

I LEARN OF MY MIRACULOUS BIRTH AND PRECIPITOUS FALL TO THE PLANET EARTH AND ALSO DISCOVER THE ORIGINS OF MY PARENTAGE AND OTHER DETAILS RELATING TO MY DESTINY.

On the birth of Crucial.
Alaska and Niagara.

THE NUDGE PROPOSES A HISTORY OF THE WORLD BASED ON CHEMISTRY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE BEHAVIORS OF THE POPULACE.

–It’s the drugs, man.

CRUCIAL DECIDES TO UNDERTAKE THE PREPARATION OF THE HISTORY AND HAS A TASK TO ACCOMPANY HIS DESTINY.

Like WOW!

WHY I AM SO WITTY AND HAVE SUCH CLEVER THINGS TO SAY AT PARTIES AND OTHER SOCIAL ENGAGEMENTS AND WHY MY ENEMIES FEAR MY PROWESS AND PLOT TO EXILE MY WIT FROM THEIR MIDST.

Party search.
You need addresses. Not real parties, just excuses to enter other people’s houses uninvited.

HOW I BEGAN MY EDUCATION UNDER THE TUTELAGE OF MR. WALTER DOVSKY.

--Let me tell you a story.
–Is it a happy story?
–It always starts that way.
–I don’t really like it any other way.

WALTER DOVSKY PROPOSES A DESCRIPTION OF THE ORIGINS OF THE UNIVERSE AND OFFERS CRUCIAL A LINK TO GROUND HIS DESTINY IN A COSMIC UNFOLDING.

I learned everything I know about the world from my teacher Mr. Walter Dovsky. As my origins were speculative, Mr. Dovsky provided me with the basic understanding of my identity so I would not spend my days wandering in doubt. He offered me a certain beginning and from there all other certainty followed.

HOW I LEARNED TO TIE MY SHOES AND REALIZED FROM THIS KNOT THAT I COULD DERIVE ALL OTHER COMBINATIONS THAT MOVED THE UNIVERSE..

I tripped and fell.

- Mr. Crucial, no doubt you have learned your lesson.
- I foreswear ever eating candy again.
- Not a bad lesson for a day.
- What will we do for the rest of the day?
- We need to provide time for that lesson to sink in.

HOW I LEARNED TO TALK WITH MY HANDS AND DISCOVERED THE INFLUENCE OF MAGIC ON HUMAN BEHAVIOR.

At Niagara the water whispers and turns in on itself and then falls and falls and falls.

This is where I am born,

Ugh

Into the waters of Niagara, twisting and turning and whirling under. I am pulled by the waters. I materialize in the foam. Something before water and then wanting water to materialize. Needing daylight to see the results of this twist.

Niagara.

Here I am found and brought to Mr. Dovsky and begin the process of my education. I learn why I was found here and what awaited me due to this miraculous beginning.

THE DAY THAT I LEARN OF MY FUNDAMENTAL ERROR AND I REALIZE THAT I WILL NEED A LIFETIME TO RECTIFY ITS PAIN.

--Crucial, I have discovered a serious error on your page and realize that something must be done to remedy this misconception.

WHY ANYONE WOULD WANT TO READ MY STORY AND WHAT GRIEVOUS CONSEQUENCES FOLLOW FROM NOT LEARNING FROM THESE LESSONS.

-The world doesn't revolve around you.

-Oh, really. Light of my life.

-And?

-What are you hiding from me?

--Why am I having difficulty making friends? No one really wants to hear about the origins of the universe. After all, it's just one dirty business.

WALTER DOVSKY OUTLINES A PLAN FOR LIVING IN HOPES THAT I WILL MAKE MY WAY OUT INTO THE WORLD.

-This is even more taxing than your discussion of the origins of the universe. I can't save money if I don't have money to save, and if you give me an allowance, then you are only wasting your money on my propensity to spend.

WALTER DOVSKY PROVIDES FOR MY MATERIAL NEEDS IN HOPES THAT HE CAN OFFER THE SOLID FOUNDATION FOR MY EDUCATION.

--And what do I need?

A need to walk around
and around.

A need for transportation when I get tired.

A need to cool the system.

A need to process waste, particularly waste paper.

A need for a good meal and serious drink.

A need for a bath
on occasion.

This is only the beginning of my list.

A need for presents:

MY EDUCATION

I apprenticed with WD (Walter J. Dovsky) at the Institute from the age of reason (7 years old) to the age of rebellion (18 years old.). WD tutored me in the ways of the world and curtailed my more radical impulses. Primarily a disciple of French Hegleians, Dovsky schooled me in dialectics that stayed just this side of Nietzsche. I was still drawn to the flamboyant. This was probably due to the more extravagant manners of WD that he could not conceal beneath his continental charm. He had learned a style of subterfuge that was to hold my interest. The very attitudes that he had sought to suppress were the most active in me and ended up being the apex of his method. Little did he know the very ends that seduced even the master.

