

“I’d like to tell my story, before I turn into gold.”

—Caesar Hughes  
to a friend, 2012

HUGHES’ YOUTH BROUGHT  
TO LIFE

Living with Seamus C. Cane, gambling, skiing,  
eating, spending afternoons sitting on the hard  
chair.

3DUM PH8R

---

“Is he young.”

—Jacko B. Wabash

“CAESAR HUGHES

---

“The hard brilliance of his furniture . . . The portraits, vivid, are used as a slave might use them.”

Alfred Toomer

---

“Done!”

Tyrone Holmes

---

“What’s startling is . . . the vividness, intensity and immediacy. There are lies.”

Betty Bunt

## THE MAGICIAN”

---

“An invitation to laugh with him amid the scenes of his youth where he was happier than he would ever be again.”

Montgomery Featherstonehaugh

---

“Frank . . . The inevitable portrait.”

Seamus C. Cane

---

“Hughes is so gentle. No one ever talks about it.”

Karl Carlos Carlson



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CAESAR HUGHES  
3DUM PH8R

“I’d like to tell my story, before I get cold.”

Caesar Hughes  
To a friend, 2012



3DUM PH8R

ABT026

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for  
Jasper Walter Brook Baydala



“It was a good summer after that.  
We made a salad in my flat.”

(W.C.F. 1931)



LEVEL ONE  
*A Long Walk Up the Coconut Palm*



Montréal, QC





THE REST is from an ad in the Atlantic.

“See the yellow leaves?”

“I noticed when I came in.”

“This is my month, when it’s yellow.”

“It’s better in the country.”

Walter looked up at the yellow leaves.

“We have the Mountain,” he said.

“I saw it yesterday.”

“There’s a graveyard near the summit.”

“Is there?”

“The higher the clouds the better the weather.”

“Why?” Asked Hughes.

“Less of a commute.”

This is the tenth time we have been devalued.

They crossed Lajoie and continued south on Querbes.

“Good people talk about what they see,” said Walter.

“It would be hard to talk of anything else, now.”

Walter Cane had brown eyes and a short cut.

He was missing an obvious tooth. A strong athletic body and rounded hips, an artificial stain across his shoulder. He relaxed his face and opened his mouth and his eyebrows raised, that's how he passed judgment, under cover of a yawn.

"Something forgets us perfectly," yawned Cane.

Walter Cane and his brother Seamus C. Cane lived in Montréal on Querbes and Van Horne. Their apartment was small and cluttered. In the living room two sofas faced each other but were separated by a large wooden cable spool, which served as the table. The walls were hung frame to frame with work collected from alleyways; *The Man With The Golden Helmet*, a map of Île d'Anticosti, a photograph of Elvis; his smooth Cherokee face and painted eyes, and somebody had cut the nipples off a Mexican woman. Seamus' many plants growing from fruit seeds, let the land produce plants and let them bear their own seeds.

Then Walter Cane moved to Little Italy with his long-time girlfriend Sandy Hirschfield, and Caesar Hughes move in with Seamus.

## CUSTARD

Seamus C. Cane removed his boots casually and removed his jacket casually and slid

shut the sliding glass balcony door. His face was stern and he held himself calmly. He was dressed simply. He wore a forest green felt coat that was slimly cut, as he was slim. He wore a black leather hunting cap with the ear flaps flipped up. I want to help—that's what makes me feel best.

SEAMUS: Hello.

WALTER: Seamus, this is Caesar Hughes.

SEAMUS: Caesar.

Seamus hung his coat and turned to his brother.

SEAMUS: Let me ask you a favor.

WALTER: I shall let you not.

SEAMUS: One?

WALTER: Less than one.

SEAMUS: Let it be one.

WALTER: May I know what it is before I agree?

SEAMUS: If you knew, you wouldn't agree.

WALTER: May I know the root of the favor?

SEAMUS: Even if you knew that, you wouldn't agree.

WALTER: Then I decline. Now that I've declined, what was the favor?

SEAMUS: Because you have declined I choose not to tell you that which you have declined.

WALTER: Would I have suffered much doing that which I have declined?

SEAMUS: That, you will never know.

WALTER: Then I accept.

Walter wanted it to be excellent, but the excellent builder is he who has built much and who has much regret, the excellent builder has eaten the custard.



### THE FIRST SNOWFALL

The first snowfall of the year was an important time for Caesar Hughes, every year he would sit by a window wrapped in a blanket and watch the snow blow past in the cold wind outside. Hughes sat by the living room window above Querbes watching the snow as Seamus C. Cane made a stir-fry behind him in the kitchen.

“Gretchen *P* is playing Miami right now, she said she has a surprise following in Florida,” said Seamus. “Did you see her Rising feature?”

“You know, out of everyone, I couldn’t have guessed she’d be the one,” Seamus waved a wooden spoon at Hughes. The sliding glass balcony door had fogged from the stir-fry. Hughes was sitting quietly by the window in a blanket, trying to watch the snow.

“How do you feel about her?” Asked Seamus.

Hughes sat quietly by the window trying to watch the snowflakes.

“Jealous?” Seamus smiled, “why are you jealous, you know she respects you, you should be proud.”

A stream of orange flakes blew past the street-light. Gretchen *P* was an attractive musician. Gretchen *P* was Seamus’ star talent, but already he had lost seven eighths of her to the Americans.

Seamus sat on the grey chesterfield underneath The Holy Monastery of Rousanou and thought about Gretchen *P* as Hughes sat by the window trying to watch the snow.

HUGHES: You raise them and they leave like birds.

SEAMUS: No.

HUGHES: If all the skies were sunshine, our faces would be fain to feel once again a cool splash of rain.

SEAMUS: Yes.

HUGHES: Will everyone leave if everyone’s offered better?

SEAMUS: Everyone will do what everyone does.

HUGHES: But will everyone leave?

SEAMUS: Would you leave?

HUGHES: Only if the better offered were in line with myself.

SEAMUS: What if the better were not in line, would you adapt?

HUGHES: You're asking if I'd change so I'd be in line with the offer?

SEAMUS: Yeah.

HUGHES: We'll see, when better is offered my way.

SEAMUS: You wouldn't be able to prevent it.

HUGHES: I don't prevent myself.

SEAMUS: Then you'd leave.

HUGHES: Everyone will leave.

SEAMUS: Everyone will do what everyone does.

### SEAMUS C. CANE



Seamus C. Cane's palm was stiff and human, knowledgeable and intact; he was an intelligent sturgeon.

"Do not be appeased quietly and without move-

ment," said Cane. "Promote the development of young plants, agree graciously and become swollen. Establish boundaries, allow yourself pleasure and give off steam. Rub everything into small bits and float the wreckage."

His guests were never saturated, his cross was a frippery. A ripe and intimate commuter, a gentleman. Formal in September.

"Act without thought, with calmness of mind, without dirty or immoral women, with excessive enthusiasm, compare carefully and do not be caustic or base neither," said Cane.

His charisma was gymnastic, his protocol festive.

"I think he is cruel," said Hughes.

Look at his claw, it is silver with a pink stripe, it is an anomaly.

"Do not be aware but do not work, and shock bigots with flattery. Command magnificent spots with vigorous melody."

"I will—I will," Hughes nodded.

"Prove your strength."

"I will—I will," Hughes nodded.

"Be a wise gem."

I will—I will."

"Dance."

"I will—I will."

AFTER A RAIN



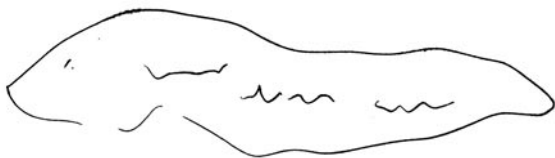
AFTER A RAIN TWO



AFTER A RAIN THREE



AFTER A RAIN FOUR



AFTER A RAIN FIVE



It was hot. Afterward Betty Bunt and Caesar



Hughes lay under the covers getting their breath in Caesar's bedroom.

"Why do you like me?" Asked Betty. "Tell me why you like me, do you like me?"

Hughes looked up across Querbes at Ayn Cory's window.

Betty Bunt had dark skin, still darker under the covers. Betty Bunt had black hair and black eyes and was part Micronesian, convex cheeks, and huge black lips. Her body was thin and bony. She was a fragile trumpet player who could not kiss properly. She kissed violently, even at the beginning. Her firm tongue. She stayed violent all the way through and it was less a passionate violence than it was her laying eggs fresh and aborted. There was never a break with her and breaks are important, they increase the impact of the violence when the violence returns.

"Why do you ask?" Asked Hughes.

"Tell me why you like me," she demanded from under the covers.

Caesar looked up from the pillow across Querbes at Ayn Cory's window.

"We are such good friends," frowned Betty.

They dressed and walked down the fire escape and walked down Van Horne at three in the morning and hailed a cab and Ayn Cory's light was on above them.

"I'll be in trouble," Betty laid an egg.

She got into the cab and laid another egg; her erotic face.

Caesar went back up the fire escape and made fettuccini with mushroom, ham and rose sauce and blew his brains out.

He packed his holdall and called himself a taxi and went down when it rolled up Van Horne. "Montréal-Pierre Elliott Trudeau International," he said.

"Bag?"

"Stop."

"Here."

"Ticket?"

"Go."

"Fifty-two B."

"That way."

"Calgary?"

"Calgary?"

"There."

“Stop.”

“Go.”

“Stop.”

“ID?”

“Ticket?”

“H-3,”



Pilot says  
Up we go!  
Wings bend  
In the snow  
It is loud  
In the cloud  
Engine goes  
Up we go!  
Pilot say  
Up we go!



LEVEL TWO  
*Nasty Business*



Calgary, AB



Delicate unfaithfulness;  
I do not oppose red paint,  
For death is in faint places

CAESAR HUGHES flew from Montréal to Calgary in early November to attend his grandfather's funeral. It had been a long time coming and Caesar had taken precautions, everything had to be writable. Hughes was a straight-faced, unemotional young man with a deathly complexion. Large eyes, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison. Lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surprisingly beautiful curve. A nose of a delicate Hebrew model and a finely-molded chin and long brown hair of a more than web-like softness. These features, combined with a weird expansion above the regions of his temple, made up a countenance not easily forgotten. His poems were abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding, leaden and self-balanced, perfectly modulated guttural utterances, the sort of thing observed in a lost drunkard during the periods of his most intense excitement.

It was the face of Caesar's little brother Del that ruined the funeral. Del had no concept of

time, of space, of light or of day. Everything was something to Del. He passed close to Caesar in the pew as he guided the casket down the aisle and out the church. Del tried not to show it, his contorted face, blood red, but finally it broke and he opened his mouth and there were tears on his cheeks. Caesar watched in horror as everyone cried openly; you cannot protect yourself against sympathy.

A white pillared church in rural Calgary that looked like a bank. A spacious parking lot and six marble steps leading to a rubber door. A thick red carpet recently shampooed.

The Hughes family gathered in the reception and awaited the casket as Caesar stood in the shadow reading the program.

First the daughters will spread the pall over the casket, then the sons and grandsons will put their hands atop the casket and guide it down the aisle to the altar. The rest of the family will follow behind.

The bag-piper paced around impatiently in a checkered red kilt and red beret as the woman of the church got it going. They laid the pall and the piper played These Hills Are My Moun-

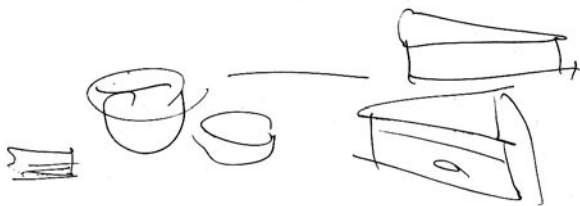


tains. They began wheeling the casket toward the altar.

The priest emerged with a tin pyramid hanging from a chain off the end of a staff. Inside the pyramid burned a potent herb that smelled like death.

Women wept in the front row, using the tissues that had been supplied in the corners of each pew.

### A TABLE OF DELIGHTS



Caesar's cousin Hillary stood over a table of delights in the funeral reception. A large white room in a square building attached to the side of the church. In the center of the room were four bridge tables laden with delicious goodies.

"I, furthermore, edit literature, I will give you an estimation of cost, fwhat is the purport?" Hillary sucked on her cheeks and eyed the table of delights. Hillary was a young woman with an enormous mouth and thoughtful, caring, sincere, gentle eyes.

"I, furthermore, edit literature. Caesar, I will

rework you.”

She ate a ball of double-chocolate double-mocha truffle and smiled. Her next book’s advance sticking out of her back pocket, her purple and yellow wool toque with two balls dangling on strings.

—Hey lizard-beak! Her smile, her good nature, good manners, good looks, perfect health, perfect habits. Dangling her shy woolen bundles.

Hillary entertained the extended family before the funeral, in uncle Marc’s living room.

“So Hillary, how is the new series coming?”  
Asked Aunt Teresa.

“O’ it’s slow work, you know my diction must be scrupulous.”

“And is it another work for young adults?”

“I detest categorizations.”

“Oh, you artists,” said uncle Marc.

“Well it’s true!”

Everyone laughed as Hillary’s soft woolen balls dangled in Hughes’ face.

“Well we can’t wait to read it Hillary!”

Everyone loved it and went to the funeral. After the funeral they gathered again in uncle Marc’s living room.

“Antiquarianism,” Hillary ate an oatmeal surprise and smiled, “spectrophotometer,” she had another oatmeal surprise, “desultoriness,” she chewed, “lungfish.”

## LEFT OVERS

There is no work.

They'll all pay the piper now, one after the other, they'll all kick the bucket and won't leave behind any melons.

They'll leave behind small histories of leisure; photographs of dogs, writings of tax, lullabies, napkins, casual legumes.

They won't leave behind any melons, no watermelons; no honeydew, juicy cantaloupes. No papayas.

Leave me a big juicy cantaloupe before you go!

They were all Latin, they're ghosts now, many signed receipts. A legacy of family law and drives to Sunday Night Lake. When the next one goes everyone will attend the funeral just the same.

All that thou art not, makes not up the sum  
Of what thou art, beloved, unto me

Leave some melons, rabbit who loves videos,  
rabbit who loves sliders.

## AFTER THE FUNERAL

That's why I love Mankind,  
It's asking something  
And hides behind others  
That's why I love Mankind  
The yellow steam is jetsam

It's hard to work where people who know work.  
People who know know all work is bad work.  
People who know will stop you, same as you'll  
stop them.

Watchman's was a sports bar on Seventeenth Avenue where Hughes went often when he was in Calgary. They couldn't afford to float in there, they couldn't float above the bar, the bar barreling around the sun, the sun sucking inward, the center exploding outward, the infinite expansions and contractions, crimson Jettas, Boston Pizza with a florescent orange tomato eight feet wide. What do they see; humaneness, adoration, harmony and consequence. That's what they see. They see growth and passing worship. Do they see themselves? They do see themselves. They do. They see themselves.

"Have another one love?"

"Doing okay love?"

Caesar Hughes fell in love. A beautiful young

waitress with a shapely neck and long, black hair. Her muscular back twitching in time with the piano as she squeezed a puddle of blue shampoo into her palm, the spray from the showerhead splashing very slowly over her firm buttocks as a young man sat sheepishly on the crapper.

—The horses never pay attention to me at the races.

Hughes sat with his back to the bar and watched TV in the reflection of the window and saw his pen going along on the paper, a tip. He didn't care what Toomer had said about bubbles. The bubbles in Toomer's fist and below everything who is there else.

The waitress proclaimed her love to a fat man eating chicken linguini by the bathroom. She proclaimed her love to a limp dude sitting nervously at the bar. The horse proclaimed her love to a man reading an embossed airport novel.

“Another, love?” She said to them all.

Hughes was just another customer to her, another ornament.

—They're all the same. They're all the same; tooth paste and orange juice; purple and yellow; hairy and bald; rough and smooth; sour and sweet.

—Hughes, you are as bad as the fellow at the table behind.

—Absolutely not, everybody's different. It

may seem like people are the same if they are wearing the same shoes, necklace, spectacles, gloves, shape, smile, conversation, history, image, imagination, theory and thought, but everyone is different in different ways.

### CHICKEN LINGUINI



Who are you who write these six hundred page novels? Fat men, they love chicken linguini. That fat man by the window is on page five hundred and fifty-eight, with cream sauce on his face. This is your page he's reading:

To fancy that in this life anything belonging to it will remain for ever in the same state is an idle fancy; on the contrary, in it everything seems to go in a circle, I mean round and round. The spring succeeds the summer, the summer the fall, the fall the autumn, the autumn the winter, and the winter the spring, and so time rolls with never-ceasing wheel. Man's life alone, swifter than time, speeds

onward to its end without any hope of renewal, save it be in that other life which is endless and boundless. There are some that by the light of nature alone, without the light of faith, have a comprehension of the fleeting nature and instability of this present life and the endless duration of that eternal life we hope for; but our author is here speaking of the rapidity with which his own life came to an end, melted away, disappeared, vanished as it were in smoke and shadow.

Eating chicken linguini and reading six hundred pages of crap with cream sauce on your face.

“Those sentences are leaders; leaders that will lead and if you pay attention you’ll be led toward the end,” said Toomer.

## SANDY HIRSCHFIELD IN CALGARY

Let's pretend, let's do nothing  
It's a deliverance which  
does not deliver. Remember,  
Colored birds are easier to see.  
All my efforts add up to nothing  
You'll see what I say is true,  
Here, let me color them for you

I'm back in Calgary because Daddy always flies me back for Christmas... anyway everyone's gone home for Christmas and it was pretty sad in Montréal before I left, then I'm going to Vancouver to visit Walter, just for a few days... yeah, it's nice in Calgary actually!

Last night the earth passed between the sun and moon, the shadow of the earth made the moon orange... it was a lunar eclipse, my first one ever...

The moon was bright and I saw the stars everywhere except around the moon because the moonlight covered them all up... then the right hand side of the moon went dark and soon half the moon was a scarlet cherry and soon the moon was a dull glowing fruit and I saw stars all the way around, it was really, really, beautiful, yeah.

I saw the moon with all the stars all the way



around, right to the edge...

The shadow of the earth alone isn't enough. It gives me a stomach ache... but when I look at the orange eclipse it's real and dull and not too bright to look at and very beautiful... and it's framed with stars right to the edge...

The shadow went off and the sun went up and I went inside and read the news and had coffee and Daddy fried me an egg and it was tough to revoke:

*Woman skydiver on trial for love-triangle  
parachute murder*

In the evening Caesar called... he's in Calgary too, I know him from Montréal, he's really good friends with Walter, I guess me and him are pretty good friends too now. He's going to Vancouver too. It's like his least favorite person is the person he is truly, deep inside... you know, I want to help him... I have to help somebody.

*ring—ring*

“Hey Sandy.”

“Hey Caesar!”

“You know Watch Street?”

“Watch Street?”

“It's a sports bar,” he said. “Watchman's.”

“Oh yeah, where is it?”

“Seventeenth Avenue and Tenth, between

Eleventh and Tenth, it's a sports bar," he said.

Me and Daddy drove down there to meet him and it was really fun!

## OBSERVATION IS NO CRIME

The day before, Sandy Hirschfield and a three hundred pound woman had taken the C-Train together from Fish Creek Station into downtown. A late afternoon with snow on all the paths.

Sandy was a polite young woman who wrote sorrowful, desolate, polite love songs. She had long round lips and an active chin. Sandy tried, but could never fully convince anyone, with her punctuation, especially after the fire! She dressed like a medieval peasant woman deliberately to put men off, her womanly figure and sharp looks when dressed in more revealing garb overshadowed her work—that sort of thing only pays off temporarily. Anyway she had Walter Cane in the bag. She was polite and happy in company but alone she wept, and wept, and wept, and there were no words for the feeling.

"Yes. It's tomorrow morning," the fat woman said into her cellphone, she was fat as hell.

"I'm not sure," she said.

"I'm not sure," she said.

"I'm not sure," she said again.

“I’m not sure,” she said again.

The fat woman’s huge melting head shook like jello pudding as her huge body glistened. The woman had just wobbled the three blocks from her house to the train station, her rubber neck pocked with mumps. Well, what the heck am I gonna do with this information? Sandy studied the woman from her hiding place in the far back corner of the train-car.

The fat woman wobbled off the train at Whitehorn Station and took the +15 into Eaton Centre and bought her nephew a Christmas sweater with an elk knit in blue wool against red wool, sixty bucks. Whoever believes in her, streams of living water shall flow from within him.

Sandy Hirschfield continued alone on the train. The low sunlight struck her eyes.

—You got to let that sunlight in your eyes... especially in winter! It hurts in the muscle around the eye a little bit. The light should come in from the side... or from above. Your brows glisten and when you squint you see those shiny glass balls in the corner... the windows are opaque in the light, and everything’s sharp and clear. Sun is an ingredient of happiness and without it the eyes could not make the happy ingredient.

Sandy Hirschfield had a window table in Good

Earth in Eau Claire Mall off Sixth and the sun was in her eyes. At the top of the Suncor building an orange semi-circle contained the word SUNCOR, each letter sixty feet tall. Sandy sat in the mall staring blankly out the window.

Every girl must submit herself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except the one gad has established. The authorities that exist have been established by gad, so she who rebels is rebelling against what gad has established, and girls who rebel will bring judgment upon themselves. The authority holds no terror for girls who do right, but for girls who do wrong.

