THE SMILING YOUNG MAN WHO'D GIVEN IT TO HIM, AND HE LOVED HIM, LOVED HIM LIKE HE LOVED THE CRAZED WRITER WHO SCRIBBLED ON IN SECRECY, DEATH-OBSSESSED, ALL DEATH-OBSSESSED, AS SOON AS WE COULD SPEAK ITS NAME.



SOME TIME LATER, THE SUN HAVING SET AND ROSE MANY TIMES, CASTING ITS BEAM THROUGH THE RUINED WINDOW VEIL, THE LANDLADY, A QUIET WOMAN, HAD HER YOUNG SON FORCE HIS WAY INTO THE DOOR THAT BORE THE NAME OF LEWIS LOVE. THE OLD MAN SAT COLD IN HIS UPHOLSTERED CHAIR, ON HIS LAP HE HELD A STACK OF MONEY AND A BROCHURE, OPEN TO A PAGE WHERE LAY CIRCLED A GRAVESTONE WITH A ROUNDED TOP AND WRITTEN ON IT IN BARELY LEGIBLE SCRAWL WERE THE WORDS "REMEMBER ME."

THE LANDLADY, HORRIFIED AND HELD UP BY HER STONE-FACED SON, CALLED THE POLICE, THEN THE HOSPITAL AND WENT BACK TO HER ROOM TO LISTEN TO THE WAR END.

NOW MY ARMS SWING WHEN I WALK
WITH THIS THIN FILM
THAT SEPARATES ME FROM THE WORLD
IT'S RELAXING
TAKES THE LOAD OFF

I AM WORRIED
WHAT HAVE I SHED?

THIS DISCONNECT
THIS DISLOCATION FROM EVERYTHING IN MY LIFE

KNIGHT'S MOVE EXISTENCE
HANGING OFF AT A RIGHT ANGLE

SEEING FINE. BUT WHAT HAVE I SHED?

IF THAT CONNECTION IS NO LONGER THERE
IS THERE A DESIRE THAT GOES ALONG WITH THAT?

A DESIRE TO BE A PART OF THINGS
THAT PUSHES YOU
BE INTERESTED
INGRATIAE AND INTEGRATE

BUT WHEN ALL THAT'S GONE
AND ALL THAT YOU WANT IS
YOURSELF
CAN YOU STILL REACH OUT?
DOES IT TAKE LEARNING

NOW CYNICAL
NO RELATIONSHIPS
JUST A MONSTER
A MONSTER WITH NOWHERE TO BE



**AGE SPOTS ARE
SUCH AN ICK**