Due to WD's strict discipline, I worked to subsume my own independent streak under his doctrinaire application. Even my creative imagination found its dreams directed to his Pantheon. And I followed his strict tutelage to the letter in order to prepare a more thorough revolt in my later years. I could use his sharpened intellectual tools against the pragmatics of my associates, and my wit always seemed to save the day.

WD seemed quite seduced by a notion of self-generation. He progressed from the more nineteenth century notions of vitality to a twentieth century idea of reflection. The mysteries of "life" were dispelled in this analysis, and they were replaced with the dynamics of formal systems. He anticipated much later work in cybernetics. Life could no longer be thought of as the critical notion in the creation of organic systems. Life itself was a bi-products of reflection, the formal system seeing itself. In its more mystical form, the universe saw itself in its own mirror. But Dovsky's scepticism rejected this cosmic explanation. He sought a more mundane explanation.

How could something as complex as reflection be anticipated in the more primitive forms

that made up life itself? This was one of the tenets of his philosophy. It went to the heart of his teaching method itself. He favored reason, but he could hardly be thought of as a lover of the Enlightenment. His philosophy had a brutality that seemed to mirror the experiences of the twentieth century. This explosion seemed to contest the very forces that engaged life in its processes. The source of reflection was not in a cool application of logical method. Thought required a cataclysm to give it its power. This was the very heart of his thinking. This perspective also influenced what he inculcated in me. He assumed the chaotic. But it served to sharpen the more methodical aspects of thought.

That is why he sought my counsel from the moment that I could exercise my reasoning skills. I had emerged from the darkness and was now verging on the light. But my path was hesitant and needed the moderation of my master. I risked slipping back into the chaotic night. My monstrous impulses seemed only more inspired under the influences of reason. Such a great man could protect unfortunate animals and young children from a burgeoning sadism.

–Remember, the Marquis de Sade is the bastard son of the Enlightenment.

What kind of sense could this impress on a seven year old? Watch out for wandering hobgoblins! I didn't want to discover the inner workings of the spider. I wanted to become the spider! Ooh, to ooze that venom on my unsuspecting prey.

–Stop that!

Snakes only seemed less glamorous and hardly the models for admiration. Although their poisons also held their romance. While there were antidotes for these poisons of the body, there could be no saving us from the more potent toxins of the mind. Ultimately, WD only fostered my chemical instincts. I burned in the fire of his eternal night.

I wondered if my desires were only sublimated by his rote exercises. Or did the bank account only remain open to accrue more outlandish usuries for some later payment. What magic occurred behind that curtain? That was the philosophy of life. The forbidden. I needed to prepare for a more critical fate.

Dovsky could indulge in his cruelties during his teaching. What better uses for an apprentice than to test out new styles of torture. And Dovsky was extremely attentive to changes in style. It was easier to bind the mind than the body. He always pulled twice to make sure the bonds were tight. At the same time, there was a tenderness in his delivery, as it was the thought itself that delivered his intent. He avoided stern words. Only his presentation needed to be austere in making his message clear. Punishment could always be self-inflicted, as the consequences of a well-formed argument were infinitely more stinging than a harsh word.

I yielded to the master. He opened a whole world for me. I was an apprentice, trained to follow the footsteps of my mentor, trained to extend his thought to future generation. I was his heir, and I welcomed my role gracefully. I shone in his light.

My most rebellious gestures I saved for a future apocalypse. I would welcome the invitation when the time was right. But I did not want to ruin my legacy before I could apply its inheritance. I needed to be patient. From Dovsky, I learned his patience. For the moment, even patience has its rewards.

Despite my baser urging, I could not use my knowledge to lord over my fellows. And my devious ways were rounded by his directives. The fundament of his teaching found its way in a transformation of my behavior. I owe this to the psychologist in Dovsky. He certainly provided

me with all the encouragement that I needed. He realized that a more depraved side would be starved by its lack of satisfaction. Desire would flower in a garden of wisdom and leave the perversities for more deprived settings. Why would anyone aspire after the aridity of the desert.

ON MY MYSTERIOUS BIRTH AND DISPUTED PARENTAGE

Niagara swirls around like a turbulence that is frozen in its defiance. I was coughed up by the falls round and feminine. From where I went in as idea to where I came out as a nightmare. The American falls in its erect assault turned over its way. I was a product of the horseshoe and its mythic coupling with its confident twin.