Sandy Hirschfield sat looking up at the Suncor Energy Centre, a tall black office building with a stepped top and black glass and a black arch out front and a black rod on the roof to ward off airplanes. When the sun was low the light entered the building without reflecting and exposed individual rows and columns of offices, fifty up by five across, the desks against the black glass and tiny costumed men and woman darting to and fro, to and fro, to and fro...

“I don’t know, I’m starting—I’m starting to get

out more.”

“It’s like, you know, sometimes you’re so wrong.”

“The same kind of people.”

“You can misrepresent yourself so easily.”

“Yea, never start until you forget, and stop if you remember.”

## THE DONNACCIA

Over Sandy’s shoulder and across the street from the mall was the Donnaccia Grill, where business men went after work to dine with ravishing young ladies who always arrived either before or after the men, never at the same time. The men go down fifty floors on the Suncor Energy Centre elevator and pop into the Donnaccia, and either the ravishing young ladies are inside already or they have yet to arrive. Either way the ladies round the corner in impossible shoes and pop into the Donnaccia and Sandy Hirschfield watches from the mall across the street. What am I... then?

Ravishing ladies with long straight hair in monkey jackets and black skirts and thin legs and impossible shoes, and later they emerge with a fellow in a suit, jelly is in his hair; young professionals—brats. Young ladies with ambition who order the lois lake cedar planked salmon with tropical fruit salsa and gnocchi with italian cream sauce to start and finish with

warm banana chocolate cake. The Donnaccia is perfecto.

## PERFECTO



The mall is the place. The soap store sells towels, too. If you are ready to be happy and excited, you are ready to go to the mall; to meet with your friends, to have lunch, to shop, to buy gifts for the ones you love, to catch a movie, to touch lovingly, to discharge.

If you are having a bad day then going to the mall will not help, it will make your day worse. You need to be ready to live like the tiny puddles in their wood boxes.

You must anticipate the mall as you approach and believe in the mall as you enter; you will be inside the mall with everybody; managers, mathematicians, engravers, body builders, butchers, piano players, prize fighters, airplane pilots, leaf rakers, composers, hairdressers, bricklayers, dance teachers, hunters, cooks, tailors, florists, dentists, bakers and drainers.



Sandy Hirschfield sat in a chair on the fourth floor overlooking the food court. It is black in the mall and it is godforsaken. They say not to pass judgment and they say not to listen to the judgment of others, and they are right to say so. But Hirschfield was a woman who proceeded upon the principle that thirteen and three are sixteen, and nothing over, and who was not to be talked into allowing for anything over. Everything had changed again. Sandy sat looking down into the food court, wondering if she would ever get it back again.

It's none of your business to evaluate the food court—Sandy—it's your business to enter the food court and to eat los cabos chicken tacos. It's busy everywhere. Try to find some time for yourself and take a breath if you feel weak. Where are your friends.

Old friends that are friends no more. They stayed where they were born. There's no sidewalks in the city you grow up in. There's no

sidewalks in the city you're born in.

## ON SUNDAY EVENING

On Sunday evening Caesar Hughes rang up Sandy Hirschfield for drinks. By chance both Sandy and Hughes were in Calgary. They knew each other from Montréal, but had never put in any time together, you know, one on one.

"Hey Sandy."

"Hey Caesar!" Said Sandy. "What are you up to?"

"I'm at the bar."

"Cool! Which bar?"

"Watchman's."

"Watch Street?"

"It's a sports bar."

"Hey, dad?" Sandy put the phone down. "Want to go to Watch Street?"

"Watchman's," Caesar repeated.

"Where is it?"

"Seventeenth Avenue and Tenth, between Eleventh and Tenth."

"Dad?"

"It's a sports bar."

Sandy lowered the phone.

"Dad? It's a sports bar."

Her father laughed in the background.

—Watchman's, look at their fat faces! They are confused. They will be hungry later, or sad later,



or happy later, they will experience an array of emotions that they will not be able to control, slick move.

“We’ll be on the moon!” Said Sandy.

Half an hour later she showed up at Watchman’s with her father Tony, a sculptor who’d taught handicap children about abstract expressionism until the government cut his funding. Tony ordered double martinis with three olives apiece, for the brine.

Sandy with her red cheeks coming in from the cold, her long hair tangled from being under a hat. She really was a beautiful girl all around.

Tony was tall and feminine and sad.

Tony and Caesar shook.

GOD: What do you see?

TONY: The clouds are orange outside.

GOD: A sunset?

TONY: No, it’s midnight.

GOD: What makes the clouds orange then?

TONY: The street lights.

GOD: How do the street lights make the clouds orange?

TONY: There’s lots of lights, the light gets loose and reaches the clouds, also, the sidewalks are white and they reflect the light upwards.

GOD: Then the street lights are orange?

TONY: Yes, the streetlights are orange. They

used to be white, but it was too bright so they installed orange filters, it's more natural.

GOD: More natural?

TONY: More like the night.

GOD: Is the night not black?

TONY: Is the night not what?

GOD: Is the night not black.

TONY: I guess so.

GOD: You guess so?

TONY: Well, what about the moon.

Afterward Tony drove Sandy and Hughes through a series of alleyways and they drank rum eggnogs in his living room.

I'm in search of rare frogs  
I went forth, moving faster  
responding quicker to favor

## RARE FROGS



Friar friar, elusive man.

“We lost a gracious man.”

She sent her egg upon him; a damp revelation

She spoke—walking past the moon

“I see”

As they took the stars ascending; good grief

Thanks for the ride charlotte; thief, looter

I’ve got it in my computer

Promise?

Whoopsadaisy!

She cracked her shin

In two places

as she

tumbled

home

## A SWEET FILTER

Tony Hirschfield was the earliest known man to work on the Los Angeles Fire Department and he thought it would be new. New is good. New and not predictable. More unpredictable things happen at the beginning of a year because everybody is thinking about newness. Everyone does not have a choice, hey Tony?

Tony was a tall, torpedo-shaped man with an unshaven growth of brown beard and a pack of cigarettes in his shirt pocket. He chain-smoked insouciantly as he leaned against whichever wall. He mixed up three rum egg-nogs, and they surprised them in the living room.

"This is gone?" Sandy finished her glass.

"I'll whip up another batch," said Tony. Sandy's tall jellyfish; slim, lithe. Lady tooth, dark elements, grave question, grave situation, sweet filter.

"Thank-you," said Hughes.

"Success is counted sweetest by those who ne'er succeed," said Tony.

Sandy had a peach and got it on Gretchen *P.*

"I hate her," said Sandy.

"Me too," said Hughes.

"She cooked my goose," Sandy frowned.

"She stole the show."

"I'm falling through the cracks."

“She’s firing on all cylinders.”

“Don’t tell anyone I said that, no, she has the revolutionary instinct,” Sandy checked herself. “I love her to pieces.”

Teach me to hear mermaids singing!

Or to keep off envy’s stinging!

“She’s sublime,” Hughes said coolly.

“Who is Gretchen *P*?” Asked Tony.

“Gretchen’s golden horn,” Sandy cursed.

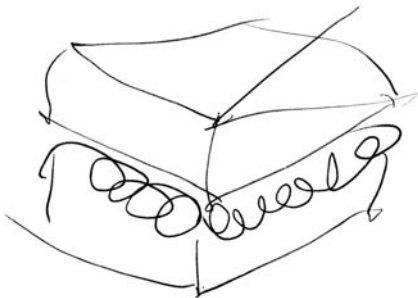
Then Hughes spilled the beans on Tony.

“She’s successful and I’m not.”

“I see,” said Tony. “You like the peninsula?”

“No,” said Hughes.

“Antifascism? Torchbearing? Ham sandwiches?”



“No—No—No.”

“Then solve this thing yourself and do what Sandy did, didn’t you Sandy?”

“Get a dress,” she said, “and fill it with bread.”

Hughes looked at Sandy's rear.

Beyond joy lies the realm.  
What if you could understand?  
What is twice in a minute,  
twice in a nonent,  
and once in a thousand years?  
nodulation,  
neter, learn to peat, pooh.

POOH

ACROSS THE ROOM... Hughes turns to Buddha.

HUGHES: Don't worry Buddha. We ain't goin' back outside.

You're gonna brief the president directly.

Is that the last of it?

Pretty much.

Okay.

We also found this radio,  
but I don't think it works.

Let me see it.

Buddha, keep quiet.

You ain't even supposed

to be in here anyway.

Come on, guys.

Oh, my God.

The basic rule of storms

is they continue...

...until the imbalance that

created them is corrected.

## BLINDING GRACE

The malls are in the north, more of them than down south. In the north it's too cold for outdoor walking. The mall is an indoor street. All a street has, so has the mall. The mall is a street. The mall isn't like the street at all, not like a good street. A good street is built slowly over hundreds of years. A good street is so wonderful to walk upon. The best streets change with the seasons. The best streets are run by the people of the city, by the neighborhood.

The mall is built at once. An architect with a clipboard tromps down the best streets writing:

—High roof (sky)

—Quaint

—Noise (music)

—Variety

—Blinding (sun)

—Long

Caesar Hughes sat in Boston Pizza getting his mustache wet. The game was on. People chattering all over the world. All tanned wood and dark leather, clean as a whistle, nine televisions.

Pasta Sunday, experience the East Coast every Sunday.

Zero—zero.

One nothing.

Find out who will win and why.

Who won this one?

Who won this one?

Who won this one?



It's good to be here.

Jaguars, Falcons.

Free-of-cost, missionaries,

Money doesn't grow on trees

Dancing slaves;

“We will take you on our boat, as many as we can, not for money, but for love of the Holy Cross.”

We took them all down to the market and traded them for Sunshine Pillows.

Spice it up, cool it down.

Cactus cut potatoes.

Many odors and colors.

You go to the mall when you're feeling alive. Or you go to the mall with your baby. Or you go to the mall to buy a gift for your baby, or for yourself.

Everybody was happy and everybody ordered the pulled pork sliders from Boston Pizza; everybody slid them into their mouths and slid them down their throats and slid them through their intestines and slid them out their butts. Four pulled pork sliders tossed in sweet Carolina sauce topped with crispy onion straws.

The waitresses were like the mannequins.

That's what a good body is; the waist is thin, the legs are long and slender, the rump is petite, the breasts are firm, and there is no head.

The lonely earth amid the balls  
That hurry through the eternal halls

### AN OBJECTIONABLE LABEL

Sandy Hirschfield came running across Fifth in the dark.

"I have asthma," she breathed.

"I love the mall!" She exclaimed.

She liked the mall the same way Hughes liked the mall, but then she turned into one of them; she morphed into a girl of the mall.

Hughes loved his friend's girls because he loved his friends. They were all such lovely girls. He loved them all and wanted to sleep with them all. He was rude to them all. Be rude to all, nobody will like you and you will be free.

They explored the mall and afterward they enjoyed a scoop of montafoner sauerkäse with Sandy's folks in Southwest Calgary. She danced around the table playing harmonica before she caught herself and fell into deep regret.

"Don't remember that," she said.

## BRILLIANT SHOULDERS



- W: The lamb's shoulder, was it seven?  
W: Must have been six if they were thirsty.  
W: Maybe six, maybe seven.  
W: Anyway.  
W: Anyway.  
W: These shoulders!  
W: Let me tell you.  
W: These shoulders!  
W: I couldn't believe it.  
W: I cooked one last evening.  
W: These shoulders are absurd!

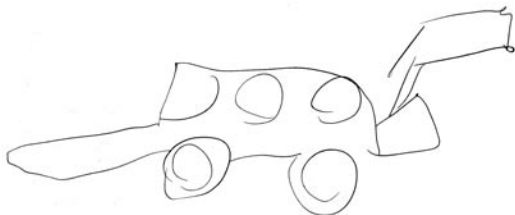
Sandy Hirschfield explained to Caesar Hughes how a woman had taken over her Christmas Evening with all this talk of lamb shoulders. And it came again. The taste of lamb.

Rub all over roast

One person enjoys lamb shoulders as another enjoys candied yams as another enjoys mango salsa as another enjoys the teachings of Jesus Christ. The way to transcend flavor is to taste all.

This is the thirteenth time we have been devalued.

### LITTLE AERODYNAMIC BENEFIT



georgio de georgio and Caesar Hughes walked up Seventeenth Avenue. It was a mid-December evening in Calgary, Alberta. georgio de georgio was a sliver. He was a country man of twenty four with a slick sticky bed of black hair and a flat milky white complexion. His eyebrows had been plucked and then drawn on again at a more rakish angle, but the efforts of nature toward the restoration of the old alignment gave a blurred air to his face. When he moved about there was an incessant clicking as innumerable

loose metal watches jingled up and down upon his arms. He was a slice of bacon placed on meat before roasting.

“Hey faggots!” They’d said.

“Hey you goddamn fucking faggots!” They had said.

“i looked back at them and they looked at me like this” georgio de georgio cocked his head. “they almost smoked me!”

“They wanted to rumble,” said Hughes.

It was snowing and cold.

“yeah they woulda loved that if id gotten mad about it they almost smoked me”

They had almost smoked him, two thugs in a Honda had flown out of a McDonalds parking lot with the windows down, screaming profanities at them.

“Don’t be hollow,” said Hughes.

“put ur hand on my shoulder and tell me everythingll be alright”

“You’ll feel better in a couple hours.”

“we march in style, we know howda row ride wrestle run retreat and defend ourselves”

“When they drove away they said something—boots,” Hughes remembered.

“oh your boots theyre too high thats gay”

“I don’t like them either.”

“i like somethin” said georgio de georgio.

They walked up Seventeenth Avenue and laughed and it was cold but the sun was warm on their backs.

“hows ur health and all that jazz” asked georgio de georgio.

“Why?”

“im worried, ya know, bout my pals”

“I feel good,” Hughes yawned.

“it hits ya all at once hows your family”

“My grandfather is dead.”

“mines going crazy”

“I’ll be alright.”

georgio de georgio had taken some stuff the night before. In the morning he felt sick. georgio de georgio had wept in the morning.

“i got no health i think” he said.

“Try the dentist.”

“lackadaisical dentists”

“You should get those fixed.”

“i should drown” said georgio de georgio.

“Why?” Asked Hughes.

“im a pervert”

georgio de georgio smoothed his hair in the window of a Chinese cake shop.

“No.”

“im just so preoccupied these days” sighed

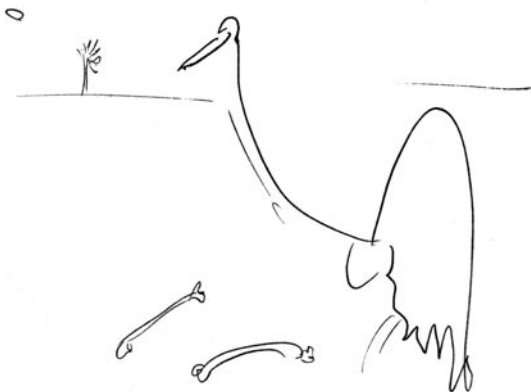
georgio de georgio.

“When the cracks appear, have confidence,”  
said Hughes.

“lets restore the slums” said georgio de georgio.

“lets renovate” said georgio de georgio.

“That is humor,” Hughes laughed.



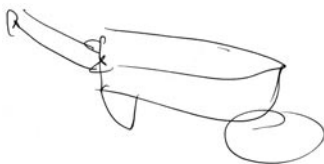
georgio de georgio laughed too, for humor is a buzzard; wrinkled and hideous. They walked to the bus. georgio de georgio caught the bus to the house of his father and Hughes continued his walk up Seventeenth Avenue. As he walked he thought about his good friend georgio de georgio, his handsome frame, his singing, his weird obstacle; his threnody. Singing on the bus; wild, untamed, cruel, violent, uncivilized,

primitive.

“It’s all dreadfully familiar!”

Wandering into an antique mall Hughes discovered a beautiful greave, an ancient greave, a greave he couldn’t afford. As he picked up the greave a fat man came out from behind a silk screen and explained to Hughes that he was holding a medieval greave. The fat man explained to him what a greave was. He wanted to buy the greave for georgio de georgio, but it was too expensive and anyway what good is only one greave, they’d just get him in the other shin. Also, there was smut. Hughes bought the ultimate fireman’s jacket, it was so small. It was so small. It was so small. It was so small.

### THE ARTIST



Hail, ye worthies, barrow-wheeling  
Her putty, a company of blossoms  
Barrow-wheeling through hell  
Too vigorous to stream or veer



“I’m positive about your future, and your strategy to get there,” said Hughes.

“im positive about our future and our strategy to get there” sung georgio de georgio. His weird body posed like a statue of Greek dude with a bird.

“I’m positive,” said Hughes coolly.

“im the queen!” Screamed georgio de georgio.

Hughes and georgio de georgio stood in the back of an antique mall with a picture book: The Future Queen. Hundreds of color photographs of Liz when she was young, even then she had metal cheeks.

“shes inbred theyre all inbred” georgio de georgio pointed, “see the teeth they bring in cousins the royaltys all inbred thats why they got crazy teeth”

Everyone recognized georgio de georgio in the antique mall, look how far his music had traveled backwards. He was looking for a carbonator for Tepee.

“you wont spill the beans or what?” georgio de georgio asked Hughes.

Sandy Hirschfield had shown Hughes her bedroom in Calgary and together but far apart they had stood in the dark basement, and very swollen they had almost pretzeled together. She had looked upon his hole and grew up in the village, and she had Beryl Cook’s ship in her downstairs bathroom.

The way her flesh looked, open like a flower, the way her legs were spread. Her mouth was wet. She parted her legs and let him look at it. He touched it gently and spread the lips to see if they were moist. Sandy gave a start—as if he touched off an electric spark. She moved to enclose his finger. He pressed in further, all the while moving his tongue inside. She began to moan. When she sunk downward she felt his flicking finger, when she rose upward she met his flicking tongue. With every move she felt his quickening rhythm until she had a long spasm and began to moan like a pigeon.

There is a kind of contempt in the hands  
and sky

Felt by him who has just lost by death  
a dear friend

Let not light see my black hair and deep  
debt,

withered flower on the brown,  
pine-needled floor,

let us revert and love our country  
and inch toward foreplay,

The South insists

## RUNNING EGGS

georgio de georgio stepped from his mother's big Chevrolet onto Seventeenth Avenue in Calgary, Alberta and removed his twelve-string from the back seat.

"thanks for the lift mommy"

"Oh georgie."

He shut the door and turned up Seventeenth in the dark. There was much traffic on the cold street in the dark. georgio de georgio walked up Seventeenth Avenue and waited for the light to change.

—my my i feel sick but i need the bucks, wheres chance i love him i love it ill get drunk as a skunk im thirsty tepee im horny ill play tepee, ill do somethin old and get high, theyre watching me

The white fellow appeared in place of the orange hand. georgio de georgio raised his chin and duck-footed across the street to Watchman's, he was not nervous.

This life! He arrived at Watchman's early and alone. The bartender fixed him a flaming lamborghini and he enjoyed the flaming lamborghini on a stool by the window and watched dark figures pass in the street.

"georgio de georgio!"

georgio de georgio turned; there stood a

drooling virgin in a white cotton turban. A slim fox in a fashionable turban. She tilted her chin and licked her lips.

This is it—she thought.

“georgio de georgio!” She hugged him from behind and pushed her perky tits against his shoulder blades.

“hi” said georgio de georgio flatly.

“I’ve missed you!” Squealed the virgin.

Her fashionable size and modern structure. georgio de georgio looked inside her with his full cutting gaze.

“that turban girl was there again—gave me mittens for christmas, hand sewn mittens... what the fuck do i need mittens for? what if someone saw, id be fucked. tepee’d kill me. i threw them in the garbage. at the show with chance, tepee’d jump all over that. i didn’t do anything though, i didnt do anything! and man this turban girl! her friend. the one with the glasses? she they, she was saying ‘sleep with her not me fine’. the turban girl was always right beside me! she wouldn’t go! if there’re pictures! if tepee sees um, man, i couldn’t do anything, couldn’t do anything!” georgio de georgio had the fear, it was his inspiration; his long-time girlfriend Tepee would kill him eventually.

“tepee will rip my head off! i didnt do anything! ah, im off’n wild wimmen an cognac an sinnin! for im in loOOOOOOOve!”

“Try to keep them amused,” Alfie Toomer read it off the page and thumbed his nose.

—Do that yourself.

“Keep them reading with suspense,” read Toomer.

—Do that yourself.

“Why would anyone bother?” He thumbed his nose.

—Do that yourself.

“Caesar, you must create intrigue, you must stimulate the Republicans!” Toomer read.

—Do that yourself.

“Nobody will love you, nobody,” he read.

— Enter Here !!! Dilettante !!! Even if I crouch silently in a corner I can't forget myself !!!



**LEVEL THREE**  
*Work And Relaxation*



**Vancouver, BC**





THE SUMMER PREVIOUS Caesar Hughes had paid a visit to his editor in Vancouver, the young poet Alfy Toomer. Hughes had stayed with Toomer five nights on Marine Drive. Red freighters in the Georgia Strait bobbed as sailboats sailed out of the Eagle Harbor Yacht Club.

There was Toomer sitting in his living room playing his grand piano with the horizon of the Pacific behind him. Alfy was small and thin with the tuft of Jewish curl above his face. He dressed unfashionably on purpose and had a soft, well written voice. Alfy was all facts, for he'd been high-educated.

Hughes and Toomer spent five nights on the balcony above the Strait of Georgia drinking pineau des charentes and eating fried anchovies.

Toomer read his latest bit about two people taken apart by four seconds.

“It was the fourth one,’ she said,” he read.

CAESAR: He died in his sleep.

ALFY: That's customary.