Already best by conflict, my fate was to be decided by my inescapable wedding to this place. I could not escape the precipitous decline onto the rocks below. My final fall. I just let go and tried to fly. My life was this flight that preceded eventual collapse. I tried to catch the wind in the assault. If I could just influence the path to move me over to an hospitable dive into the water.

Emerging from the foam, I was orphaned by the only parents that I could claim as truly my own. They aspired after a more renown legacy. I was forced to fend for myself.

A rumor was started that I was discovered by a circus couple. They held on to a few downtrodden animals and traveled with a crew of other freaks. A telepath and an invisible man were the substitutes for my original divine origins.

How I progressed from the troupe of misfits to WD's guardianship is a matter of some controversy. There is still a claim in court to get me back. I am too old for this to now make a difference. I still wonder about the truth. WD believed that I had been kidnaped from a preacher and his wife. He made this argument in court. What were his reasons if I was only to be returned to the other family.

He said that I had been under the threat of abuse by the preacher family. The circus people alleged that they were only protecting me from holy damnation. But they only wanted to transform me into some kind of freak. They sought to take advantage of my prodigious memory. My only viable skill became a curse under the circumstances. WD's naping of me seemed the appropriate response to this morass.

On another version of the story, I ran away to the circus. I sold my skill to the owner. This story seems so silly as I never had an affinity for circuses. I feared that a lightning bolt might collapse the tent. The circus only seemed like a place for controlled disaster. From the trapeze to the high wire act. The wire might be an appropriate metaphor for my life. But I could hardly see myself balancing precariously in front of strangers. They no doubt hope that I would fall as this would gratify their rather perverse fantasies about entertainment. Once adept at the wire, the walker would feel the necessity to dispense with the rope.

I felt myself drawn to the cool waters of the Niagara. To throw myself into the swirl. The current seemed more intense as I maneuvered myself to the shore. My heart beat faster as I felt myself approach that critical moment.

I would wake up.

C-R-U-C-I-A-L

At times WD would work to suppress these histories. But then in my most venal moments, he threatened to exile me back into my history. I slid down his punishing slopes. Better my imagination than the strictness of his teaching. What did my parents expect by putting me under his tutelage. He really knew nothing about my nature. And he attempted to foist his biography to take the place of my more exciting reality. Only my own search could usurp his imposition. I accepted the commitment.

Probably WD served my own purposes more than I could provide for his. It absolved the mythic guilt that I applied to my real parents.

I needed to return to the waters!

I wanted her to say something to me. I had seen her so many times out on Thursday night. We exchanged the strangest looks. But we never said anything to each other.

I found a new jacket at a thrift store. Sort of a gold-green color. The buttons almost came up like a Nehru jacket. It was the prize of the store. I thought all day about wearing it with my hot pink shirt. IMAGE.

I knew it meant something. It said me as I marked out my space at the club. I almost stepped from the moment into a timelessness. I had planned it out.

I got there early. I loosened up by dancing,

–There he goes again.

I smiled as they noticed. I kept my eyes on the door. I saw her come in about 11:30. She had on a mauve short dress. She was with another girl who wore bright green tights.

Later that night we walked past each other. She stopped just long enough to look at my new jacket. We made eye contact. I got excited. I couldn't say anything.

–I never go home with any of these freaks. It's enough to have our fantasies. I can't let them mess with my life, my art. I just go home and beat off.

Anna had a ridiculous smile when she told her story. It felt so perfect, but too silly to admit. It didn't really seem satisfying.

–Did you see that dress?

I saw some frat boy hugging a drink. His eyes got bigger. Maybe he knew her. Knew her in her civilian clothes—without the magic.

I ran up the stairs so that I could make the seminar on time. I darted to the left so I could get past her. She looked at me as I passed by. I glanced back just briefly. It was her. I wanted to stop to say something. I was in a hurry.

The seminar seemed boring. All I could think about was that moment on the stairs. I had looked for her at Flurry's earlier that day and she hadn't been in. So that moment on the stairs was all the more important.

I thought about the failed opportunity as I dressed. My colors were more muted. I put on the black jacket. Why was I always wearing black? Why was I so boring? It was a cool fall night. The colder weather was going to hit sooner. I walked over to the club rather than take my bike. I needed some time to prepare.

I was a little lost when she didn't show. I had wanted to redeem myself from the moment in the hall. Now I realized that we both had class at the same time. I might take my time next

Tuesday so that I could catch her as she went in. That seemed silly as she'd be in a hurry. Better to try on the way out. But the seminar always lasted two hours and her class would be a short one. Better get there early.

The weekend seemed uselessly forgettable. Friday night, I skipped from party to party. A couple of guys in a corner laughed at my jacket. They never wore a suit except for interviews.

I was in the library working on the book. My research was going slowly. I was close enough to the window that I could actually see the courtyard. It was a lovely fall day. I could sense the crispness from the shadows of the trees. Leaves unraked on the grass. She has moved off the path and was walking rather aimlessly. I thought that she had a class at this time. As she moved down the courtyard, she seemed less and less certain of her destination. A friend passed her, and she didn't seem to notice him. He caught her progress. He seemed excited to see her. She was rather nonplused. She affected a graciousness that was enough for him. They talked for a bit. He wanted her to accompany to wherever he was going. She appeared to ignore his invitation. She held her ground as he walked on.

I needed to recall her friend. If he could just affect her path differently. Her aimlessness was more to my liking. I couldn't really change it. I could just let it affect me in a different way.

I hoped to see her Thursday. Hope that was just the direction that she was heading, riding a slow time wave. This wasn't the day for concern.

I was anxious the next afternoon as I copied my notes to deliver to the members of the seminar. The copy shop had lost my original order. I had to go back and assemble things. I think someone else had picked them up by mistake. They were wondering now what kind of monster I might be.

I got the material in to the shop with time to spare. But the machines started messing up. When I finally got to the building, it was only minutes before the start of class. I saw her stand up from the benches and put her books together. A few minutes earlier and I could have had my desired encounter. Even though she had time to spare, she was in a slight hurry. She had lingered too long outside. All these days of wonder now offered her a focus. Perhaps a dreaded exam. She still seemed too casual for that to be the case. I was now offering myself as her biographer. My heart was always suited to fiction. But I think that I had discovered my vocation, to discover the fictions beneath these realities. What this meant was an ability to effect these events in a favorable way. But the more that I contemplated her story, the more my place became more and more diffuse.

–What happened to you?

–I'm on time.

–You look like you've seen a ghost.

That wasn't the half of it. But I couldn't bring this creature to life under the circumstances. The ghost was pursuing me.

–What are you going to talk about today?

I felt like I was being pestered.

–My true love!

–What?

–The mystery in the letters.

I was still working on my theory of costuming. Nothing that this associate might understand. I still couldn't imagine him in different vestments. His mundane vision seemed perfectly matched to his short sleeve shirt and ill-fitting black polyester pants. I had nourished my idle moments with these teen exploitation films about the make over of the soul. He seemed an unlikely candidate for a romantic comedy. I'm sure the other students wondered the same thing about my own marvels. He was her total inverse. And he seemed to be blocking my way to happiness. If I couldn't transform his frame, then I felt equally incapable of affecting her vision. She would no doubt resist my script. But that was just the brilliance of my lecture. I had found the byway to liberate my desires in application. I could ride the coasting turns of her whims.

–Do you know her name?

–Dahlia.

–Delilah.

–I'm not sure.

I was still lost in my presentation qualms. The feeling stayed with me as I listened to Chloe asking me about my progress.

–Do you know her name?

–I thought that you were talking about my presentation.

–Her name?

–I thought that you were going to find out for me. It's not like this is Chicago.

–What do I get for my detective work?

–An inestimable treasure.

–Bull shit!

–Do you know anything?

–I had a friend who took English Lit with her. She was quite witty in class.

–Was it her major?

–She is either more practical or more arty. English just seems like too much of a compromise.

–What are you doing tonight?

–I'm going to head out. Tuesday is a great night to dance. There's hardly anyone there. No vain queens to get in my way.

–It's a disco night.

–I love dance music. Besides they don't call it disco anymore.

–It's still the big beat.

–Do you want to come out?

–I could use a night off. I might head over to Flurry's.

–I know that I'll see you.

I watched her head up the stairs. I followed her, but I hesitated before I could actually go in. I saw her pass the threshold. Fall hit heavily, and I could feel a wind rip through me as I stood still. She greeted a friend when she got in. A lavish welcome. They hugged for a while. She brushed off his kiss.

He escorted her into the restaurant. I watched them share a bottle of wine as they waited to eat. I didn't want to wait while they got their meals. I didn't even know what had put me in this state. There was a pronounced glow in the room. I could feel its contrast to my solitude in the cold. The rain started to fall, and I knew that I couldn't maintain my perch.

I should have gone out with Chloe. This was turning into a total disaster. I felt like I would always be an imposition on her good times.

–Are you sure that it was her?

–What do you mean?

–I saw her come by with a group of girls around 11.

–She never goes out on Tuesday.

–I swear it was her.

–I was waiting outside the restaurant until 10:50. I got home a little while after 11.

–If it wasn't her, then all my detective work is going to waste.

–Who was she with?