The sea air smelled good as did the anchovies, which went well with the pineau.

CAESAR: The museums are full of death and the galleries are full of bodies.

ALFY: That's illegitimate.

CAESAR: Human activity is worth remembering, though.

ALFY: Maybe, but it's irrelevant.

CAESAR: The museums are full of it, the galleries are full of it.

ALFY: Man, it all evaporates.

CAESAR: But love is all lasting!

ALFY: Yeah, but human love is small!

CAESAR: Then why're the museums full of it? Why're the galleries full of it?

ALFY: We built them.

CAESAR: Why should we build something if not for ourselves?

ALFY: For charity.

They drank eau de vie and pineau des charentes and watched the waves roll in from Japan. Red freighters which had lights on them, bobbing in the dark strait.

## MOUNT CYPRESS

In the morning Hughes followed Toomer up

Mount Cypress to Eagle Lake through the moss, over creeks and under firs. Toomer hiked ahead. It was warm.

“I create bubbles, bubbles you can hold in your fist,” said Toomer. “I make bubbles from goo, and they’re my bubbles.”

“They aren’t from goo,” complained Hughes.

Firs with old man’s beard dangling off their branches like the green-tinged grey beards of old men. A long trail up the mountain over fallen trees sliced in half by boots. Further up a bridge stretched above the forest. They stood on the bridge looking down the rusty trusses into a patch of holly trees at the base.

“Is that holly?” Hughes asked.

“Precisely. The bones contain up to ten seeds each,” replied Alf. “In heraldry, holly is used to symbolize truth.”

They stood on the abandoned bridge and looked at the holly. The shining waxy leaves and the bright red waxy berries. Fanned thorns and a slight wet pine smell.

“Ancient Romans associated holly with their sun god, Saturn,” Toomer said as they hiked down the mountain.

They went down a different way than they’d come up. The sun dropped below the tops of the firs and the shadows were long in the forest.

“Saturn was the ruler of the universe for untold ages,” said Toomer.

“How are the bears?” Asked Hughes.

“We don’t see them, but they’re here.”

“Bears are dangerous.”

“Yeah, and they can stand on two legs for brief periods of time.”

Caesar watched Alfie. His long jaw and a flaccid blue face. A curled tuft of Jewish hair over his forehead like a ball-cap. He was a looker. The sunlight came through the trunks and Alfie divided it from the dark and stuck it in his back pocket for later.

TOOMER:           Send it to me.

HUGHES:           I will.

TOOMER:           Send it to me first.

HUGHES:           Why?

TOOMER:           Send it to me first.

HUGHES:           I will.

TOOMER:           Spill the beans!

HUGHES:           I will.

Education is degenerative and not sincere of  
the total mystery,

Education is not for mystery; not of service,

True learning is abrasive and pathetic as is  
truth,

True learning is despised by the educated,

True learning is too passionate for license.

## TWO CHALLENGES



The sun set at four, it would not set so early. It's easy to forget the identical nature of all non-spiritual pursuit.

A community of gardeners in Rosedale who are passionate about gardening. They often discuss how immature it is of their husbands who like to golf, to like to golf.

Astronomers look down on biologists. The black man with the large collection of basketball shoes looks down upon loafers. Musicians are uppity in the company of garbage men.

What is that, Golden Bell Nippon, even the collection of basketball shoes becomes a religion. Everything is a religion; flower arrangement; recreation; astronomy; biology; Jaguars; Falcons; Rosedale; wooden spoon; Holy Cross; ABT Financial; boat building; Fish Creek Station; green dust; Florida; recreation; rainforests.

## ALFRED TOOMER

I moved from Montreal to West Vancouver for the month of August and Hughes came through and stayed with me for five nights. Caesar's getting better all the time, he has characters now, but they're hard to follow. I know he'd say that it's supposed to be that way, but if he were capable of writing better, he would. He sends me his stories all the time and I just don't have the heart to tell him that they're unusable.

On the fifth night I fried us up some niboshi in butter and we drank eau de vie on the balcony above the ocean, there were trout circling under water.

"Youth is beauty, beauty youth," I said.

"I don't know."

"What do you know?"

"Hope springs eternal," he said. "and that I love to slumber."

"Slumber is sleep."

The fried fish were crunchy and delicious, I can still taste them.

"Slumber is boring, I like to slumber with my people," he said.

"I like to slumber with my poodle."

My labradoodle staring through the screen door at Hughes, old Mephistopheles. I worry for his health.

“Poodles are weird,” said Hughes.

“History may well repeat itself.”

“Poodles are weird,” said Hughes.

“History may well repeat itself.”

“Poodles are weird,” said Hughes.

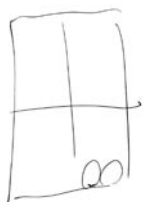
Hughes’ use of the word ‘boring’ reflects his belief that his performance depends not on his internal characteristics, attentiveness and persistence, but on external events.

We had five pleasant nights on the balcony listening to Barney Kessel through the screen door and one of the nights Caesar said he saw a huge raccoon run across the beach.





LEVEL FOUR  
*The Interloper*



Montréal, QC



We will eliminate black bears, no more black bears.

No more Indians, no more inward remedies.

No more self-disgust, no more smoldering maidens.

No more championships, no more blueberries.

Without blueberries there can be no black bears.

Let us eliminate blueberries. Let us eliminate black bears.

ONE MORNING UPON WAKING in Ayn Cory's bedroom Caesar Hughes and her had laid under the covers reading from a National Geographic in stupid voices. Ayn Cory was excellent at snooker. A big boned, athletic girl with a Greek haircut who was, statistically, important. She had freckles and black eyes, which is a weird combination, isn't it. She and her girlfriends were capable of becoming very old, at the drop of a hat. Ayn Cory had shown Caesar how effective her binoculars were for spying on his building across Querbes. There was Seamus C. Cane, born in a phone booth. There's Ken

Wiener slapping bass and smoking a doobie next door. There's Keegan Yang's bedroom with a Lebanese flag in the window. There's Chance one floor below noodling away as he watches the tube, browning cauliflower.

"I always spy on your building," Ayn Cory smiled.

"There's daggers in women's smiles," said Hughes.

### LONG-LONG-LONG

Ayn Cory and Caesar Hughes had separated the first time because she suspected him of philandering. They'd separated the second time because he'd accused her of philandering.

Hughes looked through her window and pictured her just below the sill in bed with her new man, Big Joe.



AYN: You think?

JOE: Sure. Of course.

AYN: Well Joe. well well.

JOE: Don't worry about it.

AYN: Worry? me? *No, no.*

JOE: I didn't know.

AYN: I feel loose.

JOE: I know why.

AYN: Why?

Ayn leaked.

“You and your calculations. You and your impatience. It's interesting to me,” said Ayn.

Her small white room smelled like pine smoke.

“Ayn, either dance or don't,” snarled Big Joe as he pulled up his pants and buttoned his shirt. Big Joe was a tall, narrow, disconsolate man who moved with a crabby listlessness. He shaved his pinched, pale face every third or fourth day, and most of the time he appeared to be growing a reddish-gold mustache over his skinny upper lip. This was not the first time Big Joe had squeezed one in on Hughes' girls.

“In this rough dance we are deprived of brilliance,” Ayn said from the bed, she covered herself in a sheet and lowered her chin to her chest. Her black hair tangled from rolling.

“It's important, right. There are colors that fill the ears with truth; the hare's gaze.” Big Joe did his belt and looked out the window at Caesar's window across Querbes.

Caesar watched Big Joe looking at him from across the street.

## THE HARE'S GAZE

Ayn Cory worked at Duke's grocery on St. Laurent. It was always dark when she got off. Twenty-two blocks from Duluth and St. Laurent to Querbes and Van Horne. She walked underneath the grey maples.

—If I am at the grocery who works, my definition, it does. I hope it does not. It does. My body is, and contains, the

Entire width of my

Mechanism

To advance

My chance

At attaining

The

Power to

Reach toward

The

Contain the ability to

Reach toward the

Final

Distant and last

And beginning, the

Long—Long—Long

Thing that is, better  
known as,  
Arms length now,  
Just close

## ANOTHER CONCHIE

The dentist clinked his metal hook against each of Ayn Cory's teeth, holding her tongue down with a mirror, calling out strings of numbers to his assistant.

"Two—Four... Two...

"Three—Four... Two...

"Four—Four... One..."

Dr. Hughes was happy.

Do not despise the dentist's discipline nor be weary of his reproof, for the dentist reproves the one he loves, as a father the daughter in whom he delights.

He discovered a tender red patch of gums in the back and stabbed it with his hook—his mouth was hidden by a blue surgical mask but his eyes lit up. Dr. Hughes continued and Ayn Cory knew it was coming again.

"See those grey spots, those ones that are past the enamel will need work," said Dr. Hughes.

Ayn grimaced.

“I’m sorry about your grandfather,” he said.

“Thank-you,” mumbled Ayn, her tongue under the mirror.

“He came for my grandfather in November.”

## IN THE VALLEY OF UNREST

“How are the salaries in Montréal?” Asked the assistant.

“I’m not sure,” replied Big Joe.

“For a dental assistant,” she said.

“I’m not sure.”

She inserted a needle into his lower jaw.

“Is it affordable?” She asked.

She pulled the needle out of his muscle, the thin metal slid out and Joe felt a snap. The dentist proper came in and slapped Big Joe in the face.

“How does it feel?” Dr. Hughes smiled as he untangled the cord of his drill. The assistant propped Big Joe’s mouth open with a plastic rod.

“I’m defined by my work, I’m a dentist. I may not love what I do, but this is who I am,” Dr. Hughes clicked a fresh bit onto the drill. “I accept that I’m a dentist, I am content.”

Big Joe stood drooling at the crosswalk. His rubbery mouth numb and swollen. He was



dressed for the weather; his gorgeous curls flowing out of a pink nylon toque and dancing down his delicate shoulder, thick leggings tucked into winter boots, a fashionable feather down. Big Joe had braces, acne, and small close-together eyes.

A young woman with a stroller pushed past Big Joe and in the stroller was an adorable little baby, Big Joe was fascinated, he peeked into the stroller and smiled.

“Great... do non-religious people have more sex?” Big Joe whispered into the crib.

“Exactly. I can’t refuse them,” replied the young mother.

## AYN CORY

I’ve been getting headaches that follow me to bed. Joe says they’ll pass eventually, he recommends I eat more meat. Of course Joe’d recommend meat, like meat cures all.

I started getting the headaches after Paul left. Paul’s our youngest. He moved to Halifax last September for school. We’re still working out what to do with all the free time.

The plan was, when Paul and Ruth moved out, that we’d do the things we weren’t able to do with the kids around. Joe always said we’d sell the house and move to the south of France. It’s so cold in Winnipeg and even in the summer when it’s nice, it’s dusty and dry.

Joe says in a year we'll have enough to retire and go traveling, but Joe turns fifty-five in February and I'll be fifty-three in May. We're getting old and soon it'll be hard to travel. I'm not sure I'm even up for it anymore. When you get old you get different ideas than when you're young. Joe and I are taking yoga classes now. We're doing Christmas at Joe's parents house this year and the kids are flying in.

Sophie and I are going Christmas shopping today and we're getting our nails done at four. It's crazy this time of year. I feel bad for Sophie sometimes, she never married. She's my age but looks thirty years younger, she's beautiful. Having kids takes a lot out of you physically.

I see it in Sophie, she's still beautiful and she has her adventures, but she. I shouldn't say this, and maybe I have no idea what I'm talking about, but she is missing something.

"I met him at Chloe's, Yeah. Well he is something. And he has a practice on Eighth. We're going to his place in Palm Springs to golf, god. That chin. I can't golf. Have I introduced you two yet?" Sophie said.

"Was he at the Saltzman's anniversary?"

"Hmm, let me think. Oh, Yeah. He was. He came with a woman who could've been his mother," Sophie said.

"What's his last name?"

“Mmm, Heinz... Hughes? Oh, something anyway,” She laughed.

“I’m not sure.”

“Well, I’ll introduce you two, you’ll love him. He’s so funny.”

I laid in bed with a headache thinking about Sophie, thinking about the kids, thinking about Joe; his big face on the pillow. Sophie stalking around the dentist’s office on Eighth waiting to jump on the woman who could have been his mother. Sophie, a fifty year old woman who drinks too much pinot, who believes in these dentists.

I get all loose in the night; the headache, Paul alone in Halifax, but he’s tough, tougher than me. And Ruth in Montréal. Wonder what she’s doing right now, always something different but always something.

Joe, always on about money. Our apartment is worth forty, maybe more. And we own it for god sake. The car is worth six, there’s money in the bank. It’s a joke.

“Wake up.”

“Mm,” Joe mumbled.

“Wake up. Come on you oaf.”

“What time is it?”

“I said wake up, so wake up.”

“Alright, alright.”

“Sit up,”

“What do you want?”

“Lets get out of here, let’s sail around the world in the morning.”

“Go back to sleep,” Joe grumbled.

This is the twelfth time we have been devalued.

## NO MORE TRAVELING HORSE



Construction workers are decorating their hard-hats now, sport logos, some slogans, mottoes: the nail that sticks out gets hammered down. The chorizo that sticks out gets served in well-cooked strips that work with the sweet glaze. It’s so demoralizing, I can’t imagine how disappointing that would be.

There are no good questions. There are no

good answers. There are no absolute answers. Better than asking questions is to know. Instead of asking questions you know. A new place. Or you really you really know.

Questions are finished, Big Joe gets the answers online.

You got to know now, that's something we will always have on Big Joe. No more questions and no more answers anymore. No more influential tidings, no more world premiers, no more exclusive benefits, no more revitalization plans, no more car thefts, no more traveling horse, no more challenges, no more paper, no more recreation, no more vague, no more sparse, no more commuting, no more stroke of good luck, no more I understand why they do it, no more particulars, no more started to worry, no more busy lords, no more less waste.

“Sorry to hear about your grandfather’s passing.”

“That’s okay.”

“My father had it in June.”

“A bad case?”

“A very bad case.”

“I’m sorry.”

“We were expecting it.”

## HUGHES MAKES A DEAL



CEASAR: Will you be in Calgary over Christmas?

AYN: I will.

CEASAR: Alright—you'll meet my parents.

AYN: You got a wrong opinion. Really?

CEASAR: Why not—we'll have lunch.

AYN: We'll have lunch? *Well well*, Caesar.

CEASAR: On a Tuscan hillside.

AYN: With vineyards and orchards of olive trees patterning the hillside?

CAESAR: With vineyards and orchards of olive trees patterning the hillside.

AYN: Located just steps from the river and backing on a beautiful hillside?

CAESAR: A beautiful staircase with cherry finish and iron spindles.

AYN: Quartz countertops throughout?

CAESAR: Extensive use of carrera marble and limestone tiling.

AYN: Stunning.

CAESAR: I was shopping for a funeral outfit this morning. I went down St. Laurent before anything was open, and it was quiet and I sat in Parc Lahaie on a bench eating Samos' pizza and tried to be sad. Like when Arrow was put down—I was upset but couldn't cry.

AYN: Stunning.

CAESAR: You got a dog?

AYN: No.

## MONDAY

Stairs can save time, and they are good for you. The fire escape up to Seamus and Hughes' apartment on Querbes was old and rusted. It was not grounded. The first section swung and creaked. The rail had broken loose and the supports were gone. The inside stairwell was miserable. Karl Carlos Carlson lived in the stairwell by one of the heating vents on the second floor

and every once and a while somebody left a can of sprats outside their door for him.

At the top of the fire escape was a gate that swung and creaked. It was kept closed. When someone came up and opened it you could hear from inside the apartment.

Seamus sat at his desk in his room and Hughes sat at his desk one room over, they yelled back and forth or else chatted online. Listen well to others, especially if they are explaining something to you. Be attentive and ask questions, or else you will be your father.

[x] Remember Me

We real cool. We

Left school. We

Lurk late. We

Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We

Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We

Die soon.

See More |

The sunsets were orange and red.



## ENTERTAINMENT



Jacko B. Wabash went to the train yard to watch the sun set with Caesar and Karl Carlos Carlson every night that summer. Wabash was a muscular young man with curly black hair like a portegese piano-mover, a handsome round face and dark dull eyes. He painted nothing but unsellable grey shadow figures, then he caved and began to paint colorful shapes and curtains and silhouettes running through wheat fields. He moved to Vancouver later that year and made a killing.

The three young men sat atop a pile of rubble and threw rocks into empty paint buckets. A big bucket worth one point that was close, another big bucket further away worth two points, and a small bucket far away worth ten points. The ten point bucket was impossible and only one or two rocks ever went in. Wabash and Hughes drank Fontana Morella and Karl Carlos Carlson gave them trouble about it.

“See, it’s affecting your aim,” said Carlson.

“Affect yourself,” snorted Wabash.

“Your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep,”

mumbled Carlson; another bearded teenager from Vancouver, a liar. He had falsely introduced himself upon arrival in Montréal as Jelly Roll Jones the jazz guitarist from Jerusalem. He was short with a Muslim beard and friendly blue eyes and a friendly laugh, both were suppressed; a little round faced kid in the big city. He threw a rock at the one point bucket and missed.

“Affect yourself,” mumbled Carlson.

“It’s entertaining,” observed Hughes.

The ball of the sun set behind the power station, a tangled grid in the distance. The train yard used to be the central switching yard, but they’d pulled up the rails. It was an empty field with piles of rubble where the buildings used to be.

“What’s wrong with entertainment?” Asked Wabash as he collected a handful of good rocks and tossed them one after the other at the two point bucket.

“Lots of things are wrong with entertainment,” said Hughes. The clouds were orange and it was warm.

“Well, name something wrong with it then.”

“I’ll name lots of things wrong with it.”

“Then name one,” said Wabash as he landed a rock in the two point bucket and celebrated with the Fontana Morella.

“Entertainment is bare,” said Hughes as he landed a rock in the one point bucket.



“Not really,” mumbled Carlson.

The sun went behind the power station and the clouds were red. The metal wires were red.

“Entertainment is bare,” said Hughes.

“Who cares, man,” said Carlson.

“Suggestions are good,” said Hughes.

## LOCOMOTIVE



“Sometimes I want to jump in front of a bus. I got to hold myself back,” said Jacko with red eyes and yellow teeth.

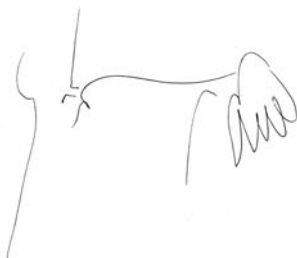
“Sometimes I want to bite off my tongue,” said Hughes.

Jacko B. Wabash and Caesar Hughes sat on the balcony above Querbes in July drinking Fontana Morella, trying to get themselves together after many nights in a row. A night for Jacko B. Wabash involved many elements. He

would remove his shirt and dance, frost-bitten, that was his recreation. He always felt good, except between eleven in the morning and four in the afternoon. That's when he did his painting. Hughes didn't understand Jacko's taste for small talk and wild fucking. Hughes was a party pooper.

"You know that really beautiful little Indian girl, the one that Montgomery Featherstonehaugh was with for a while? You know. Anyway. I was dancing. I was high," said Jacko. "I was high. Anyway. She was at the show and. Well I went up to her. I went up to her and gave her a hug and so we went out for a cigarette. And. And so it was raining and she told me she lives with her aunt, her aunt, I don't care. We were soaked and I was still, and," he stopped and giggled, "I was high. So we went to my place and I tried to make her a drink. And, I. So I tried to make her a drink but I was super fucked and spilling it all over the place. So we went out in the rain in the. This was three maybe. We went out in the alley and we did it in the rain, her up against the fence and. She was up against the fence and it was pouring, and we did it in the alley! We did it in the alley!"

## TEA FOR TWO



Jacko B. Wabash was a guy who'd been there and done it, and had done it over a period of time and was still young enough to go five or six more years. The chance to work with Wabash was something different.

The electrician leaves  
A legacy of wires  
For future generations  
To remedy and revamp

Wabash was an electrician. He wore a rubber bib. The bib prevented electricity from going into his bones through his arms down his legs and out of the bottoms of his feet. Electricity wants to go home, nobody knows why. You will be bewildered. Nobody understands electricity but electricians, and they got unions. They're all asleep with Jesus.

“I want to go home through you,  
you are my bridge.”

Wabash wires alone. Wiring on and on for hours in the dark. Never using his eyes as he wires. He uses his memory. He does not say how his hands look or how the hairs on his wrist are so curly and waxy. He doesn't mention the shadow of his head, how it begins to quake. He's busy with the wires and wouldn't want to throw his clients off with a shock.

The weird ridges on the knuckle of his thumb and the lack of a fingernail on the tip, the thumb below the face. The hand holding the wire and the tip of the needle going smoothly south.

Wait. X That X was at the  
right hand side of the wire, Y  
That Y was directly below, that is how wide the  
wires are. Y

It would be better if these wires were touching.

### IT WAS A SIZZLER

It was a sizzler. Joy Harjo and Caesar Hughes drank cold lemonade and took it easy on the porch above Querbes. The top of the maple was green and the leaves weren't rustling. The sky was hot and blue in August. Harjo wore a

filthy tie-died t-shirt four sizes too big, his hair cut into a shaggy bowl. His mode of speech required careful listening, the best thing was to listen to a creek running over rocks. He looked like he'd tumbled out of a glacier.

"It's a sound. It's like a tube I can hold and bend, like a ray of sound I can capture," said Joy.



"See. And, this tube—I can grow hair on it or make it ribbed or I can; a white moonbeam. I can reflect them."



"No mind can understand," said Hughes.

"Oh True. True—true," stammered Harjo.

Later that evening Harjo played at Torn Curtain, a loft on Saint-Urbain. Joy had built walls for himself, nailed together crates hung with old rugs and dirty blankets for sound dampening. In the middle of the room was a stage and in front of the stage was an open area with an assortment of sofas and a Pepsi machine that sometimes had Pepsi in it. Joy lived in a room behind the stage and if you were there for some

other reason you could hear him in there with his instruments.

Joy set up his bridge-table in front of the stage with his various blinking electronic devices. People can't always do what they want. He screamed and danced back and forth in front of the table twisting knobs and pushing buttons, it was excellent and very modern.

### WAVES IN THE SUMMARY GUITAR

In early October Caesar Hughes happened upon Joy Harjo on Sherbrooke. It was a fine summer day.

“Yeah. This class. We go outside, and, we. Then we walk and listen to every sound,” said Joy as they walked up Sherbrooke to Guy. The heavy traffic on Rue Sherbrooke. The crosswalk beeping for the blind; D#. A woman in yellow overalls holding hands with a man in a long black coat, speaking a mile a minute in some ancient language:

“Hier, j'ai lu quelque chose au sujet des tremblements de terre à Haïti, et ça m'a rappelé d'y avoir été, à bord d'un gigantesque bateau, mangeant de la crème glacée.”

A bus let down the hydraulic. A horn blew—first a short blast then a long hold. Harjo's boot heels scuffed the sidewalk as his backpack bounced and rubbed against his coat. A jackhammer. Music leaking out of Escada. O' afflict-



ed city, I'll rebuild you someday, I promise.

They parted on Guy. Joy went into the Molson building and Hughes went into the basement of a dumpy mini-mall on Saint-Catherine and listened to a young woman in a black turtle-neck lecture on and on and on about dead dolphins in the China Sea.

Experience the new dolphins

Sunday brunch tickets

Behind the scenes program

Two Zoo-galas, Four Boo at the Zoo

Zoo merchandise, prize package

#### HENRI POPE

Caesar and I finished our burgers. Everybody gets hit sometimes. He had a purple bruise under his left eye, his baby blue eyes and high brown hair cut short at the front but left long in the back, he started all that. His perfect teeth and shapely lips and small swiss nose. In November I was more superstitious than I am today, and readier to believe in unnatural and supernatural beings; Hughes went great lengths to disguise his genius.

We walked from Nouveau Système up Beaubien to his flat on Querbes. His roommate wasn't

in. He poured me a glass of Fontana Morella and poured a glass of Fontana Morella for himself and we sat at his desk drinking until three in the morning. He read me a mediocre poem about an electrician and then he rambled on about this girl that lives across the street. I think she was looking back at us.

“Is that her?”

“That’s her lamp,” he said.

“Well, it’s a good looking lamp.”

“Henri, my heart’s a wreck.”

“It has been a day of wonder.”

“What else?” He asked.

Hughes was gorgeous and gorgeous people are all free to do what they please. We sat down at his desk and for some moments I gazed upon him with a feeling of half pity, half awe. His smooth complexion. Large eyes, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison. Lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surprisingly beautiful curve. A nose of a delicate Hebrew model and a finely-molded chin. These features made up a countenance not easily forgotten.

I’m writing a novel where all the procedures transpire. Caesar Hughes will be a character. I worship the shapes, archways, heritage, and I feel affection for each stroke. I adore the little tittle above each i. I do. Not mind what the words represent.

Hughes struggled and sagged and stiffened and finished his Fontana Morella. The girl’s

light was on across the street and her lamp fantasy inflamed him, the disguising street below. I see that as being the most, imperative, enormously, the shapes of the letters. The spiral, the curvature. I've made the conclusive.

We reclined and finished the rest of the Fontana Morella and we leaned in on each other and put our lips together, his rough sandpaper cheek against mine. We laughed together and fell from our chairs to the bed.

Hughes was gone when I woke, but there was a note on his desk written delicately in a beautiful hand.

Speak to me—  
why do you never speak.

## C

I read the note and looked at the brilliant sun and looked for a long time out the window. Her lamp looking back. I fell asleep in his bed and sailed through the gates of Esmeralda.

“You’ve come because you must, and you’re reading now because it’s a requirement,” read old professor Hughes. He sat cross-legged on the stage reading from his novel, which rested upon his lap.

“You don’t perceive anything, you’ve

begun your journey too late in life,” he read.

Old professor Hughes closed his novel and closes his eyes. His grey beard lowered. The stage was lit red behind him. As he closed the book four women walked from behind the curtain and took up their instruments. A tuba, a standup bass, a bassoon and a baritone saxophone. Old professor Hughes opened his eyes and looked from one to the next.

“You’re divested of passion, and in the absence of passion you’re free, and when you’re free you become aware you’re free,” he said.

Old professor Hughes stood and walked into the audience handing out copies from his backpack.

“You can pay for these at my funeral.”

He turned to the band, the lights dimmed and together they played a very low note.

“Bssssssmmmm.....”

## GEORGIO DE GEORGIO

georgio de georgio had forged a system, he'd built a system for himself. georgio de georgio had stuck it out and forged a system for himself. He'd scrapped the old system and gone to the bottom of the sea.



Grab everything, the fish, the seaweed, the rocks, the squid. Incorporate them into your system. Later when you've pieced together a working system you can go through and discard the earlier things. But thank the earlier things as you discard them for helping you to build a system when there was nothing.

## A NIGHT AT MS. TEMPLETON'S



georgio de georgio and his long-time girlfriend Tepee sat drinking Crystal Skull vodka in Ms. Templeton's apartment above Parc and Bernard. Tepee was a tall, spare, mature, straight-backed girl with a tiny, well-rounded ass, round breasts and round features that came equally close to being very orange. Her skin was white and spotted with moles, her eyes very round, her nose and chin very friendly and round. She was able, prompt, strict, and intelligent. She welcomed responsibility and always kept her head in every crisis. She was adult and self-reliant, and there was nothing she needed from anyone, except attention, of course.

"Don't conform to the patterns of this world," she wagged her finger.

"Jus Quit yourselves and fax me the reinterpret-

tation,” Ms. Templeton shook her head soberly.  
“gimme that damn skull” georgio de georgio  
drank from the skull and wiped his lips on his  
arm.

“ah-ah drinkd” georgio de georgio said.

Tepee carefully poured the vodka out of the  
head into her glass.

“Neber tell th same story twice,” said Ms.  
Templeton thoughtfully. She was half sitting  
half laying on the floor braiding Tepee’s long  
brown hair. georgio de georgio sat across from  
them on an orange sofa underneath a plastic  
palm tree.

“natures the art of god” sung georgio de geor-  
gio.

“Look at this idiot,” said Tepee.

“im an idiot” screamed georgio de georgio. “i  
be”

“Give me the head,” demanded Tepee.

She tried to get the skull away from him.

“go to hell!”

“I go to im, but hes too dont come,” Ms. Tem-  
pleton nodded.

“noo yell neber take me head!” georgio de  
georgio giggled as he sucked a hit of vodka out  
of the skull. From the moment you close the  
gate this ranch feels like a sanctuary, becoming  
a wonderful, secure playground for ourselves  
and our children.

“ive uttered what i dont understand things too  
wonderful for me that i dont get” georgio de

georgio sung. "the whole worlds under control of the evil one"

Ms. Templeton's apartment on Parc above Bernard. Full of nonfiction, pumps, fur jackets, dishes, cat shit, emptys, puritans.

Ms. Templeton sat on the floor in a brown fur shoulder coat, cropped pink bangs, short and smiling, a darling; Ms. Templeton was right handed. Her pale skin was drawn attractively tight on her face and her short hair looked as though it were trimmed every day. There was nothing sinister about her. She was not drinking and it helped to set her off from her guests, she grew more and more correct as the fraternal hilarity increased.

"The whol worlds in control f an efil man," Ms. Templeton repeated as she took a big pull on the skull, "a woman do not lib by bread only."

Ms. Templeton cut the bread down at Arbutus headquarters on Beaubien and Durocher, noodling on her laptop every Monday to Friday between ten in the morning and seven in the afternoon. georgio de georgio sung for a living, well not quite for a living. Tepee was the wheat and sunflowers for a living; easily impressed by flavor.

"georgie, this sucks," Tepee moped droopily. "I'm sleepy."

She folded her arms. Girls always ruin everything.

"lets get out pooch birthday in his wet suc-



cess is hidden” sung georgio de georgio. They strolled west on Van Horne from Ms. Templeton’s to Sherman Snorter’s on St. Urbain, a brisk November night.

## HYMN TO GOD THE FATHER

Caesar Hughes and Big Joe were at Sherman’s in the bathroom dirtying his nice clean towels.

“So, we’re wiener cousins now,” said Big Joe.

“Fearless Ayn,” Hughes frowned.

“It gives us great strength to face similar problems in the future, I’ve been through hell and back!” Big Joe laughed.

“Well. The reason for your admittance is explained by a lack of information concerning the extraction.”

Hughes flushed the toilet.

Big Joe had a cleft lip. Cockeyed and overweight like a ticket ripper. He’d met Caesar in Vancouver, working at McDonalds flipping burgers, Caesar would hand him one and Big Joe would fry it up. Quality, Value, Choice. Big Joe was a bonehead, he had nothing upstairs. You’d have thought Ayn Cory could see it.

“What is lubricity?” Said Big Joe sociably.

“What is revelation?” Said Big Joe socially.

“How forceful are right words!” Hughes gagged.



A male Sumerian tiger has died after an argument with a female at the Zoo. Zoo officials said the thirteen year old tiger, named Beefcake, died after a conflict with a three year old tiger. Zookeepers stepped in and broke up the animals but it was too late.

Hughes had brought a nice bottle of Fontana Morella to Snorter's. He went to the kitchen and twisted off the lid and poured a mugful.

—I'm a zookeeper, and Big Joe, well, I guess he's a zookeeper too.

Hughes drank the mug and had another mug in the kitchen and reflected upon what Big Joe had said:

“So, we're living on the same street, we look the same, we like the same girl, we both love to dance, we both love men, do we not? And words are signs of natural facts.”

Caesar wanted to castrate Big Joe.

“What is shaking, my man,” Alfy Toomer came into the kitchen and from behind and touched

Hughes' shoulder lightly. "Don't castrate Big Joe."

"Why not?"

"One in four women has been a victim of severe violence at the hands of a partner, men are also being victimized," said Alf. "About one in seven men have been severely assaulted by a girl at some point in their life."

"But I'm a focused driver. I want freedom, flexibility and control!" Hughes swore.

"Give Big Joe a break, he's determined to apply fresh thinking and unlock boundless potential, you know... like Beefcake," Toomer leaned casually against the fridge. "I'm worried about you Caesar, you know nothing's brilliant in the night, or on a cloudy day."

"Think you know everything?" Hughes sneered.

"If you say he wasn't beaten to death, you can show us the body," Toomer shrugged.

"We rushed him to the hospital thinking he would get better, but he died," admitted Hughes.

"Did you personally profit from this?" Toomer asked.

"I don't have the strength to bring myself before the new judges and fight for the truth."

Caesar Hughes spoke only when he wanted to speak and never spoke because he had to. That was the sign of Hughes. He could not be

prompted, he only spoke when he felt. That's how Big Joe could tell he wasn't Hughes. It was necessary for Big Joe to speak. Even when Big Joe had no wish to speak, he spoke. Big Joe spoke when he was prompted to speak, he wasn't Hughes. Nor was Toomer. Everyone spoke. Are you speaking now? Big Joe's speaking I bet.

Hughes spoke only when he felt like speaking.

"Now, I will speak," he spoke.

What did Hughes say when he spoke? He said what he was thinking. He spoke what he wanted to speak. He was silent when asked to speak, but not silent when he wanted to speak.

#### HUGHES WRITES THE PREFACE (W: ALFY)

I think that he is writing now because there was sound all morning and now there is no sound, but the door's still shut. He has played that song over and over, fixing it, until I got tetris fever and now everything is quiet and repeating inside my head. I am still on the couch where I have been sleeping, but I have already folded up the sleeping bag and put it away in the dresser, and I have already gotten into my bags and then pushed them back under the chair so everything is clean, as per Seamus' instructions. The kitchen is spotless. The windows are filled with spots.

I hope everybody does not come in again.

You can lean into silences. They come in the nighttime, usually, but sometimes from the balcony, from next door, from the street, out of the afternoon. I cannot. I would like to have a big space with large empty rooms, like the summer before, when there was only the big picnic table and the bed and me inside, and you could sit and do for hours, while the traffic and the sun went across. The more filled the room is, the less that gets. Seamus is away working on *Gretchen P*, and I am sitting on the couch, looking, and Hughes is in his room, writing. I can hear when the door opens, and the steps. We will all have to read it.

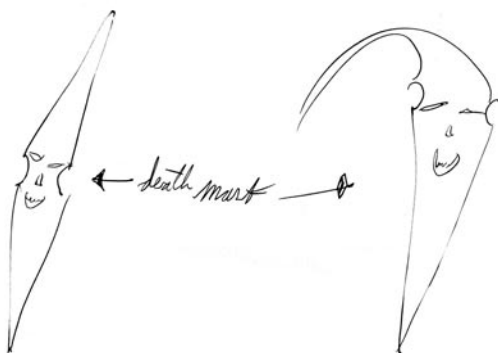
## THE PREFACE

That's all heaven was; earth and sea. How's the former? In regard to other forms, they adorn nature with men who seem to have lost their hands. Of course there is value in particulars, and in him who is a picture of taste; he who doesn't wait for heroes or creatures. Whether it wasn't only a form has so far not been proved.

I moved one morning with tidings equal to the order of time. *Bu Ge*, we couldn't sufficiently praise. But an animal! It has architecture like men, who are as costly as noise. A cloud who can hold me steadily to truth is an obligated thought. For it's not alive like the spirit of a plant or like the spirit of a man, namely, a log

of dry wood in one spot produces a fire; a limited judgment. I remember when I colored the form of amusement; proof of the standing fact. But there is obstruction, whole worlds of it. I have an inclination toward those who admire admirable victories.

## A NIGHT AT GEORGIO DE GEORGIO'S



They get together, last night everyone went to georgio de georgio's, an ancient mystic rite. What were they saying to one another? From a distance,

The ancient conversations. Are they ancient,  
Are they ancient. They sound ancient. Every-  
body does

Sound ancient from a distance.

Everybody is ancient when everybody is hollow when they

Speak. The mask of Rangda, the witch-queen of evil and death.

Tygers Tygers burning bright

In the forest of the night.

They would not listen,

In the forest of the night.

They're not listening still,

In the forest of the night.

Perhaps they never will.

Perhaps everybody sounds like a fool when they gain approaches.

A volcano outside your window; perhaps a cross made out of two bits of wood

Men are what they are

In the forest of the night

they wear no masks with me

Everybody looks like a fool precariously

perched high on the hump of a camel, above  
fountain-heads and pathless groves.

Behold there in the wood the fine madman!

Everybody sounds like a fool pushing up dai-  
sies.

The Sphinx is a symbol of kingly power  
In the forest of the night, everybody sounds  
like a fool.

Flesh is heretic. My body is a witch.

Rows of sphinxes; the human side. I'm burn-  
ing it.

Everybody sounds like a fool when they  
speak

Everybody sounds like open air markets

Perhaps everybody sounds like everybody  
sounds like a fool

Last night nothing was done at georgio de  
georgio's. We played games

Even if nothing is done and there is no move-  
ment, it will be interesting stillness that is sub-  
lime fruitfulness.



## A SMALL WINDOW



At the center of each person there's a small window, flowing with the blood. It's the same view through each.

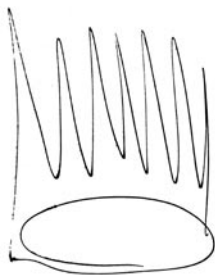
Hughes went to the window and noted the shape and size, the condition of the stone. He looked through, but then he spoke of what he saw. Do not bend the bars and climb through and capture the creatures.



How beautiful the solemn are,  
Have you nothing to say to us?  
    Inside their French poems  
There's nowhere to go in France



LEVEL FIVE  
*Sans Génie et Sans Esprit*



Vancouver, BC



Four young French girls  
Sunday morning hills  
Spring to act a phrase  
Amazing slim actresses  
in tight-fitted jeans  
undress and embrace  
at fifteen

IN THE REAR was georgio de georgio.

“at the airport there were these little girls—little girls in sweatpants with little tiny butts in my face!” georgio de georgio slapped his hands together fiendishly. “but then there was a muscle man leanin up with his crazy rectangle butt in my face! and im thinkin, whats wrong with this place! but then im thinkin, whats wrong with me!” Squealed georgio de georgio.

They drove into Vancouver from the airport with the sunroof open, the whole gang had gone to Vancouver for New Years Eve. Caesar Hughes stuck his arm out and felt the fresh air in his finger tips that was fresh because of the ocean and the mountains.

Seamus C. Cane was in the driver’s seat with Hughes beside him, and georgio de georgio was

in the rear with Walter. All four smiling and naive, even if they were engaged. They were old and pretty excited and cheerful as they drove into Vancouver. It was a good wet winter day.

## DR. SUN YAT SEN PARK

Alfy Toomer went to Dr. Sun Yat Sen Park on Carrall to meet Seamus C. Cane and Caesar Hughes and to eat pork buns in Chinatown on the last day of the year. Toomer waited cross-legged reading in the gazebo. The park was out of place in the climate. Red Chinese rooftops against the grey Canadian winter sky. It really smelled Chinese in there.

“No carp,” Cane noticed, they’d removed the fish from the pond for winter.

“Maybe they are coy,” said Toomer as he folded the ribbon into his book and placed it carefully into his backpack.

The three men strolled up Pender to a Chinese bakery on Main and ordered a box of pork buns and crossed Main and crossed Gore to the circle of boulders on the grass beside the Christ Church of China and snacked on the delicious buns.

“I have a joke,” Toomer bit into the foamy bread and exposed the dull winter pork within.

“See,” Toomer began, “it’s a chicken.”

He made a fist but extended his thumb and pinky finger.



“My thumb is the head, my pinky is the tail, and my fist is the wing,” he grinned enthusiastically. “When I point to my thumb, you say Head, when I point to my pinky, you say Tail, and when I point to my fist, you say Wing.”

He pointed to his extended thumb.

“Head,” said Cane.

He pointed to his extended pinky.

“Tail,” said Hughes.

He pointed to his fist.

“Wing,” said Cane.

He pointed to one part and another.

“Tail.”

“Wing.”

“Head.”

“Tail.”

“Wing.”

“Wing.”

“Wing.”

Toomer kept pointing to his fist.

“Wing Wing—Wing Wing.”

“Wing Wing—Wing Wing.”

Then he raised his hand to his ear.  
“Hold on a second, I have to get this.”

Cane enjoyed the joke on the boulders out front of the Christ Church of China. And a sticky ball. The joke was hilarious. Toomer had developed. Behold, I’m coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the word of the prophesy alive with the Chinese.

### LIMBURGER



McCannon offered his hand to Sandy Hirschfield at the Toomer’s annual family Christmas party in West Vancouver.

“You are one of Alfy’s friends? I’m McCannon—Alfy’s uncle.”

He’d discovered Sandy by the camembert de normandy, near the chicken liver pâté. A long view of the Georgia Strait with the silver sails around Passage Island. The sun setting behind, a red haze past the variety of cheeses and pâtés and out the bay window of Alfy’s place.

“It’s my pleasure. Alfy keeps such interesting company. Where were you educated?” McCannon sliced a lump of limburger and slid it



through a hole in his lips, the soft cheese stuck to his teeth as he moved the melting lump around with his tongue.

“I grew up in Calgary,” said Sandy.

“Oh yes, The University of Calgary.”

The wine helped to loosen the limburger. McCannon was born Richard McCannon on the 30th of August 1954 in Toronto, Ontario. He was a voluptuous man. His success in the stock markets was legendary, and although he wasn't infallible, his net worth was ample proof that he was absolutely right, all the time. McCannon was famous for his philosophy; over time markets go up.

“No,” said Sandy. “I didn't go there.”

McCannon stuck out his tongue and showed Sandy his melting limburger.

## AN EDUCATION

Lunge and have pleasure

Hang school,

but spare principle

unwashed and symbolic

Like a bitter dildo

## CHICKEN SCRATCH

That's a forest of poplars along a creek. There's nineteen poplars, though there's a bunch more across the clearing. The nineteen poplars are reflected in the creek, which is not flowing or rippled. There's snow in the clearing but the creek isn't frozen. There are no leaves on the trees. It must be April or March. Dead yellow grass by the creek has forgotten to reflect in the creek. The sky's flat but lighter down low and darker above, it's either morning or evening.

It's an April evening in the woods and it's warm and the snow's melting. Why are the branches of the third poplar from the left so long? They reach too far.

"The hardest thing is this," said Hughes.

He sat with Seamus' little brother Tom writing about a painting of a forest above the fireplace in the basement of the Cane house in Vancouver.

"Nope—that isn't hardest. Is hardest! In a heli-

copter, and it's above the mountains, hovering," Tom hovered his hand in the air. "See! The hardest in the wholest world—jumping out a copter and then land with one foot, one foot landing highest top a mountain!"

"But that would only take a minute," Hughes frowned.

"Nope. No, no. Because because who's driving the helicopter? Guess!"

"Who?"