–Just some girls. Two other girls. I don't know them.

–Wow! Well, I'm sure that she won't be out tonight.

–Are you going to go out?

–Of course, it's half-price night.

–You don't even drink.

–I get intoxicated on the crowd

I needed to console myself for the embarrassment of my presentation and the humiliation of the night before. Who had I seen in the restaurant? Did this mean that my attachment was only fleeting?

Chloe told me that she felt a sense of personal liberation dancing among all these men. It didn't matter that they hardly paid her a mind. She still could feel a special sense of attention. It was as if she was the perfect stand in for all the most assertive desires on their part. I think that invited a more expansive fantasy on her part. Part of her reconciled to the impossibility of satisfaction. Within, she felt a more powerful attractiveness. This new prowess was too overwhelming for me. She wanted to live the carefree abandon of these model boys around her. She was frightened by the fleeting glibness of their charms. In a deeper way, she acted out a marvel that was too much for even them to bear. This gave her an air of celebrity. She was lost in the chasm of denial and orgy.

She loved to dance.

I was distracted from my earlier pursuits by a new face. She seemed very meticulous about her fashion, something too extreme for this Midwestern town. Few students had the money to compete with such taste. Her hair was sculptured and dyed the right shade of blonde. Hardly a prairie desire.

I introduced myself when she went in the other room to get a drink. She was definitely from downstate, but she affected a cultured accent that made her seem more attractive. She was a potent contrast to the girl of my fictions. And her intent placed her in a zone that was even

farther away. But she entertained my attractions for a continental life style.

A diet of champagne—I wasn't buying—made her positively charming. As the night wore on she became more and more attracted to the bank. My frustrations increased. She was an immediate focus. It brought out an extreme jealousy—a new entertainment.

She left a half hour before closing. I took some consolation in her leaving by herself. She had a plane to catch the next day. I agreed to see her again. I was glad that there would be no embarrassing restaurant scene with her.

I woke up around ten. I had some preparation for class. I felt that I could make the coincidence work in my favor. She wasn't even around when I got to the building. I just walked into class early. Our director had left a note on the door that he had an emergency to take care of. Why hadn't someone phoned me.

I saw her going up the stairs as I walked out the door.

I read for a while and then decided to take a nap. It was going to be a long night. I awoke around 5. I wanted to go by to the vintage store to look at a new jacket. It was only fifteen bucks but that was a lot of money for this week. My stipend was getting low. I needed the jacket.

It had these wide lapel—a new look. I decided to wear a thin tie with the jacket. It would contrast with the floppy looking jacket. I loved it.

It was already 12:30 before she came in. I had already been dancing for most of the night.

—Hey, don't I look sleazy.

I turned to see a sorority girl covet a more dangerous nightlife. She quickly drew herself back from the brink.

—What would your father think?

Marie had me cornered on the stairs from the dance floor when she walked by me. It seemed like our encounter was cursed by such misfortune. I saw her go in the other room for a drink. Through the glass door I could see that she made her way to sit at the bar. She was alone.

—Hi. We keep running into each other but we've never had a chance to say anything to each other.

—I keep meaning to say something to you.

We both smiled and gazed briefly into each other's eyes. She was in a dark green dress. Her chestnut brown hair was done in a bob.

—What are you drinking?

I looked at my water.

—A Perrier.

—I'm still finishing a glass of wine.

We both smiled again. Sam was motioning me over by the toilets. This seemed inconvenient.

—If you'll just hold on a bit.

When I came back, there was some guy standing in back of her. He was massaging her shoulders while he breathed on her neck.

—Your eyes are the windows to your soul.

—This is Carlos. He's in econ with me.

–I’m going to go dance.

She expressed disappointment.

–Please, don’t go. We could all have a drink.

I prepared myself for the worst and left the room.

Chloe was dancing in the center of all these men. I liked the song. A shrill disco number. I lost myself in the music. I watch Carlos take her outside the door. I wanted to stop them. I did nothing.

Chloe asked me to walk her home. She told me about the regimen. It was this male exercise thing. All the men involved in this collective ritual. No touching. But they just moved to the music. It culminated in them all stimulating themselves to climax. Acceptance and denial. No women generally, although they let Chloe become part of their group. She felt honored.

She told me about this guy Rich. I used to see him in chaps and boots. His rugged beard. He had slept with over 1500 men. I was astounded. I counted each one by his heartbeat.

–Maybe that’s a mistake.

–He may have undercounted. No one ever says NO!

Chloe’s self-denial seemed in sharp contrast to Rich’s indulgence. All I could think about were Carlos’s heartbeats as he accommodated my heroine.

She tracked me down at Flurry’s. I thought that she never came here.

I’m sorry about last night.

–You have nothing to be sorry about.

–I’m feeling bad for myself. And I how I embarrassed myself in front of you. I’m not usually like that with men.

–I’m not complaining. Not really. I have to get my seminar. Don’t you have class.

–I’m not going to go today. I want you to stay with me.

–It’s sound sort of dangerous. Almost criminal. Aren’t you afraid the University cops will find us in here together. Sort of a conspiracy.

She laughed. I liked looking at her.

–I really made a mistake last night. Carlos and all that. I’m not that kind of girl. Whatever that kind of girl is. I’m not her.

I wanted to hold that impression in my mind. It was all becoming too animated. Noise everywhere.

–I’ve wanted to meet you. Now I feel that I sort of blew it.

–I haven’t let it affect me.

–Don’t you have class? Sorry, your seminar.

–They’re just passing back papers today. I’ll catch the professor in his office.

–Oh, wow. Can I get you some coffee?

–Just get me a water...no, some orange juice.

–Daring.

–I am thinking about dying my hair a new color. It definitely gets me closer to God. Get me outside of you as I’m going upside down with you.

–Where were you? I went to get you your orange juice and now you seem so distant.

My table is set for dinner. I expect you to stop over. I know that you are coming? I've been waiting all month for this night

I was caught up with her. Stared her in the eyes. I knew that whatever that I wanted to say was not going to come out right. It wasn't going to mean as much

Time came to a screeching halt as she faced me on the stairs.

–I was waiting for you.

To stop the plunge in midair. I still felt that sinking feeling inside. My words. What words?

–I'm... Give me your hand, I feel unsteady.

–Do you have a class here?

I've got to go.

–*Do you want me to call you?*

–*I'll just see you later.*

–*Should I call?*

–*Yes. No. I don't know. I'll find you. I just have go. It's not that I feel anything bad towards you. This is just too much. I don't want to think about it that much.*

–*Think about what?*

–*I just don't feel like myself*

–Are you having difficulty concentrating. I'm not talking to you, and then you just zone out.

I was feeling incredibly cold.

–I'm no good today.

–About last night, I really am sorry.

–Stop apologizing. Just keep talking.

–I asked you a question.

–Really! What was it?

–It just doesn't seem so important now. Are you fucked up?

–No, nothing like that.

–I'm not trying to apologize to you. I'm just trying to convince myself that last night didn't happen.

–Just tell yourself that it didn't, and it will go away.

–That sounds clever. Is it advanced philosophy.

–It's just advanced life.

–Sometimes don't you wish that someone would just hand you a script. That life has been going on cool up to that moment. And then you just hit this wall. And you need this script. Damn! That's how I feel.

I wanted to hand her a script.

>>>You know that you've waited for this moment for all your life. You get it, and your just speechless. You want someone to just lead you by your hand. Like kindergartners clinging

to that rope.

She smiled again.

>>Is that orange juice doing it for you.

–Something must be. Maybe it’s your wit.

–Is that a complement. I never know how to take compliments. Is someone just trying to make up for my shortcomings?

–I just find you funny. Entertaining. Nothing really is coming out right today.

We both laughed.

–You’re getting a little tipsy on that orange juice. Heaven knows what you’d be like if someone added some vodka.

I paused on the stairs. She was right in front of me. I wanted to say something. I felt that she thought the same. But she didn’t seem to hesitate that long.

–I have to get to class.

I ended up not going to my seminar. The professor was just handing back papers, and I had more important thing to think about.

Chloe was at Flurry’s. She told me that she had a new theory about men.

–All men. No matter their orientation. They all want the same thing.

–Are you ready to give it to them?

–I can’t. I’m not a man.

We both laughed.

–I think that you’re getting too close to your own transformation.

She might have taken this as an insult. She smiled.

–Did someone put some vodka in your orange juice?

–No, the jelly on my Danish fermented.

–I’m going to get really fucked up tonight. Let a guy take you home.

–Really.

–Yeah, with his friend so that I can listen in on them in the living room.

–Wow!

–I watched someone getting a blow job in the parking lot. I left the club around two.

They let me hang out inside while the owner prepared his lover boys for trouble. Then I walked outside to the parking lot. I could see this steamed up truck. I got this vantage point so I could the one guy going down on the other. I could even see his cock.

–Did you get off?

–No, it just gave me a sense of power.

–More like embarrassment.

–No, this shit really happened.

–Next, you’re going to tell me that we’re all made like that. Made to just take it like that.

–I wasn’t really saying it like that. It felt sort of strange.

–Don’t tell me after all your exercise groups and all that, that you haven’t seen something like that before?

–But it was out in the open. So raw.