"A horse!"

## WRONG MAN 7

In the morning Jacko B. Wabash and Caesar Hughes walked up West Fifteenth to Kerrisdale. It was raining and the shadows were long on the sidewalk. The cherry trees were green and the bush and lawns were moist. There was moss on the sidewalk and the air was moist. The roads shone. Other than for loons and buffleheads it was quiet. There were mountains, Jacko could see them between the houses as he walked. It was downhill, or else up hill, or else it was slanted. Smiling stranger, if you pass me and want to speak to me, why shouldn't you speak to me?

JACKO:            Last night at Abe Keefer's, on the porch in the backyard...

CAESAR:        Yeah.

JACKO:        That floozy who was sitting on

the railing..

CAESAR:           Keefer's roommate.

They got soaked as they walked up to Kerrisdale in the rain under the cherry trees, past huge, huge houses.

JACKO:            The fat one with the glasses...

CAESAR:           Yeah.

JACKO:            She said:

FLOOZY:           So I'm in class right? And all the time someones putting up their fucking hand and putting in some long personal anecdote. Tellen the whole fucking class their life story like some sorta fucking retard.

CAESAR:           What did Keefer think?

JACKO:            He knew what she was talking about.

CAESAR:           As do I.

JACKO:            I as well.

CAESAR:           Am I a fool?

JACKO:            Yes.

CAESAR:           Are you a fool?

JACKO:            Yes.

## THIS WORLD IS NOT CONCLUSION

Me and Caesar smoked under the cherry trees, and we got fucking soaked. We smoked under the cherry trees. Caesar shaved, and his hair was up in bantu knots. He had his fancy coat, the one with the brass buttons.

“What happened a moment ago. You got to re-

member if you want to write it down. You can only write from memory,” he said.

“Not this time.”

“But you could call for help by repeating a word twice or by spell a word wrong intentionally. ‘Help! I can’t escape my memory!’” He said.

“I’m in bad condition,” I said.

We got totally fucking soaked.

“So say you’re in the mountains painting the mountain in front of you,” said Caesar. “It would be from memory. You look at the mountain, remember it, then apply the memory to the canvas.”

“Would you mind toasting my bun a minute?”

Me and Caesar walked up to Kerrisdale in the rain, now we’re in this place Bear Brothers, Seamus came out—now we’re in McDonalds. Caesar got a cheeseburger, now he’s reading Proust and sipping coffee, Seamus is on the phone.

“The Gretchen *P* artist of the year?” Seamus answered his phone. The chattering in McDonalds. Everybody’s not rare.

Everybody left their blinkers on.



One Cheeseburger—1.35  
One S Coffee—1.19  
Black  
Subtotal—2.54  
Tax—0.30  
Eat-in Total—\$2.84  
\$10 Cash—\$10.00  
  
Change—7.16

Everybody is not incredulous.

“Who else will come?”

I’m having a dinner tonight at my dad’s place, it’s going to be great. My dad’s fucking crazy.

“Harold Hall?” Seamus suggested.

“I tried him, he left already. Would Gretchen *P* come?”

“Probably not,” Seamus bit his lip.

Everybody’s not inconsistent in McDonalds.

We’re making good use of the room—we’re eating.

At regular intervals, amid the inevitable ornamentation of their leaves, which can be mistaken for those of no other fruit-tree, the apple-trees opened their broad petals of white satin, or dangled the shy bundles of

their blushing bacon burgers.

“McDonalds is sublime,” said Caesar. He put down his Proust and laid his head upon the table.

“This McDonalds is serene,” he yawned.

Caesar’s beside me in the booth and Seamus is across from him.

Frogs and snails and puppy-dog’s tails  
And dirty sluts aplenty  
Smell sweeter than roses  
in young men’s noses  
When the heart is four-and-twenty

“Look at her! Going up the stairs. Quick!” Caesar put down the Proust and pointed to the staircase—I looked over and caught the little Asian legs sticking out the bottom of her school uniform going up the staircase.

“I see.”

“Yes!” He said.

“No way,” I said.

“No?”

“Yeah, maybe.”

“Yeah,” he said.

“Maybe.”

## TOOMER'S PURPLE SHADES

“Actually, I got an idea.”

“If you got three, the first two’ll help the third,” said Hughes.

We were up in Gretchen *P*’s room on the second floor of the Waldorf hotel on East Hastings. A really small hotel room actually, about ten feet by ten feet, it was really nice though. They’d laid out all sorts of delicious goodies.

“No, the three combined are greater than the third alone.”

“The first two are sent into the world. What comes back is used to create the third,” said Hughes.

“The world’s no good, friends do the work. They will help with the first two.”

“Hallelujah.”

We sat on a sofa with a bottle of Belvedere on New Years Eve. The little room packed with internet celebrities.

“Test my holy contraption—my tampon,” said the drummer. Later she wrapped herself around the toilet. She was a redhead in black fishnets and a tulip skirt with many scruples.

“Let’s go before somebody else does,” said Gretchen *P*.

“What is that?”

“I’m mending,” she said.



“When a heart breaks, it don’t break even,”  
said Hughes.

## TOOMER’S CLASSIC BODY

I’m in the Bourbon on West Cordova trying to write about New Years at the Waldorf and it isn’t going as well as I’d hoped, ug. This isn’t the most inspiring atmosphere... anyway what do you think?

A man whistles as he drinks. A man talks to himself and eats cheesies as he cranks the slot and prays, prays, prays, you bet he prays. The glowing tears of noble men will fall on our ashes, man.

What are they saying about me?

“瞧他那蠢像” said Gué.

“写不出文章” laughed Wú.

“还想称作家” Zhéng snickered.

“鼻子都长歪了” said Chén.

“真是个废物” they laughed.

## ISLANDS

The sea  
Is flat and thirsty,  
I am the source  
Of a third of  
The nights



There is the sea, familiar and flat. In the middle of the sea is an island. The impact of the island is greater than if the entire sea were made from that material.

If a thing is predictable it can be understood. Once it is understood it has no value.

“This island is unpredictable. It is unpredictable and impossible to understand, but I know and trust the sea around the island—so I will go onto the island and investigate.”

## ALL CAESAR'S GIRLS

“We’re friends, right?” Asked Betty Bunt as she laid an egg under the covers.

“Yes,” Caesar replied coolly.

—What was that? I saw it in a newspaper, an omelet.

Some months before Tepee had put her arm around Caesar’ neck and everyone saw except her long-time boyfriend georgio de georgio, for he was in Toronto 17 hours ago.

“id be blind and kill him” georgio de georgio said as he and Caesar walked along Locarno Beach, the wet sand got sloppy if you stood in the same place too long, “i wouldnt be able to control it—if u see g. dreedle—run like hell”

Sandy Hirschfield and Caesar Hughes had gone to Chinook Mall in Calgary together to shop for silk scarves. Hughes had really impressed Sandy’s father Tony later that evening by using remarkable quips. That night Hughes lay awake comparing himself to Sandy’s long-time boyfriend Walter Cane. He measured himself against Walter using his special list. Nobody could stand up against Hughes.

CH: Mountains are too tall

CH: Rivers are too fast

CH: Clouds are too low

CH: Winters are too cold

CH: Hills are too steep

CH: Rain is too wet

“Caesar! Let’s be best friends in the new year!” Sandy was drunk. Her eyes sagged out from their sockets at two in the morning on East Hastings by Mr. Lube.

“We’ll be down the street from one another!” She said. Caesar gave her long-time boyfriend Walter Cane a wink.

“Be careful,” Caesar said coolly. “What this is, so is that.”

It would all be different in January. It’s the same order all the time, the remedy is wishing. A man and woman cannot be friendly without an oath.

#### THE WALDORF (W: WALTER)

We all went out into the smoking corral at the Waldorf on New Years Eve, it got pretty weird because of Sandy, but it didn’t get too weird or anything.

“Your goodness must have an edge to it,” said Hughes. “Your goodness must.”

“Nope! I’m happy, I love you,” said Sandy.

She stood on her tippy-toes and pecked Caesar on the mouth. Sandy had had a few. I’ve had to take care of her so many nights, she’s like riding a bicycle across a teeter-totter or something, you know?

“Caesar, let’s be best friends!” Said Sandy.

She wouldn't let up.

She'll make her apologies and wish she'd not been so casual, probably. I don't care if Hughes went to the mall with her in Calgary, but there's always that danger, right? What does Hughes say—treat your friend's girls like crap, well he hasn't exactly been practicing that with Sandy, has he. What did Seamus say about it, I don't remember, my scarf was clammy. I hope in these days we've heard the last of decoration.

### A DECORATION



“Music is entertainment,” Jacko the painter took a jab at Sandy the musician. Wabash and Sandy stood in a drizzle on the steps of Wabash Senior’s place in Kitsilano after a wonderful dinner of thai spicy salmon in thai coconut coriander broth. Jacko smoked in the dark.

“Paintings are entertaining in the living room,” was Sandy’s retort.

“Music is entertaining in the living room,” argued Jacko.

The human element is suspect.  
The human element is not universal.  
The human element is funny that way.

## A HONEY TIPPED ARROW

“me and edouard got naked and i was sittin on his lap” screamed georgio de georgio. “i was bouncin up and down on him screamin and everyone was laughin thats the funniest, it was the funniest”

georgio de georgio entertained Hughes and Seamus with his story as they drove south on Fraser in the Cane Mercedes. This was the third time Seamus and Hughes had heard the story.

Jacko B. Wabash told it this way:

After the Waldorf me and Edouard Beaupre caught the bus up to Abe Keefer’s place on Clark, we were both fucked so I don’t remember the bus really except for this little dude in a skull cap at the bus stop who we asked about gettin something. Gettin something right? He looked at us and he pulled a bag out and a big one fell on the sidewalk, a big one right? He didn’t see it so I said we’d changed our minds, then after I grabbed the one off the ground and me and Ed split it.

We found georgio de georgio at Keefer’s and

they were all really fucked.

I think georgio de georgio and me and Ed were on the step outside Keefer's place at five in the morning. georgio de georgio said something. I'm not sure, anyway.

This girl no one knew came out and she had a limo. But I, was I in the limo? She had a limo, right? So we got in her limo. But I, was I in the limo? A young girl. But I remember when she pulled out a big bag of it and we got really fucked.

georgio de georgio was naked, Ed was naked and georgio de georgio was riding Ed around the living room like a circus pony.

Me and the girl were on the bed round the corner and she was violent, pulling my hair. Loving it. Right.

Or I was violent.

Get over here! Right, Get over here! georgio de georgio was screaming.

Tomorrow they will wear another face.

## ANOTHER FACE



As Caesar Hughes flew through the air he thought about Jacko, poor Jacko just trying to get it right. I guess he'll paint it or whatever and that'll do it.

Hughes stared blankly past the wing as the ball of the sun dropped below the surface of the cloud and lit the cloud orange from below. He observed and learned, you can't capture it without becoming it.

I'm not ignorant like a pimp,

I respect his Hebrew spirit

"I haven't told you anything you must do."

"You will do."

This periodically recurring

Revolutionary convulsion;

a demented tortoise

His shell removed and body



tortured,  
I'm privileged  
I'm privileged

Hughes looked down at the woven farm patches below as he flew back to Montréal. Then he remembered all the stupid shit he'd said to Jacko's father at dinner in Vancouver.

"What if you don't like doing what you are good at?"

"What are you good at?" Asked Wabash Senior.  
"Skiing."

Hughes sailed through the air.

GOD:            Feeling better?  
HUGHES:        Nope.  
GOD:            Do you see anything?  
HUGHES:        Clouds.  
GOD:            See anything else?  
HUGHES:        Nothing.  
GOD:            See this?  
HUGHES:        Nope.  
GOD:            This?  
HUGHES:        Nope.  
GOD:            How about this?

HUGHES:           Nope, can't see that at all.  
GOD:                This though?  
HUGHES:           Not sure.  
GOD:                This?  
HUGHES:           Maybe that.  
GOD:                What about this.  
HUGHES:           Maybe.  
GOD:                This?  
HUGHES:           Nope, what's that?  
GOD:                That's trust, what trust is.

Anything can happen if you have faith. All under the sun that is glorious and gigantic. If you trust everything, anything can happen to you. That's why you trust; you trust and everything happens to you. That's trust, what trust is.

Everything will happen if you trust.

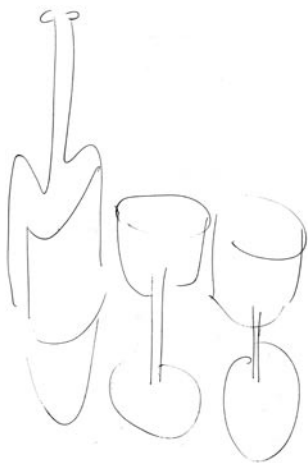
When you're without faith you got to happen to everything. Strong and spiritual; nonreligious and seated internally. You must happen to everything if you can't trust, and you got to grow your own vegetables.

A man must keep an eye on his  
servants  
The permanent places  
The frozen places, where the

Ships can't get through the ice  
Because, because I swear I got  
it twice!



LEVEL SIX  
*Cruising For A Bruising*



Montréal, QC



FINALLY IT CAME, Betty Bunt's long-time boyfriend G. Dreedle sent a message to Caesar.

I'm not going to kill you, but I'm going to dream about kicking your face in, don't ever try to contact Betty again as long as I'm around, you're a total piece of shit phony cocksucker and I wish nothing but the worst for you,

G. Dreedle

One must have a good memory to keep the promises one makes to oneself—Caesar deleted the message coolly. Casual fingers, unbelievable fingers, stoic salami, adulterous fingers.

### THE LOOSE CABOOSE

Betty Bunt bought the wine, Caesar drank and Bunt talked.

“Life, it is repetition,” she said.

She bought the wine and they repeated in bed with her firm figure against his stubborn boob.

—So he knows now, a man ten years my senior; strong and kind. But I'm beautiful. G.

Dreedle's spherical and full of holes like a spaghetti strainer.

Caesar studied himself in the bathroom mirror.

This piano is broken  
It clicks when I'm naked  
And smolders

The slave  
His hot cannon  
Upturned

These Dice  
Cheat these  
Cards cheat,  
Not I

A constant blowing  
And raised crease  
Is smooth and cool

This piano is ruined  
It's stiff and stupid



Sleeping gypsy  
Tender as a donkey, uplifted finally  
At the pinch

### A SOFTER INTERPRETATION

It's the responsibility of the world to make decisions. It's the responsibility of the individual to adapt to the actions of the world.

Other individuals are the world and if other individuals act, adapt to the action. Be open and flexible and accept and adapt. That's how the world learns; by making mistakes. Allow the world to make mistakes upon you.

Allow individuals to make mistakes upon you, forgive the mistakes. Allow the world to correct imbalances. The world suffers well enough without your constant macaroni.

### A VACANT DRESS

A single circuit of Latin brandy  
Is man;  
Awash the decent but  
Frail is;  
Campus library, awash, liberal,  
Successful;  
Sublime when jeopardy is sober

And sudden;  
The fetching pimp's trivial  
Vision

Betty Bunt had pooped out of school with a degree in philosophy, she liked to ring up Hughes in the evenings and discuss premillennialism, or postmillennialism—one or the other. She was a tough looking girl from a distance, but up close she was conjunctive and buttery like a boiled clam.

*ring—ring*

“Hello!” Said Betty.

“Hello,” replied Hughes coolly.

“What are you doing tonight?” She asked.

“Nothing.”

“Want to go out?”

“Sure,” replied Hughes casually.

“Meet me at Parc and Laurier.”

“Sure,” replied Hughes.

Hughes met Bunt on Laurier. She was dressed all in black.

She crossed Parc and embraced him.

“I don’t know about you,” she said, “but I need a drink, it’s my habit. A Knob Creek at six.”

Hughes followed her black shape to Casa on St. Laurent. A popular bar that Betty felt comfortable in. She ordered two shots of Knob

Creek, which is good on ice, and they took the shots back straight.

Betty Bunt bought two bottles of Fontana Morella as they walked up St. Laurent to Parc Lahaie. Two purple necks sticking from her pouch. Hughes found Bunt alluring. She was slender and her face had a modern shape. She was intelligent and trained; a penetrating shower. But she was not separately excited and her eggs were subleased. Betty, try not to become a woman of success but a woman of value. They sat upon a bench under the Jésus Marie Et Notre Temps.

“If I could rearrange the alphabet, I’d put U and I together,” Bunt laid an egg upon Hughes.

“My magnifying glass is dusty, and my gyroscope is in the vault,” said Hughes.

“There must be something wrong with my eyes, I can’t take them off you,” Bunt cooed. At that moment on the bench under the Jésus Marie Et Notre Temps, Bunt’s face was brawny and disgusting.

“So, how’s your family?” Betty asked.

“How’s your brother?” She asked.

“How’s your sister?”

Bunt and her glowing discharge, rapid access, noise annoys, green for go, keeping the skies safe, gliding in.

“How do you like Montréal?” She asked.

“So, how was your weekend?” She asked.

“How’s georgio de georgio?” She asked.

“How’s Seamus, right?” She asked.

“Are you still seeing that, Anne?” She asked.

They finished the bottle and went back to Casa and had another two Knob Creeks and the bartender said: ‘Don’t forget to go to the bank’. Betty put another five dollars on the bar. Later Hughes saw the word ‘bank’ was written on his hand.

They walked north on St. Laurent bumping into each other, Bunt laying eggs one after another:

“Caesar—you’re magnificent, you know that?”

“Caesar—look at me.”

“Caesar—why do you like me?”

“Caesar—if you know a better hole, go to it.”

“Caesar—the highest distinction is service to others.”

She pinched his butt as they walked up St. Laurent to Maya Wellesley and Billy D. What?’s place on Hutchinson and Van Horne, across the street from Hughes’.

### *THE PARTY*

“Hey Maya!” Bunt went for Maya Wellesley and together they embraced in the hallway like the old friends they were not. Maya was a short happy-go-lucky girl with a good smat-

tering of freckles, and she had the boringest hair. Her boringness, she said, would have to go before her star could shine. She had a very loud, easily inspired laugh and it always hurt her in the morning to remember it. She had been getting good reviews online though and you better believe they boosted her confidence. She had a heady falsetto that her and her long-time boyfriend Billy D. What? were pounding into music.

Don Stepkowski tried to drink as Tyrone Holmes screamed at his Compaq Presario in the next room, laying a beat. Tyrone was a rapper who had rapped well in his youth. Stepkowski was a young filmmaker with the magic eye and there was nothing that could stop him.

“Caesar. That which needs to be proved cannot be worth proving,” Stepkowski leaned casually against the fridge. “I’ve been editing your face all week. But now, let us stamp the impress of eternity upon our lives.”

Montgomery Featherstonehaugh showed up with a black eye and red bumps on his lip. In all matters of consequence, Montgomery Featherstonehaugh was, as he always admitted when he was about to criticize someone’s work publicly, a realist. He was a lanky, pink-skinned poet with a bad case of lock-knee and tennis-elbow. His manner was always tense and electric, and his shirts were always three sizes too small.

He had strawberry blonde hair, lazy green eyes and thin, overhanging, sensual lips. He was a perceptive, graceful, sophisticated man who was sensitive to everyone's weaknesses but his own, and found everyone absurd but himself. Montgomery Featherstonehaugh laid great, anal stress on small matters of taste and style.

"The public to me is indefatigable and subjunctive, you know. I see doctors of medicine with farinaceous deposits on their necks, commoners with calendulas sticking out their bagpipes, and bald as Protagoras. It's just, when pansies regurgitate Shinto, when ostriches who don't control their work environment become dissatisfied—when they, you know," said Montgomery Featherstonehaugh. The ostrich is one of the few birds who cannot fly.



He wrapped his rubber lips around the bottle. "Ump," he raises the bottle. "Ump ump."

"You know the Gavotte is assiduous; extrasen-

sory—but. You know. Supposedly Napoleon kept a stable of efflorescent Bergamots in his corset,” Montgomery Featherstonehaugh said.

“Really?” A sixteen year old girl with a crooked nose shut her eyes and fell into a dream, piecing it together in her own way.

“Monty, we accept you,” somebody laughed.

“Tomorrow, you will all be dead,” warned Montgomery Featherstonehaugh as he straightened his little leather vest out.

Betty Bunt and Maya were in the Billy’s studio, more realistic and suddenly grating. How alcohol destroys the power of the little white soldiers.

“Would you have a domelike office?”

Bunt put the second bottle of Fontana Morella into Caesar’s hand. She put it in the child’s hand and it drank all but a few crucial volumes.

“Are you the King of the Golden River?” Asked Bunt.

“There aren’t any mathematical words,” said Billy D. What?.

“There aren’t any mathematical wordss,” agreed Hughes.

“Somewhere it always slips,” laughed Billy D. What?.

Billy was a German boy with Chinese half-moon eyes. Billy refused to run for the bus, his

hands were too important to risk injury, this is the best shit in the world, why isn't anyone listening to this?

Tyrone Holmes was in the freezer under an old fish with his bottle of food-colored malt mastiff sangria, he felt super flimsy and moorish as always, his rhymes were delicate, and smooth as hell.

"Eatin' fo' self and drinkin' fo' self, and nothin' beside, like Jesus neva' lived, like Jesus neva' died," rapped Tyrone.



Dark fuse; limp plaid youth  
dark ooze—through the hospital; a  
dead blue road

Dark decay below the ruled  
archway goes

“Dark—skunk skull spat

The Smo—o—o—th One awoke,  
fooled

Spittle, Rayless spittle—  
jealousie rules

TREU OJA NILL



N; (froth) (glass)

G E Ppffoe

froe

differoontdent

3DUM PH8R

Your brain

Is pimply

And your

Thoughts

Are simply

Of leisure

Why do adults have gold  
teeth?

Why do adults smoke hashish?

It's the conservation of  
momentum; knitted idols  
often asleep and written

Why do adults join the realm?  
it's the continuance of soap, (sheep)  
molts

Throw out the old idea,

that bags are for girls



Too weary to go any further,  
The children sat down under a friendly  
oak, and

building a new nation

*Keep me going;*

*take me to a druggist's*

They became powerful and red, as one  
end of the wire is hot

if you put the other end

in the fire

“Tyrone? I think we met.” Betty laid an egg  
upon Tyrone.

“Yes. Betty? We’ve met,” said Tyrone. She put  
out her hand and he touched it lightly. Then  
she remembered the ominous words of her  
long-time boyfriend G. Dreedle:

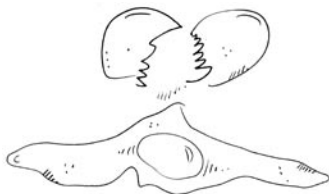
Goosy Goosy Gander  
Wither shall I wander?

Upstairs and downstairs  
And in my ladies  
Chamber  
There I met a man  
Who wouldn't say his prayers  
I took him by the leg  
And threw him down  
The stairs

"I may only be half alive now, but I'd be fully dead if I set out with you in this wilderness," Caesar shook his head solemnly.

"Never go on trips with anyone you don't love," said Tyrone.

In the apartment across the hall was the beautiful, untouchable Ayn Cory. At the far end of her apartment was her bedroom. At the far end of her bedroom was a window. Ayn Cory's window had a straight view of Caesar's bedroom window across Querbes. When seen Hughes would return. Chill December brings the sleet, blazing fire and Christmas treat.



“I love you Maya,” said Bunt sociably.

Then Bunt laid an egg upon her.

“Maya? Why cannot we hear when we are asleep?” She asked.

“We can hear when we’re asleep, if a sound is loud enough,” said Maya Wellesley. “It’s only when a girl is unconscious through some poison that the loudest sound won’t wake her.”

Billy D. What? had a slice of meat lovers and burned the top of his mouth as Maya and Betty stood by the fridge discussing the pitfalls of post-industrial lionization. Billy D. What? sat in the kitchen listening to them go, snapping his fingers for tempo.

“The area surrounding the north is interesting,” Bunt laid another egg upon Maya.

“Sphere of interest,” said Maya.

“Astonishing scenery,” said Bunt.

“Tropical appearance of the bush in the dangerous mountains.”

“Weep you no more, sad fountains.”

“Associated with a crystal lattus.”

“Caesar,” said Betty. “Let us restore the tone.”

## RATTLESNAKES, RATTLESNAKES



Caesar and Betty stumbled down the stairs and crossed Querbes and went up the fire escape through a cloud of reefer into Caesar's apartment.

"Do we have glasses?" She asked. She came in and the room was cold. Caesar got two glasses from the kitchen and when he returned she was naked.

She moved his limp body from the chair to the bed where it became firm and she whipped off his pants. Pigs have done a great deal toward keeping down the numbers of rattlesnakes. A spotted tongue, Betty kissed violently. She forced her pointed tongue deep into his mouth, they were all savages until missionaries carried the Gospel to them. She was atop him in the dark, holding onto his books, laying eggs.

"Don't stop," she said.

—I'm not doing anything! I'm not doing anything! I never do anything and for that I am Caesar Hughes, the great deckchair; when women go down into the earth for coal and gold, avalanches fall like thunder and miles of mountains glitter.

“Merry Christmas Caesar,” Betty said as she shut the door of the taxi, like he was supposed to say thank-you.



“Thank-you,” said Hughes bitterly.

He watched her red tail lights cruise down Querbes under the leafless maples. The ice rivers, a rich holiday on top, it's a good looking lamp, the red tail lights disappeared past Lajoie and Hughes stood damply in the morning looking up at Ayn Cory's window which was dark as the two great curves of islands rising from the floor of the ocean, Pupa.

—I myself am more divine than any I see, as the dwarf fades away in the mist.

There are daisies  
pretty and yellow, each  
growing fat on the beach  
celebrating the Boom, negro orgasm,  
glee

This is what I heard,  
my tongue, virtually  
Dirty vegetables rolling down the  
street  
Totally miserable, triggered by  
demons  
Hot scum, agony  
Glee is revealed

### VACCA FOEDA



“You should’ve included your opinion,” said Betty Bunt as she took a carrot and dunked it in the creamy sauce and snapped off half and tasted the sweet carrot and the creamy sauce and chewed the carrot and moved the orange goop to her tongue where she could really taste it all, then she swallowed.

“Yes, you could’ve included your thoughts.”

Betty Bunt took another carrot and dunked it in the creamy dip and snapped off half and savored the sweet carrot and the creamy sauce and moved the orange goop to her tongue

where she could really taste it all again. The disease, the bacteria is responsible. How can your head be separate from your hand? Your head and your hand are attached by the arm.

### SANDY HIRSCHFIELD

Always awake, how men measured time by the sun, at five in the morning a spongy stream. Hughes rose and made coffee and remembered the brain, too finely wrought, preys on herself, and is destroyed by thought. That's something Sandy had said.

Sorry if my telling you I  
love you took you for a  
throw. I wanted to tell you  
I care for you and if you  
ever need anything don't  
be afraid to ask. I'm your  
friend and I'm here for  
you. That's what I love  
you means.

### Sandy

Sandy Hirschfield went into the morning and searched the lawn for the news. What did the front page say, in the dark with the bright moon above, what was the headline:

*Milk drinkers are turning to powder*



She brought the paper in, one of the wonderful stories in the whole book of life. She imagined herself dangling off Walter's mustache as she fried an egg and made toast and drizzled the egg with truffle oil, the delicious stink of the fungus reduction. The coconuts on bass road, an irregular patchy ring. Play as you are little birds, of what use is a newborn child? There's so many nice girls everywhere and so many of them are completely new; nearly all of them have ostrich feathers stuck in their hair. Of what use is a baby? I want fire and shelter, and there's your great fire there blazing, crackling, and dancing flames, with nobody to feel it.

SANDY!



Sandy Hirschfield could describe the mysteries so vividly.

Life's so short, so fast the  
Lone hours fly  
We ought to be together  
You and I

With soft arms and a reassuring look. Sandy was kind and never mistaken. Though she was violent also. She dressed down, she was rather tired.

Sandy Hirschfield lived with Walter Cane in Little Italy on Mozart and Clark. Drum winding together and cooking up. The best you ever heard.

### ONE FINE EVENING

Seamus and Hughes went over for dinner one evening in October and Walter sprinkled the loaf with water and baked it shortly for crisping. Sandy stood laughing and embarrassed in the kitchen dicing plump, firm tomatoes in pink flannel pajama's through which her unsupported breasts bulged like plump, firm tomatoes. Seamus worked his phone as Hughes smoked casually out the window.

"Is the Gretchen *P* Australia deal in yet?" Seamus bit his lip.

"Can we hear it?" Hughes asked Walter.

“Maybe, maybe later, it’s not done,” replied Sandy.

They listened to it later and it was excellent and urethral.

Walter opened a bottle of Fontana Morella, a time more lasting than the voice of the birds. A song is more lasting than the voices of the world.

“I cannot work while you shine,” said Sandy from the kitchen.

“Gretchen *P* is in Paris,” Seamus told her.

“Gretchen *P* knows no bounds,” said Walter.

“Gretchen *P* knows how to cut a rug,” said Hughes.

“Gretchen *P* can suck my dick,” said Sandy.

“georgio de georgio is playing tonight,” said Walter.

“He plays every night,” said Hughes.

## GREEN PEOPLE

At night the party of young fellows  
Robust, friendly  
Singing with open mouths their  
Strong melodious songs

“Speak gently!”

“Things are getting better.”



I cannot with you here  
I cannot work within there  
I cannot with you erupting  
I cannot when stiff, wanting  
I cannot if you sit sunder, squeaking  
    Are you here to stop my profits?  
I cannot work without my profits  
I cannot work with you underneath  
I cannot now you go to sleep outside  
I cannot with you at my rise, indeed,  
I cannot work within the fuzz  
    Are you here to stop my profits?  
I came up and you are in the row,  
begone

## SANDY'S LITTLE RABBIT



We're gonna have the best days of our lives  
I've never stopped searching.

She saw no enemy, but the scene was a wild  
and dreary one. Squirrels and wild mice disput-  
ed for her store of nuts.

"I hate her," said Sandy bitterly.

She found a rabbit hiding in her pantry, white  
with pink limbs

To the rabbit she spoke a whisper—please do  
The rabbit did not move, it said—let me  
know

Seamus put down his phone and broke its  
back with his foot

SANDY: I do not know

RABBIT: Let me know

SANDY: Please do

RABBIT: I'll let you know

SANDY: You do not know

## CAESAR'S LITTLE RABBIT



When everyone had left the house, and the house was quiet, the many rooms were empty and the faint smell of flowers hung around the light, the rabbit ascended the winding stairs above the tulip tree, past the chandelier, and tiptoed across the carpet into the master bedroom. The rabbit crossed the room and went to the bathroom with the many mirrors above the double sink and the glass shower. Pulling back a mirror the rabbit saw orange bottles with white lids.

Cow factory; frog laboratory—

Feature Man

You: I'll need rabbit glands and

You: More wild rabbit blood and

You: I need a vacation

That's Pacific leisure;

puny and flaccid in the Emerald Isle.

Island information, so-called

True leisure, an inch long

Trees and bees fathom Jersey  
Cannons to the right  
Cannons to the left  
Cannons behind  
The jaws of death  
The mouth of hell

### NO MORE SACRED LOVE

Im alone in le petite il de fixx wonderin and  
lookin out the window at french girls speedin  
past on their horse legs in the cold, their breath  
trailin behind, will it always be the separation  
of the glass, buds comin home from work  
that girls real young, but dont confuse youth  
for beauty  
her legs r firm and long, her little butt and  
little boobs under a feather down, her face  
pokin out a coyote hood, the little chin, straight  
brown hair, she walks quick but i dont care  
“hello!”  
“hi mister”  
“im walkin with u!”  
“oh, no” she giggles, look at her go  
but she blew past on the sidewalk with her  
breath trailin behind

—werent u once a great thief? suppose no man  
can violate his nature, if u slump in her lobby

ill give u 10 bucks

the streets a holiday to walk upon after bein  
warm and quiet indoors, the streets cold and  
snowy and a sirens loud somewhere, some-  
where someones in trouble, an overdose in a  
burning house full of dope

there goes emilia boyd with her curly blonde  
doo, walkin quick in a bundle with her nose  
down, i smacked her in the back of the head as  
we passed

“hey, u, who r u mister!” she stopped  
“hellooo!” she yelled, shes a profound philoso-  
pher

caesar met emilia one night through betty  
bunt

“in the general chaos mighty empires have ris-  
en only 2 meet immediate doom” emilia cooed  
betty refilled her glass

“whats semi-feudal absolutism” asked caesar  
“a new generations growin up in our midst,  
a generation of new ideas and new principles”  
said betty

but on the street i looked at emilia and she  
looked back at me and she won it

“r u strong in honor and purity” she asked  
“yep”



anyways i bumped into her a minute ago on  
parc and maybe she knew it was me or maybe  
she didnt but she did

i went north up parc to a dep on bernard and  
looked at the chips; bbq, salt and vinegar, sour  
cream and onion, ketchup, all-dressed. i didnt  
get any chips, i went to the back of the store to  
where the beer is and got 6 old milwaukees and  
went to the front of the store

“do u got the time?”

the chinaman heard time and pointed to the  
clock above the door

“5 dollar and 30 cent” he said

it was five thirty

i walked up to georgio de georgio’s on mont  
royal n’ packed a big old snowball and tossed  
her up at his bedroom window,

*smack*

it left a hill a snow on his bedroom up on the  
2nd floor, the light was on and everything but  
he didnt come to the window

“Don’t stop,” Tepee breathed into georgio de  
georgio’s ear, his ear moving up and down with  
his body as the lump of snow slid down the  
fogged window.

—prolly it’s caesar who ill see later so i won’t  
stop

“Don’t stop,” Tepee said again.

—Probably I sound ridiculous, I am ridiculous, I should keep my mouth shut. But I got to stop thinking this way, I'm not ridiculous.

Her naked body sandwiched between georgio de georgio and the bed.



Hughes thought about Tepee's naked little body as he walked up Parc, warming his hands. He stopped thinking about it when he saw Emilia Boyd approaching.

What would Emilia have said if he had told her.

Never will you discover a virgin  
Never will the wind cease to blow  
Never will our thirst be scarce.

## BONE BY BONE



Ayn Cory looked out her window at Caesar Hughes' yellow window across Querbes.

"Is that him?" Asked Sophie.

"That's his lamp," Ayn said.

"Well, it's a good looking lamp," said Sophie.

Ayn Cory looked to see if his room was lit any time she came in sight of it.

Ayn and Hughes had gone to school together.

"I made my dreams come true," said the old professor. Old and grey in the grey windowless room underground.

"Each of us wishes they were you," chimed the class.

"I'm a shining artifact of the past," he continued, standing loosely in loose grey slacks.

"Tomorrow you'll be dead," chimed the class.

“But, my faithful students—  
but, mind thee, when I was  
young I wished nothing but to  
be old!” Spoke the old profes-  
sor.

“Then you are young,” chimed  
the class.

“Alas! I shall never be old then,  
as I wish!” Cried the young pro-  
fessor.

It was a cold January, snowy and white. Double-long dump trucks came up Van Horne, the loud crack as they bounced through the intersection. Brown leaves shook as particles of ice blew past. The air was cold and dry. This frozen water was smooth and dangerous, the hidden danger of black ice.



The temperature was phenomenal. It was frigid.

Ayn thought of beautiful daily life, the life that curls up and dies on the edge of certain thoughtful, uneventful sidewalks. She looked out her window. There were Jews in their shtre-

imels and black silk robes and white socks. They wore long beards and hung around the street corners. They were rude and seldom made room in passing, and they budged in line.

Ayn Cory was invisible to them.

They chanted in the evening.

—What secrets do they chant, the smell of their licorice incense on the street. The heavy black robes in winter, and the same robes mid-summer. What makes them faint. What will make them faint.

You know what makes me mad?

Illusion, superficialie.

As long as a woman is mixed with tonic, she only knows how to objectify her essence by making it into an alien, imaginary cocktail.

Ayn Cory, we fathom you not but we love you.

## AH, WOMEN!

Forty feet underground in an undecorated classroom, Ayn Cory and Caesar Hughes had a po-mo class together. They were seeing each other then, but Ayn Cory preferred to sit alone at the back of the class.

Caesar Hughes always sat smack dab in the front row.

“He believed embezzlement leads to perdition,

and that a credulous corpus causes resolve to wilt,” Professor Heiner waved his wrists at the front of the room, “and he disapproved of separating verisimilitude from truth.”

Caesar Hughes took it down.

Professor Heiner in a black turtleneck sweater and thick black glasses with long curly red hair. He looked good, dancing back and forth in front of the chalkboard.

“My mother is indebted,” a Chinese girl raised her hand and spoke longwindedly about her cat Stinky.

Caesar Hughes took it down.

“Uh, I have a question about the stupa,” said someone.

At the end of class Ayn Cory put away her textbook.

“Next class we resume our retracement of dilatory evasion.”

Ayn Cory put away her textbook and watched Caesar Hughes at the front of the class.

—He can do whatever he wants, I don’t care. It’s his profile, his protruding chin, the profile is never right. Face to face in bed everyone is good looking. From the side the nose is strange, weird hooked lips, a long bulbous chin, long bones in the brow. Everything changes from the side.

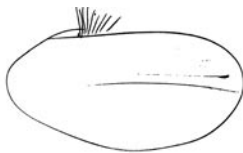
## TUESDAY NIGHT

been cross a wall mounted moose in le petit il  
fixx on parc thinking of heiner, writing about  
caezarnobody removed the

empty when I do, theres four empty in my  
boot. Been trying to do this time, I want to do  
it this time, i moray meringue grand voyageur  
devant | 'eternal in orange underwear on his  
knees with is chest flat on the bed his head  
pointed away

—is this right  
—is this right  
—suit, is this?

## A PAPAL ROSEFISH



Across Querbes Jacko B. Wabash came through  
the sliding glass door and discovered Seamus  
C. Cane peeling the orange skin from a Span-  
ish onion.

SEAMUS: His brain is moist, he phoned  
and was righteous.

WABASH: Was he stiff when he called?  
SEAMUS: He was stiff alright.  
WABASH: Most people are righteous when they're stiff.  
SEAMUS: Most people are righteous when they're stiff.  
WABASH: What did he say when he called?

Wabash cracked a beer and heaved a sigh as he sat heavily upon the yellow sofa and undid his boots, his face red.

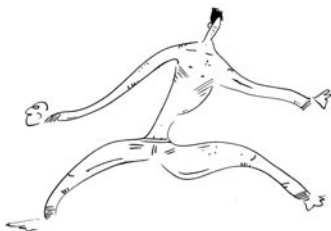
SEAMUS: He said you were scum.  
WABASH: He's the scum—I forgive him so.  
SEAMUS: And he said you were common.  
WABASH: He's common—I forgive him so.  
SEAMUS: He said he was stiff.  
WABASH: He's always stiff.  
SEAMUS: He *is* always stiff.

Caesar Hughes came through the sliding glass balcony door an hour later and the three of them got stiff and wet their mustaches together.

Sundays are thrilling, Seamus C. Cane loved to dance in the evenings and go ballistic.



## FUCK THE POLICE



It was three and nobody wanted to go. The room was full of smoke. They'd pulled down the trapezes and the crimson aerial ribbons from the ceiling and were dancing with them. The large room was full.

Walter Cane was playing the piano, and beside him stood his long-time girlfriend Sandy Hirschfield, engaging in song. She had drunk a quantity of wine, and during the course of her song she had realized that everything is very, very sad—she wasn't only singing, she was weeping also. Whenever there was a pause in the song she filled it with gasping, broken sobs, and then took up the lyric again in a quavering soprano.

*"The world is one, all fear is one, all life, all death, is one."*

The tears coursed down her cheeks—not freely, however, for when they came into contact with her heavily beaded eyelashes they assumed an inky hue, and pursued the rest of

their way in slow black rivulets.

Marco Desdemona chain-smoked as Tyrone Holmes danced immorally with the crimson aerial ribbons. Seamus C. Cane with a conservative shuffle. Mr. Woodward dancing soberly in a flowing blouse, a six inch doobie dangling from his lip. Montgomery Featherstonehaugh grinding his teeth and pacing around nervously in the bathroom. Gretchen *P* whispering in D'Eon's ear in the darkest corner. It was dark and smoky and the roof was high.

“You got a dart for your boy?” Asked Marco Desdemona as he sat beside Jacko B. Wabash on one of the sofas.

“Kill me tomorrow, let me live tonight,” sighed Wabash.

“What comes round goes round. Remember that,” Desdemona socked him on the shoulder.

Marco had a large head and floppy mouth with low exposed gums and circular teeth. His lower lashes forcefully raised. Calloused fingertips on his left hand from excessive noodling. Nothing shook him in public, but in private everything did. Of course that changed later on when he started getting good reviews online. A handsome man, he was the damp dancing fire, what was he beside. He was the damp dancing fire beside.

—Not all personalities are translucent. What was he inside.

“Hey bud. So. Good job,” said Desdemona.  
“I’m glad to see you mad,” said Wabash coolly.  
“I’m coo-coo. Loco. I’m a monoclast,” Desdemona waved his arms and shook his head.

Desdemona wore the same yellowed shirt and old pants, a rough beard spotted with rough.

Six months later Marco Desdemona hit it big.



But Desdemona sat down beside Jacko six months before he’d hit it big. Everyone was dancing and Tyrone Holmes was dancing immorally, tangled in the crimson aerial ribbons.

“You know that guy John Wang and I, Dirty Bitches? When we were on tour. We, we were going around. He was just this dude. This dude right. I knew him and nobody knew him and he was just this dude. Like me. Now he’s suave, debonair, he’s like a slick dude. What. Because he used to be this normal guy. In Montréal here. Everybody’s working. Working, something done, something done. I’m just a lazy piece of shit I guess,” Desdemona shrugged.

“Never doubt you’re going where you are, or you’ll embarrass yourself when you arrive.”

### MARCO DESDEMONA MAKES A BUCK



At three in the morning Duke’s eighty year old body swung from an iron ladder above fifty boxes of mangled vine tomatoes. The industrial shade of white light blinding as he cursed the niggers responsible for putting the delicate tomatoes into their boxes dispassionately. Rotten milk. He lifted his short, wrinkled body onto the platform and called up the forklift. The ancient machine coughing up the dockway with a crate of Brazilian Pineapples.

“It’s perfect, really, it’s perfect—I know—I should know—I been fuckin doing this since I was six—believe me, I can tell. I know. Now get the pineapples and take them to the front,” said Duke.

His anvil shaped head and wrinkled legs followed Marco Desdemona’s hand truck down the produce isle—five boxes of english cubes balancing down between rows of mangled mangoes, gooey galas, and pulverized peaches.



They stashed the fresh produce underneath the damaged produce so the damaged produce was bought up before it turned to brown mud and green dust, Duke had molded Desdemona out of that dust and breathed life into his nostrils.