–Just go upstairs some night. Or head out to the parking lot during hours. It’s not like

they're just getting trashed cheap in their cars.

–They are getting trashed cheap.

–You said it.

–We've all felt it.

–Self-loathing.

–Fear. Loneliness.

–Humiliation.

–Nothing that we don't do to ourselves.

–I think that it's more about trying to get back at something.

–Get back to something.

–Vengeance.

–Sex as vengeance. Ph.D. thesis time.

–Don't make fun of me!

–What are you going to do tonight.

–I'm going out.

–Don't you have a paper that you have to write.

–I did it.

–Don't you think that you just rushed through it so you'd have an excuse to go out.

–Who's playing psychologist today?

–That sounds like something someone else said to me.

–Really.

The bar closed at one AM. All the drinks has to be off the bar. The liquor had to be locked up by 1:30. If the bar is emptied of all by staff by 2, you have to give them about an hour to two to get out of there. Serving drinks to staff and all. The cleaning crew doesn't come in until 8. It's still a couple of hours until sunrise. This is when you have to get back in to see what is really going on.

There seemed to be a crack in the dream. Just to get back inside before it turned around and did something bizarre against me.

–How do you get off trying to sell yourself like that?

–It's not as if I was giving him a blow job in the parking lot.

–No, it was in his bedroom.

–I didn't say anything like that.

–What did you say?

–Nothing happened. Besides, you and I aren't even going out.

She needed to use sex as her mirror. All the lack of precision could be focused on these intimate moments. She loved to go to the club and dance. To have her image reflected in all this mirrors. She felt like so much more than herself.

–I've just gotten a drink from the bar, and this guy comes and stands next to me. I trun and smile. He pulls out a picture of himself. All naked. And erect.

We all laugh.

–What did you do?

–I took him out to the parking lot and gave him a blow job!

–That was you.

We laughed even harder

–I didn't do a thing.

–But you wanted to.

–I couldn't. I'm not that fast. I'm not that good.

Chloe was the first to speak up.

–Do you wish you were?

–Chloe, don't get psychological on the poor guy.

–I'm just not that kind of guy.

Chloe would have been delighted if he was. It would have given her a special privilege. She looked at me with her cold stare.

–I think that you're a romantic just like our star wonder over there. He's been staring at this girl for months. She's just some baby. But he can't get up the nerve to say a thing to her. I've tried to introduce them. But I'm only in the way.

–I don't really like girls that way.

James was working out his sexuality before us.

–I have crushes on guys. But I'm pretty pathetic at following through.

I crashed in my clothes. I had plans for the night. But I wasn't married to them. I woke up at 4AM. My dreams were too entertaining. What if she had have been out? What if I missed her at a party?

I feel so well rested. Too well rested. What am I supposed to do now?

This is going to be the week when I get up my nerve to say something. When she gets up her nerve to walk across the room and tap me on the shoulder.

–Can I buy you a drink?

–Sure.

–What are you drinking?

–Just get me a Perrier.

That worked then.

–An Orangina.

–Cool.

–You don't usually come out on a Saturday.

–And you're always out. What happened?

–I couldn't stay awake. More accurately. I couldn't wake up. The dream seemed too good.

–Does it still seem good?

–I don't know your name.

–I don't really know it either.

We both laughed. I looked into her eyes and lost consciousness.

- I don't know what hit me.
- The green eyes.
- I thought that they were blue.

What is really supposed to happen here?

Hand him a script.

- Get me a Perrier.
- I thought that you weren't drinking.
- Anything mellow.
- Why can't things just happen faster.
- They will.

It was a crowded night. I just blended in. I kept dancing until my moment arrived. I sat on the stage. Why am I here? Why do I still live here after my moment is long gone? Why? I let the music take me again. This was a Saturday, and she would never show up here. What a terrible night.

I don't know how I got home. One moment I was there, and the next I was here. At home. Maybe I needed a trip. I needed to leave the city. I needed to change my name.

I woke up from my dream. I touched down.

Down a long corridor, I wandered. I came to an empty room. A little like the club. No one was there. I can practiced my strategy. It is not much different from an off night. Maybe a Monday.

- Did you hear what happened?
- What are you talking about?
- Didn't you hear about it on the news.

I could feel my body radiate out from the source of power. My mental concentration focused on this strength. It was part of the way I move. I pushed out from this center. I couldan feel the tension. I floated in the intensity.

It was is a Tuesday night. She took me back to her place. Why do I come here?
 - This is the source of the body's power.
 She motioned downwards. I thought that she was talking about the floor.

I could feel myself breaking down. I needed to brace myself against the wall. This is all imagination.

- Do you want to come back to my place. I can give you something for your headache.