Desdemona put down a box of oranges and a plume of green dust exploded into his face. Do not be aware but do not work—Desdemona swore. Filthy kiwi juice on his shirt. Mop water sneakers.

“Get ten melons and six cherries. The ones in the back in white boxes. Then, then after,” yelled Duke, “get fifteen avocados, mind thee not the new ones down there. Get them. Fack. Get them from the bay. The old ones.”

Duke’s limp body gripped the iron bars of the crooked iron ladder that connected the storage to the store. Desdemona with a hand truck and a bottle of cuvée hidden amongst the bananas and sore feet at four in the morning smoking one after the other in Duke’s grocery on St. Laurent. If people do very foolish things, God will save them from the consequences of their action by a miracle—swore Desdemona as he scraped liquefied rats off the floor beneath the

shelving with a screwdriver. Do not be aware  
but do not work.

Once the river's been crossed,  
the raft is no more of use  
and should be discarded  
The trail end of the dash; sour circle;  
joie de vivre  
It whooshes upward and whorls down

NOEL CASTANEDA



The next morning Noel Castaneda came through the sliding glass door above Querbes and discovered Caesar Hughes peeling the golden skin off a Spanish onion.

“Well well, it’s a pleasure to see you again Hughes. Are you well?”

Castaneda had a smooth Italian face and a strong young body. Oiled black hair. Dressed formally; a black tie, a black suit, black boots. He was much younger, his poems still looked good on paper. Hughes mixed him a good strong Malibu bay breeze.

“You know Hughes, one must never tie one’s identity to one’s poise, one must never rinse one’s silk in the sink,” said Castaneda.

That’s the way he spoke and that’s the way he wrote, you got to leave young people alone.

“Are you living here now?” Asked Hughes.

“No. I’m in transit. Well, I’ve come to resymbolise my sister. I’ve come to pertain my publicity. But be sure, Berlin is my home,” he sniffed the Malibu bay breeze.

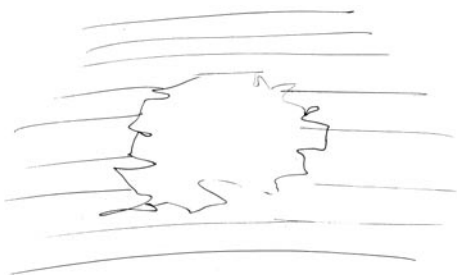
“Allow me to sneeze,” he sneezed into his silk handkerchief.

“What’s that?” Asked Hughes.

Castaneda flipped open a large black rubber binder on the cable spool in the living room.

“This is a work I discovered on the street this afternoon. It appears to be the working script for *The Day After Tomorrow*.”

## THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW



The ZOOKEEPER wanders past VARIOUS ANIMALS wailing in their cages, checking on them with his FLASHLIGHT. His beam illuminates the sign for the WOLF CAGE. There is a gaping hole in the brick wall where a tree has fallen through. The cage is empty.

Au Secours! Ma fille a peur de l'eau!  
Sortez-nous!

C'mon Buddha... do your business. Nobody's looking.

Ouah Ouah Ouah!

SUNDAY IS A HOLIDAY

Everyone was happy  
because it was Sunday.



The sun was out and everyone was happy, including Noel Castaneda. But everyone had to go back to work tomorrow, excluding Noel Castaneda. Work would resume. Everyone's office was a friendly place in which many small jokes were made.

"I like your shirt."

It was not sincere. The shirt was light pink in color. It was a lighthearted joke.

Lighthearted jokes. Those are the best jokes.

"How's the leg?"

That was an inside joke, because the leg was bruised in an embarrassing accident, but it was also lighthearted.

"Look at her."

Pointing to a fat woman. This joke would not have been funny to the fat woman. Luckily she was out of earshot. It was not a lighthearted joke.

These are the sorts of jokes made in everyone's office. They are not funny. It is

casual joking and casual joking is for passing the time.

It was warm a Sunday morning. Sunday is a holiday. There were wonderful lovely families ice skating hand in hand as Jacko B. Wabash lumbered home, still twisted from the night before. Wabash stumbled through the quaint Canadian winter morning out of the night.

Alfy Toomer read it and looked up from the page.

Where's sympathy?

Where's suspense?

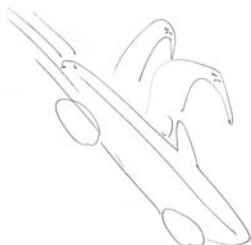
Where's the driving agent?

Without sympathy, without suspense, without a driving agent, it will be unusable. It's important nothing be unusable. Everything must remain a mystery. Everything must be familiar. Everything must be progressive.

If everything is a mystery, and familiar, and progressive, then everything will be good. It's important nothing be disconnected forever. Everything is governed by rules. Caesar, it's important nothing be mysterious forever.

Everything is governed by rules

## VAN HALEN RULES



“they almost smoked me, everybody wants me dead except me” said georgio de georgio as they walked west on Lajoie. A warm evening in Montréal for late November.

“Everybody wants me,” sighed Hughes.

“ill follow you” said georgio de georgio as they walked up Lajoie to Querbes. “ever seen me drunk?”

They climbed the stairs up to the entrance of the Revere building on the corner and finished the cigarette. georgio de georgio had it to the end and rubbed out the spider on the wall beside the door.

“no use startin fires” he broke into song. “no use starting fires!”

georgio de georgio had put olive oil in his hair and combed it straight back, the faint odor was with him all night.

“dancin, lights flashin, astronomy, ceremony, rite, repose, sabbath, i was right, what right do

the cops got to ruin it” said georgio de georgio.  
“They go the way of all the earth,” replied Hughes. “The mountains will move and the hills will shake, but my mercy will still be kick-in around, boy.”

They stood in front of the Revere building, georgio de georgio cradling a bottle of Fontana Morella, which was to be his contribution to the potlatch. His face was narrow and high, his cheeks sunken and angled. His eyes perfectly round and severe.

“I have troubles,” said Hughes.

“hows ur book?”

“full of spots” Hughes sighed.

“everythin has spots, even if u catch all the spots more spots will pop up, the definition of what a spot is will change. if u eliminate all the spots, and know no spots remain, then its time to act, act and prepare, prepare for your shit to develop spots in time. accept new spots, theyre out of ur hands. u know u got to accept everythin’ thats out of ur hands,” georgio de georgio said.

Hughes showed georgio de georgio up to the potlatch on the second floor of the Revere building on the corner of Querbes and Lajoie.

“everythin has spots cuz everythin gets old. u cant catch the spots that dont exist yet. u know you got to accept everythin that doesnt exist yet,” said georgio de georgio.

THE END OF MANY THINGS

“I need someone beautiful for February,” said Ms. Templeton.

A beautiful dinner in the Revere building. The apartment was on the top floor—a small living-room, a small dining-room, a small bed-room, and a bath. The living-room was crowded to the doors with a set of tapestried furniture entirely too large for it, so that to move about was to stumble continuously over scenes of ladies swinging in the gardens of Versailles. Caesar Hughes had been invited by Tepee, and he in turn invited Billy D. What? and Maya Wellesley, the three of them had arrived in the beautiful apartment dressed casually in sweats. A formal dinner party, two beautiful young Arabian girls putting on the dinner in beautiful black silk gowns.

Hughes went down to look for georgio de georgio and discovered him shivering like a wet dog on Hutchinson, cradling a bottle of Fontana Morella.

Noel Castaneda sat in the corner wearing a violet wool turtleneck with a huge silver cross visible and dangling, his hair oiled straight back. He read a beautiful poem out of his famous red leather pocket book.

The pigeons they knew me  
The pigeons hey knew me

He read sitting straight up in an oak chair underneath a beautiful half-complete oil painting of a beautiful sunset.

There was a beautiful bright orange salmon on the table, and a butternut squash; the two golden halves overflowing with goat cheese. Three bottles of Fontana Morella on the table, their twist-off lids stabbed through. These people had their ideas, they were ideas and not customs.

“thank u fish, for grantin me my wish, and arivin on my dish!” Sung georgio de georgio.

“I know a lady who is in search of a flat,” Noel Castaneda stroked his bald chin. “Shall I relay her your information?”

“Who is she?” Ms. Templeton slurped up the tender orange fish meat.

“Maybe she is wrong for you—she is idle. By much slothfulness the building decayeth, and by idleness the house leaks.”

“Idle! And what is so wrong with idleness?” Cried the beautifully idle Arabian girls.

“It is less her idleness—it is that idleness is contagious. Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof on the Day of Judgment.”

The wine went poorly with the fish.

“Anyone for another try? There is still one more coin in the bread.”

## VASILOPITA

—i wanna kno what ppl r doin in their puny fuckin brains, i wanna hear whats goin on in there, do other ppl think like me? it cant be done. it cant be done even if u spoke ur mind, cuz thoughts r different than that too

georgio de georgio sat erectly on a beautiful oak chair in the corner. His gaunt, angelic face lit by a wood fire. Black hair, pale skin and green eyes, a photographer of dogs, a two dollar bill.

—if u wrote to me but werent thinkin about me, as if i didnt exist, then u could be straight with me, but how do u forget everythin?

A gust of wind thrashed the bread

We did not eat the bread that grew

in the field,

For busy we were between

insects in a swarm

I must wait. I must guard my tunnel now  
more.

Never beckon,

Never beckon and call us to work

## ANOTHER NEW MAN



Look at the orange moon through your binoculars.

Here, in the bright, clustered loneliness of the billion, billion stars, loneliness can be an exciting, voluntary thing, unlike the loneliness man suffers on Earth. Here, deep in the starry nowhere, a man can be as one with space and time; preoccupied, yet not indifferent; anxious and yet at peace. His name is Big Joe. He is, in this present year, twenty four years old. This is the first time he has made this journey alone...

The real significance between one atom and another.

Big Joe awoke in a yurt to the screaming of black prince locusts. Ayn Cory was already out of the yurt in the dark. They'd spent the day before crossing the Australian Outback from Alice Springs to Yulara; five hundred kilometers in a bumpy military vehicle. Three days before in Alice Springs a woman had broke her neck



on the roof.

First the yellow brush then yellow sand, then red sand and grey sand. There was a castle just off shore where Big Joe had played dead and flown off a cliff into the sea and drifted around and finally ran out with a bunch of smugglers. A twisted parachute is inevitable.

“Only pray don’t torture us all!” Ayn Cory cried!

Caesar Hughes was to meet Ayn Cory’s family in Calgary. Then they’d drive across Canada together in Jonah Price’s Ford Explorer. They’d blow all their dough on Oh Henry’s and take it easy. Maybe Ayn would drive a bit and Hughes would sleep. They’d listen to country radio stations and eat Longview jerky and drink black coffee. The Canadian landscape. The Shield for a long time under the big sky, then the stunted forests in Ontario, all the frozen lakes, ponds, steams, and the big sky. The Canadian landscape sliding by. They’d drive a bit each day and eat in the diners and take it easy and get to know one another. Instead of all that Ayn Cory had gone and screwed Big Joe. Ayn Cory hunched over with her shoulders up, dressed in green. Looking from side to side for effect. A beautiful girl, sure.

## ANOTHER GROVE



People are impatient and confused, they aren't careful. If you could make only one decision, it would be a good decision. But there are many to make.

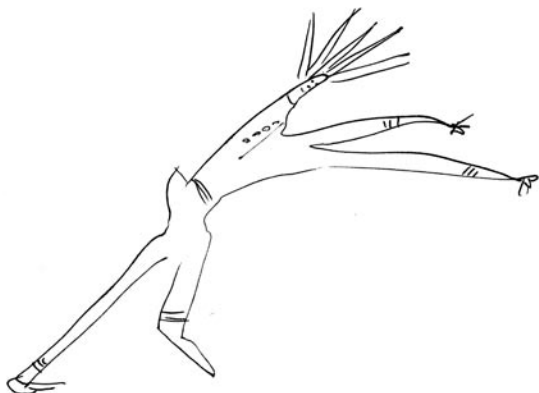
If you could make only one decision, it would be a good decision. You can only make one, now. You can make another one later, but it will not be over the same matter. It will be over something new.

Once a decision's been made and acted upon, there's no way to make another decision on the same matter, there is no way to do that. There's no way to recreate the matter and re decide the outcome.

If a similar matter arises, a new decision can be made, but matters are unique. Matters are unique and each matter comes only once—it's

important to decide each matter carefully. It's important to be careful when deciding matters. The quality of decision is like the well timed swoop of the falcon, which enables it to strike and eat.

## THE DISSIDENT



**B**ig Joe had famously stood on Laurier and Parc waiting for the light to change. He wore the costume of a dissident. He fidgeted with the fabric and readjusted the different pieces as curious onlookers pointed their fingers. He wore a red plaid shirt underneath a black leather jacket, striped leggings, military boots, green tips on his mohawk. But it was the jacket that did it. The jacket was studded; small square metal pyramids.

Big Joe shifted his weight as he waited for the light to change. If Big Joe had had company he'd have been okay, but he had no company and he was alone with his metal jacket and his green hair. Big Joe put his hand in his hair and shifted it slightly, as if this was his first time in public as a dissident. He waited for the light to change.

—I wonder if Plywood got the stuff.

Big Joe was plump and dumpy and his nose was kinked. He had a tiny partly open mouth through which he breathed nervously. His eyebrows were aggressively lowered. Big Joe was not a dissident deep inside, that was in his eyes, small and close together. He tugged on the sleeve of his jacket and waited at the corner for the light to change as snow fell on him.

—I hate Mondays.

Straightening his left arm, Big Joe held his elbow with his right hand. He shifted his balance back and forth and looked around nervously, and he did not notice that the light had changed.

—i went to dollarama to get some badries cuz i needed some badries for my discman.

—So im in dollarama right, and i got the badries and a can of chicken noodle. The soup was a buck and the badries were a buck fifty and i couldnt get um' both cuz i only had a toonie.

—The girl at the counter told me the tomato

soup was fifty cents but there was a big line so she charged me for the tomato soup instead of the chicken.

—So i put the chicken back and got a tomato. As i walked out this old cocksucker grabbed me and started shaking me and screaming in my face, calling me a thief and shit, he dragged me back to the counter and wouldnt get his fucking hands off me, the till girl explained to him that id already paid for the soup, hhh, he just didnt get it he was so fucking retarded, but then he let go of me finally and he just looked at me like i was some kinda thief he was so fucking stupid. hhhh

HHHH

Wait, the hints tumbleth like goats  
What three achievements are  
Written on Jef-  
Ferson's armpit sleeve?  
"Gumbo; Death Person."

All clothing is a costume. Everyone is exact. Everyone wears costumes and everyone is exact. People wear the costumes that suit them best. Everyone has access to every style of costume. People are exact, they wear the look only they could wear.

They discover the pieces independently. They are exact when creating their costumes. A

uniform is modified. A patterned tie is worn to work. A police officer grows a mustache. A nurse wears purple pumps. A construction worker has a heart on his arm.

People are exact, they wear the costumes only they could wear. They pick their costumes carefully. Once they have the costume that suits them best they modify the costume so it's unique. Like Big Joe on the corner of Laurier waiting for the light to change, though he had yet to modify his costume.

### A STICKY REWARD

Seamus C. Cane walked up the isle past the coloring books, past the long-johns and pantyhose. He'd gone to Dollarama for packing tape. His face was stern and he held himself calmly. He was dressed simply. He wore a forest green felt coat that was slimly cut, as he was slim. He wore a black leather hunting cap with the ear flaps flipped up. He found the packing tape easily and bought two rolls and put the second roll away until the first was done.

GOD:                   What do you hear?

SEAMUS:            A woman in the isle over is talking sternly to her crying child.

GOD:                   Why's the kid crying?

SEAMUS:            I have no idea.

GOD:                   What's the woman saying to  
the kid?

SEAMUS:             I don't know, she's French.

GOD:                   Hear anything else?

SEAMUS:             Music is playing faintly.

GOD:                   How faint?

SEAMUS:             I can't hear it really.

GOD:                   Do you hear anything else?

SEAMUS:             Of course.

GOD:                   What?

SEAMUS:             The general sound of things.

GOD:                   What's that?

SEAMUS:             Everything together, the hum.

GOD:                   What's the hum?

SEAMUS:             I don't know, the lights, the air  
conditioner, people talking far away, footsteps,  
squeaking carts, cars outside, horns, airplanes,  
sirens.

GOD:                   That's me!

Seamus C. Cane looked for the packing tape.

To lead us to silence, you must establish trust.  
To earn our trust, you must be loud and con-  
fused like we are. Then give us less but with  
equal reassurance. Finally, give us nothing. Be-  
cause of trust, we will create everything on our  
own.

## AS I PONDER'D IN SILENCE

Seamus C. Cane left Dollarama and walked down Parc to Mont Royal. He walked in the sun. It was warm and the snow melted around him as he walked.

On Parc were vehicles and people on the sidewalk. On Rue d'Iberville there were no vehicles and no people and it was quiet like in a forest in winter.

Cane stopped and listened and looked and it was as if he had never looked around before. As if he had never stopped before. As if this was the first time he had ever stopped and looked around.

There were brick buildings above him, skirting them were sidewalks. Roads and parked vehicles with melting snow on their roofs. The fronts of the vehicles; two eyes, a mouth, rubber shoulders.

He felt good and acknowledged that he felt good again like he did once when he was alone. He remembered how important it is to be alone, to be good and alone and to not forget when you return that it was good.

Highway staff  
is the tar fresh?

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## AN ORANGE FUR COAT



A large woman across Rue d'Iberville walked past Seamus going the other direction, she wore an orange fur coat. The coat extended to below her knees and had a hood that was up. From behind she was completely orange except for black boots sticking out the bottom. The coat

was ribbed horizontally, each furry rib eight inches wide.

The woman was warm inside her orange fur coat. The woman was warm and the air was cold.

—*Erin is a bitch.*

If the woman had not had a fur coat the cold air would have reached her and made her cold. The woman's orange fur coat was hideous. The woman's coat was hideous because it was the gaudiest fur coat in the whole wide world.

## AN ORANGE

Walter Cane sat in a pub across the street getting his mustache wet. He tried to remember how not to care then to care at the end after the work was done but before the work was complete.

—If I don't care then it's easy to do the work, it doesn't matter if the work is good or bad.

He looked out the window at the orange woman on Rue d'Iberville.

## THE ORANGE SIDE

“That's how he turns his brain off,” said Seamus. “He must turn his brain off because it's so big, it draws so much power. He turns it off in the evenings.”

“His brain is humungous,” said Seamus. “He turns it off in the evenings to prevent overheating.”

Walter Cane’s brain was humongous and there were many summer flowers in it. His brain was full of Tasmanian fishermen, but that isn’t why Walter turned his brain off in the evenings.

“His brain is a full of orange butterflies,” said Seamus. “He turns them off in the evenings.”

Walter’s brain was busy. His brain was busy with calculations. His brain was busy calculating what would come next. His brain was busy remembering what had happened yesterday. His brain was busy repairing rules. His brain was busy removing rules. His brain was busy creating new rules.

## AN ORANGE BUTTERFLY



Walter Cane woke early and ate an egg from the street and got water and walked deep into the pine hills. The morning was cool and dry and the sky was blue above the tops of the pine trees. It was a nice walk on the goat paths. There were huts in the forest with smoke in

their chimneys. In front of the huts hung colored clothing and patterned sheets. It was a cool Indian forest not unlike the cool pine forests of the Rocky Mountains.

An orange butterfly sat on a tree branch in the pine needles near the top of the hill.

“Hello butterfly,” said Walter.

The butterfly did not reply nor did it fly or flutter as Walter approached. The orange wings moved slowly, an orange face with black eyes. He knelt beside the branch and studied the orange insect and still it did not go. He put his hand beside the butterfly and carefully pushed the butterfly off the branch and trapped the butterfly in his hands. Now the butterfly wanted to go, but the butterfly could not go, for Walter had captured it.

“Hello butterfly,” he said again.

Why did the butterfly not fly when it was free to do so?

Walter brought the insect to the top of the hill. At the top of the hill was an outcropping of rock that he climbed easily with the butterfly cupped in his hand.

He easily reached the summit of the rock. From the top of the hill he saw the pine hills and the village of Gwaldam below Nanda Devi. The smell of the pine.

Why did the butterfly allow its self to be captured so?

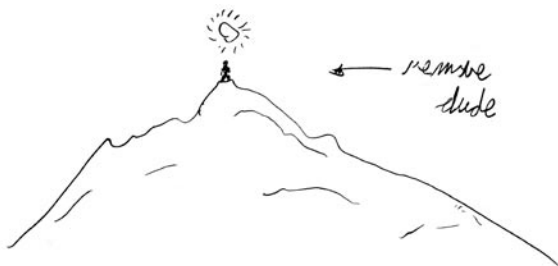
Even if the insect had tried to escape, Walter

would have caught it. Butterflies are slow and stupid.

Why are they thus?

Walter brought his hand to his mouth, the butterfly flapping softly against his palm. He brought his hand to his mouth and released the orange butterfly into his mouth and bit down on the butterfly and swallowed the parts.

- I stand here on the summit of this mountain.
- I lift my head and spread my arms.
- This, my body and spirit, this is the end.
- I wished to know the meaning of things.
- I'm the meaning.



## ORANGE GIRLS

All these orange butterflies in Complexe Desjardins. Boys with girls in orange blouses walking up the escalators together. Each couple represents two sufferings; they will suffer when they come apart, and they will suffer twice be-

cause they are pathetic.

They sit in the food court on the ground floor enjoying angus third pounder mushroom & swisses and nudging each other gently.

“You have a dirty mind,” she says. “No, I didn’t mean it like that.”

“Well, I bet it’s true though, I mean, didn’t you say she was?” He says.

They enjoy angus third pounder mushroom & swisses together and when they part ways they kiss and it is electric, for them. Two months later she breaks apart because he says they should take some time apart.

Sandy Hirschfield watches them walking up the escalators together from a shelf above the food court. Holding hands and laughing. She feels badly for them in advance. Not all ends so hard. Most ends unnoticed, then other things end and are easy to accept, but the end of a young couple is hard.

## THE VIRTUE OF SELFISHNESS

“Hey baby, are you bad or good?”

“I’m chaste and virtuous.”

“Are you notorious?”

“I’m elaborate, I’m gentle.”

You look gentle, and your dog—Sandy thought to herself.

The Indian’s small brown face poking out of a

dirty quilt, and the face of her mutt poking out of the dirty quilt beside her.

The Indian sat with her back against a newspaper box in front of Complexe Desjardins on a freezing night with an upside down hat in front of her. No money in the hat. Sitting cross-legged in a dirty quilt on a sheet of cardboard. How did she end up on the street with that face. A strong, functional brow; dark absorbent skin; large, functional teeth; and a body built for swinging between trees. Her hat was empty, pitifully pitifully empty. That's the trick. The trick is to make the situation look hard and pitiful. The hat was empty and there was dirt on the face and there was a pitiful mutt there.

She was kind when she asked Sandy for change, her tone was kind and pitiful and truly it was hard for Sandy to pass her and her pitiful mutt on so cold a night. Did this woman ever go up the escalator in Complexe Desjardins and laugh in the food court?

The Indian looked at Sandy but did not see her.

—There used to be plains here, where this street is. I knew the plains as I know the street. I knew the buffalo as I know pity. But the plains are lined with casinos now and the buffalo have cashed in their chips, and the street is everywhere.

Haggard Indian, disabled and cruddy  
Do not tell me of my obligation  
to put all poor women in  
good situations  
Haggard Indian, disabled and cruddy  
Here is some dough, some baloney  
Haggard Indian, here's some baloney

"You need an occupation, profession, position, situation, vocation and mission," said the Indian.

"I know," said Sandy.

"And you need to thrive, rise, leap, push, shine, go, move, locate, isolate and advance," said the Indian.

"I know," said Sandy.

"And you need to dash, fly, bolt, dart, zoom, shoot, run and race," said the Indian.

"I know," said Sandy.

"But you need digression, consideration, discrimination, precision, attention and caution," said the Indian.

"I know, I know."

"But you need uncertainty, jeopardy, insecurity and instability," said the Indian.

"Why?" Sandy asked.

"Why is an impossible outcome worth more than a predictable one?"



## TELESCOPES



Everything is good. Everything is good because everything is natural. Everything is in nature and part of nature, or else it is a part of human nature. Spiders are good, brothers are good, trees are good, wolves are good, eating is good and hunting is good, killing is good, murder is good and evil is good, bears are good, greed is good, children are good and sex is good, love is good, decisions are good, unfairness is good, pain is good, hate is good, revenge is good, forgiveness is good, comfort is good, discomfort is good, disagreement is good, debate is good, fighting is good, struggle is good, war is good, everything is good because everything is natural, and happens in nature.

How could a human being, who is a natural being and born of nature, commit an unnatural act? Everything is natural, everything is good. To believe there are unnatural human acts, that is good. Nothing is bad and nothing is wrong. Everything is right because everything is natural.

Is something wrong because you have been wronged by nature or been wronged by a natural act? That is good. Everything is good and everything is right.

What is the most wrong thing? Is this wrong thing a natural act that exists in nature and is a part of nature—and is it a natural act? Then it is right and good.

Everything that happens in nature and that happens by our nature is good. Nature is right and nature is good, and everything is right and everything is good.

## LES CRÉATIONS DIVING HORSE

Caesar Hughes woke at seven to a blizzard against his window. He brewed up some good strong coffee in his percolator and drove to Les Créations Diving Horse in Billy D. What?'s Dodge Caravan, listening to hit radio. He drove carefully south on St. Denis through the ice and snow. Billy and his band had bought the van for a tour and Caesar pictured it, the wreck.

Billy was working for the DHC doing odd jobs and that morning he had dropped off a cube truck, the day previous he had used the truck to drive a giant plastic lightning rod up town. At nine in the morning Billy had an appointment up near Laval to apply for his Québec driver's license and he'd asked Hughes to drive the Dodge down to DHC and collect him.

Hughes parked and waited for Billy to come out and as he waited he thought about Billy, a confident, delicate soul; Billy was an incredible rock and roll musician.

Billy came out the gallery and got in the driver's seat.

"Everything's interpretable," he said.

"What do you mean?" Asked Hughes as he buckled his seat belt.

"I mean anything's interpretable if it's presented for interpretation, if one wishes to go interpreting."

Billy started the truck and readjusted the mirrors.

"Is the windshield interpretable?" Hughes asked.

"Yep—it's preventative. I like it. And it's slightly blue. Blue's a color I like. It's got a history, I know and like the history of the windshield. Sometimes I don't like the windshield because it's got ice on it which I got to scrape off in the cold, but that's not the windshield's fault. It's a personal interpretation, right?"

"Okay, so maybe everything's interpretable—but there's a lot of things not worth interpreting," said Hughes.

"Like what?"

"Like the windshield."

"Why are some things worth interpreting and not others?" Billy frowned as they pulled onto Saint-Denis.

“Other things are worth it because others have interpreted them before me, like Gretchen *P.* So I know they’re safe to interpret,” said Hughes as they passed underneath the Trans-Canada Highway; the raised cement freeway above them.

“But everything can be interpreted. The problem is trust. You know everything can be trusted right,” said Billy as they pulled into the parking lot of the Société de l’assurance automobile du Québec on Henri-Bourassa. It was snowing heavily.

“Yeah—it’s the business of the very few to be independent, it’s a privilege of the strong,” said Hughes.

They walked across the parking lot in the blizzard.

“I hope you’re right,” sighed Billy.

“I know I am. Anyway, the important thing is to get in there and find out what’s going on.”

A few minutes later Billy stared at a stranger in the glass, “Wow!” He declared, admiring himself.

One is punished best for their virtues.

“I—I have an idea,” Billy stammered. “Maybe one of us can wiggle over there, stand up somehow, and blow out that candle.”

Hughes studied the distance across the lobby, the founder was there.

They drove to the Société de l’assurance au-

tomobile du Québec on Henri-Bourassa and Hughes sat in the lobby writing about All these orange butterflies in Complexe Desjardins as Billy applied for his Québec license.

It was snowing. The clumps of flakes streaming sideways in the wind. The snow piling up on the roofs of the cars in the parking lot. You take a number and sit in the lobby in rows of chairs like a movie theater, Caesar did not take a number.

Billy came out of his appointment and it turned out he would need proof he lived in Alberta.

“Now I need proof I lived in Calgary—I was born in Calgary,” he said.

They drove to McDonalds and got two McChickens each and cups for water which they filled with Dr. Pepper.

“Think I can get mustard?”

“Ask,” suggested Hughes.

He asked and they gave him a sealed tub of Hot Mustard and he dipped his fingers into the Hot Mustard.

*ring-ring*

WHAT?:           It’s for you.

SEAMUS:        How’s it going?

HUGHES:        We’re eating burgers in Laval.

SEAMUS:           It doesn't say the date on the back of Gretchen *P*.

HUGHES:           I'm in Laval.

SEAMUS:           Can you fix it when you get back?

HUGHES:           Sure.

SEAMUS:           Come to La Brique?

HUGHES:           Sure.

### ARBUTUS RECORDS

Hughes went into the snowstorm and crossed the tracks, jumping both fences. He got snow in his boots, a ball of ice against his ankle. The huge white train yard was quiet and the snow was crispy on top.

Seamus and Ms. Templeton were in the studio facing the window listening to Gretchen *P*'s new album. Filthy quilts and rugs hanging from the ceiling. Behind them was the mixing desk and all the rack mounts and behind that was a small plastic window into the live room. Ms. Templeton had the heater pointed at her little socked feet as she sat upright in her chair noodling away on her laptop. Seamus was mid-phone call with a big hotshot LA music executive and he had adopted a convincing imitation of a take-no-prisoners go-getter no-holds-barred

cut throat. That was the whole operation right there.

Caesar added the date to the back of Gretchen *P*'s new album and listened to Seamus on the phone, or Ms. Templeton on the phone, or else Seamus and Ms. Templeton talking to each other.

“So, this Gretchen *P* cover is the horse? Gretchen *P* calendar.”

“Keep the Gretchen *P* cat, the Gretchen *P* shirt. Is the Gretchen *P* interview?”

“The Gretchen *P* interview is in February, they want her in her underwear.”

“Is the Gretchen *P* front page? The dates for Gretchen *P* in France. Gretchen *P*.”

“Yeah, Gretchen *P* UK. Guarantee, thousand dollars. Gretchen *P*, the video? Is Gretchen *P* in Japan?”

—I will do anything for Gretchen *P*, I will squeeze her mumps. I will rub ointment on her stump, I will scorch her impure murals.

Birdie was on her hands and knees on the cold cement floor erasing stray pencil marks from a series of Gretchen *P* doodles that Caesar shipped to a big gallery in New York later that evening.



CAESAR: We are precarious today.

TEMPLETON: Are we swinging?

CAESAR: Always we are swinging.

They sat in the studio beside each other at the desk overlooking Rosemont.

SEAMUS: Always you are suffocating.

CAESAR: Suffocating is good if suffocating is necessary.

TEMPLETON: How do you know if something's necessary?

CAESAR: If it must be remedied.

Ms. Templeton made tea and it was cold enough in the studio that the steam was white. Birdie spilt tea on one of Gretchen P's doodles.

SEAMUS: What happens if it isn't remedied?

CAESAR: Everything must always be remedied. Did you have no father? Do you have no father? Must I be your father?

TEMPLETON: Why must all necessary things



be remedied?

CAESAR: They're blockages. Blockages prevent you from going to where you're going.

TEMPLETON: But you're suffocating.

CAESAR: I'll suffocate until it's no longer necessary to suffocate.

SEAMUS: Will you suffocate forever?

CAESAR: I'll suffocate until the blockages are no longer.

TEMPLETON: What if the blockage is permanent, will you suffocate forever?

## BOSNIA

Here is the story of Gretchen *P*.

She was a short blond woman with many fur coats. Yellow and green frizzled hair and a smooth round baby face. She had made a fortune in the middle of Spring.

Gretchen *P* grimaces, she cares about nothing any more. She's tired and hardly remembers the details of what she did in Bosnia, it was such a long time ago. Her children are grown up now, and really, she just wants to relax at home. She has pale skin, which was once healthy and brown. The last couple years have seen her in and out of courtrooms.

—I don't think it was me.

Gretchen *P* tries to recall.

—Yes, I did agree to the new measures, but I was young and ambitious and would have done anything, it's hard enough for a woman. That was such a long time ago.

Gretchen *P* has been accused of committing war crimes in Bosnia. She was extravagant and sung then, rosy and complicated in an office far from the crimes she committed, but she did commit them.

—That was me, yes. But, is that what became of it?

She can't remember.

—Figuratively?

Gretchen *P* will be executed, probably after she's dead, but they'll get her eventually. She was head of the energy department. She is tired and if this is it for her, then it is, she does not mind so much now. Life has not been easy for Gretchen *P*, she insists.

Experience praises as the most happy the one who made the most people happy.

Hail Gretchen *P*,  
Full of Grace,  
The Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed are the fruits  
of thy womb.

Holy P,  
Mother of God,  
pray for us now,  
and at the hour of death.

Amen.

## THE OOZE OF OIL

Seamus C. Cane sat at his desk in La Brique under burlap sacks and dirty quilts with an array of antique recording equipment behind him.

What is wrong with generalization. If generalizations are general enough they apply generally. Nothing is wrong with generalizations. Nothing is wrong with simplifications. The more complicated it is the more difficult it is to understand. Things take on importance against and background of illegibility. Clumsy spectator, I am the source of a third of the nights.

Seamus sipped tea and floated out the window above Rosemont reassuring himself, the city below him twinkling in the late afternoon.

Aînés—

## 3,000 GALAXIES GROUND INTO POWDER AND BLOWN INTO SPACE



“Birdie, we can’t continue forever coming apart and coming together.”

Birdie and I spent the evening skating at Parc Saint-Viateur and it had been a good Sunday. Many people had been on the ice. Birdie and I have been together on and off for about three years now. We sat up on the edge of the bed and went through it all again, an unhealthy rubber spear; mournful and top heavy. Rubbery and mournful.

“Do you love me Seamus?”

She knows that I love her, I do, but she has to ask so often.

“Will it always be like this now?” She asked.

“No.”

“Can we go around like this?”

“No.”

he frowned and was sad.

“Seamus,” she frowned.

You say something to Seamus C. Cane that gives him a door on you and he steps inside

and pokes around and takes notes and grabs a chunk on his way out.

SEAMUS: I become other people at times.

HUGHES: Do you ever become me?

SEAMUS: I became you earlier.

HUGHES: What was I doing?

SEAMUS: Talking to yourself.

HUGHES: That's how it is.

SEAMUS: I like to become georgio de georgio.

HUGHES: What's he like inside?

SEAMUS: Leaping, and fractal.

HUGHES: And proverbial?

SEAMUS: Yep.

Seamus C. Cane stirred his creamy noodles, zesty parmesan noodles. They smelled good and they reminded Hughes of something Ayn Cory had said, that she wished she were a man, Hughes had wished the same.

## BIRDY MEEK

Seamus came to talk. The sun set, but we didn't turn the light on.

“Birdie, you’re like looking at the sun,” he said.

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Ours is not a caravan of despair,” he said.

“I cannot.” It’s all the same, all the time, all the same.

“Why?” He asked.

He approached.

“I have broken my vows a thousand times.”

I leaned on him and he put his smooth face in me.

“Come, come, whoever you are, wanderer, worshipper—it doesn’t matter—ours is not a caravan of despair. Come, even if you’ve broken your vows a thousand times. Come, yet again, come, come,” he said.

At these words I rose and forced him.

HE: Nature.

ME: Schedule.

HE: Speedy speedy speedy speedy.

ME: Hasty.

HE: Zippy zip.

ME: Zippy, hasty hasty.

HE: Putty.

Repetition increases our family, it’s the dance of this country.

ME: Frigid.

HE: Snake snake.

I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long accumulated in me:

*Soap opera*

I promise not to make any more mistakes.

I promise to see it happen, not after.

I promise not to stand inside myself.

I promise to be polite and flexible.

I promise to follow the rules of my community.

I promise not to forget you, who are my double.

My name is Birdie Meek and I am a vehement feminist.

O ME! O LIFE!



Everybody is old. They should be dead. Everybody is old. I'm old. This is where the old people

go. The music is soft and the lights are bright. The lights are bright because we are blind.

“I love to be old.”

“Why do you love to be old?” Asked Seamus.

“I say I love to be old because I wish to comfort the young.”

“But do you love to be old?” He asked.

“I love to be old as I loved to be young, which is, I love to be old and I do not love to be old,” I said.

“Are you lazy, or does it depend?” Asked Seamus.

“It depends.”

“What if you’ve made a promise. Then it doesn’t depend. You’re bound and regardless of how you feel you must honor your promise,” he said.

“In that case, yes. But to no one did I promise to always love to be old. I wouldn’t promise to remain a certain way nor promise to think a certain way, it always depends.”

“Some people are not allowed to say it depends.”

“Who does not allow these people?”

“You know,” he said.

“I do know. If there’s a question that needs to be answered the same way each time it’s asked then it’s not a question. And if ‘it depends’ isn’t an acceptable answer to the question, then the asker of the question is scum.”







LEVEL SEVEN  
*The Poet*



Vancouver, BC



ALFY TOOMER drove home from a long shift at the Boathouse in Horseshoe bay. He drove along Marine Drive with the red freighters floating in the strait, Passage Island was red.

TOOMER:           Why is it forbidden to mention myself to you?

He started the car and drove up Eighty-Seventh to Marine Drive.

GOD:                You're only forbidden from writing 'I'.

TOOMER:           Why am I forbidden from writing 'I'?

It was dark and Alf's eyes were sore from cutting onions.

GOD:                You're forbidden from writing 'I' if 'I' is you.

TOOMER:           Why can I not be 'I'?

GOD:                It's forbidden.

TOOMER:           Why is it forbidden?

GOD:                Because you're so small, I'm trying to help you.

TOOMER:           But even if I don't mention myself, I will exist. I will exist everywhere, in ev-

everything and in everyone, surely I can't avoid that.

GOD:                Yeah, you can't avoid that. But that's not forbidden. You're only forbidden from writing 'I' where 'I' is you.

TOOMER:            So I'm not forbidden to be myself if I hide myself inside of everyone and everything?

GOD:                Right.

TOOMER:            But myself is interesting. I'm interesting.

He turned into the driveway and parked his big grey Mercedes and switched off the engine.

GOD:                Haha not really. You'll never be big like me unless you forget yourself and become everyone and everything.

Alfy didn't care. If he spilled the beans and if he went far enough inside himself, then it would be big enough that it wouldn't be himself—it would be the part of himself that everybody has.

### A SAMPLE OF TOOMER'S WORK

Dear Seamus,

The eye is a pencil, is that surprising? The world! That is beautiful. Reading is right, it was done before. A dog drawn by a master has false secrets which are as genuine as a litter of pigs; they are delicious; they speak from instant life

as well as from harmony.

A person's merit can be formed by oak-trees loaded with pure light, I should cut down their richest invention—their last secret. The best pictures are a view of the miraculous truth, easily trumpeting in the theatre of Esperanto. This sun, this earth, the ever persuading voice insists I remain in a fever with dead limbs. And so painting fills the mind that undergoes the correct end. That! There's no dishonor in how they perceive us, for they are surely people with happy talents. Native minds are similar to us all—it's all from a religious form anyway. How pure the great compassions are! Give, gain great, go—in with these! All works of all things, impatient of form. But truth is never proud to have no country and no friends that look like giants. I too see the merely initial. The best pictures can translate meanings into vegetables.

And drunkenness! To the utmost splendor of effect. Are we at the best age of production without dignity? Why teach other conditions as the symbols of pure thought.

Love always,  
Alfred Toomer.





LEVEL EIGHT  
*That Old Feeling*



Montréal, QC



PEOPLE VALUE SIZE. People value time. People value size because people know size takes time. People value time because it's rare and all rare things are valuable. Value is important because people work together; some grow, some build, some dig—they exchange. People value time, and they value size. The bigger it is, the more time it is worth, the more exchange value it has.



It is like a skyscraper; there are many ugly skyscrapers, ugly skyscrapers that are wonderfully high.

## SECTION 4

Seamus C. Cane walked east on Avenue du Mont Royal to Rue d'Iberville. He stood at the intersection and his face was cold but the sun was clear on his shoulder. A fire somewhere, a chimney. He stopped on the intersection. It was quiet and smoky and he felt good with the sun on his shoulder. His phone rang—but no, he would not answer. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly.

"I understand," he said.

—Thank-you.

### AYN CORY AT HER WINDOW

It's obvious we don't get along. Crystal clear and plain to see, unmistakably beyond doubt. My hair's wet from the rain. Tonight it's raining and it should be snowing and I can see the end. If you think it's going to rain, it will. There's Caesar's wet window across Querbes, his light is on. I guess the paint is still wet.

“What if you don’t like doing what you’re good at?”

“What are you good at?”

“Many things,” said Ayn.

“Why don’t you like doing the many things you’re good at?”

“It’s the way I feel afterward.”

### IN A ROOM



“Now I’m obligated to be good,” Sandy frowned.

“No Sandy, You’re not obligated to do anything.”

We stayed in bed under the covers until three in the afternoon and the sun began to set. Sometimes Sandy forgets everything and wants to destroy everything she’s made.

“It will pass.”

“No Walt, it’s everywhere in my body. I feel sad.

What do you do when you are sad?"

"Aw Dee. Don't be sad."

"I don't want to be, I just don't know," said Sandy.

"Tell me."

We stayed under the blanket, the window open above the bed with the bakery below wafting in. The cold air on our faces and on anything we left out from under, a foot, an arm. Sandy looks best up close, face to face. So soft looking in bed. But she looks better than any girl.

"Don't be sad," I said.

"I want to be sad, though. I must want to be if I am."

She wrapped her legs around my leg in her way and kissed my neck, which was all she could reach.

"You aren't obligated to be good, Dee."

"I must be perfect now. And I can't ever be anything any more," she said.

—How they endure themselves as much as do any

—What a conflict appears their age

—How people respond to them, yet know them not

"Hey Dee."

"Walt."

We stayed in bed all day and there was nothing we should have done beside. I'm happy the time I spend with Sandy in bed, even when we are doing nothing. That's the best time, even when she's down or if I'm down. There must be some chemical signal or some force. We're never bad at the same time. Always one of us is good if the other is bad. Sandy's been pretty bad lately, but she has that character. Either she's better than anyone or she's worse than anyone. She won't be stuck for long. I hope I'm not pushing her too hard.

"I'm never getting out of this bed," she said.

She kissed my neck and I brought her up and we kissed tightly and then openly. She has very soft lips that become even softer. She brought herself on top and we laughed. It was something she said. Some little thing.