–I don't really have a headache. It's deeper than that. My whole being.

She motioned down as if she was talking about the floor.

–Do you want to lie on the floor.

–Pardon.

–It's a power down here.

–You can only feel it when you're breaking down. A total collapse of the psych.

He showed me a picture of himself. Naked. I moved toward the bar.

–What am I doing here?

I didn't want to go home. I wanted her to take me back to her place.

It was Wednesday night. Everyone was drinking. Drinks were cheap. Except for me. I didn't even have a water.

She took me back to her place. Her name was Belle.

–Do you want to see the end of the world?

I was looking at the fish. And a bunch of plastic figurines on a shelf. Prizes from a cereal box.

–What do you mean the end of the world?

She hid her face with her hands.

–I still don't get it.

–Why did you come back to my place.

–You seemed like fun.

–You're going to stay aren't you.

–For a while. I think that it's going to snow.

–No, it's not silly.

Her eyes spoke of a coming storm, a long night.

–Do you believe in chaos?

–What? You are confusing.

–I don't try to be. I just see the world differently. Some mornings I don't know when my dreams leave off and I begin.

–that happens to all of us. It's like waiting for the fog to clear.

–Does it clear?

–Eventually.

She did this little dance in the middle of the floor.

–What was that?

–Oh nothing.

–Do you want to kiss me.

–I do. But I don't think that I should.

–Why did you come back here.

–You seemed like a cool person. I wanted to get to know you. I love your style.

She smiled. She only had a few things in the apartment. It was part of a house. A big apartment. Two rooms and a bedroom. I wanted to explore some more. I could sense the chill outside. Maybe it wasn't going to snow. But I could feel something.

–What about the end of the world?

There was something too strange about all this. As if she never saw people much. I loved to see her smile. To prance around the room. This electric feeling now that she had someone in her place.

–Have you lived here for long.

–About a month. You’re my first visitor.

–I feel honored.

–I didn’t want my friends to visit. It was such a mess. I might have a party here. I want you to come.

–I’ll come.

–Don’t do something stupid like die on me. I want you at my party.

–I’ll be there.

I was trying to deal with her quaintness. But there was also something more than quaintness. A vision.

–I haven’t been doing too well lately.

–Really.

–Not anything special. I didn’t have a dog that died or anything. It could just be the change in season.

–I thought that you told me that you grew up around here.

–I did. But I always felt like I was really abducted from somewhere else.

–We all feel like that from time to time.

–But I even think that they spoke another language. In some dreams, I can hear that language.

–Can you say a few words?

She mumbled some gibberish. And then laughed.

–Are you making that up?

–I really hear this other language. It’s a warning about the end of the world.

–There’s always such warnings. It’s part of growing up.

–Really?

–I don’t know.

–I like you. You know things. Deep things. But you don’t pretend. I want you to stay with me.

I wasn’t ready to leave. She touched my arm. I held there for a moment and then moved away.

–Are you afraid of me?

–No, not at all.

–Don’t you want to kiss me?

I stared in her eyes just long enough to deflect the question.

–You want something to drink. I think that I need another drink.

–I’ll just have some juice.

–I’ll see if I have some. I normally have just enough for the morning. Do you want some coffee?

–No, water’s OK.

She went in the kitchen and left me to wander around the living room.

–I want to tell you a secret. I have TB. I'm dying.

–You've just heard Camille too many times.

–No, really.

I wasn't really moved by her sense of drama. There was no reason to believe. She hadn't coughed at all. She seemed in fine sorts.

–How did you catch it?

I didn't want to pursue my scepticism.

–Traveling.

–I thought that you never left the city.

She needed a convenient fiction to sell this story, I sensed her hesitation. Her desire to see the script. To become someone else. I was expecting a tale of creatures flying in the night. Something to rescue her provocation.

–I went on a high school trip to Europe.

–Didn't you go to high school with my sister. I could manufacture a sister if she could create a high school trip.

–I'm not sure.

–She never told me about such a trip. I thought that they don't let you back in the country if you get a disease over there.

–They don't always know.

–Are you contagious.

I let my own fears come into play.

–Not unless I cough on you.

–Is that what you want to do.

–What do you want?

–I don't want to get sick.

–That's what you're afraid of.

–You might say that. Why do you like making up things?

–What are you talking about?

–You don't have TB.

–I might as well have it the way that you are treating me.

–Is that why you're telling me this.

She smiled. It really affected me. I wanted to kiss her at that moment. I took the water and turned to the wall. She came up behind me and touched my shoulder.

–I know what it is. You're sensitive. And you don't think that I'm the one. Come on. I don't care. Just have some fun.

She took another sip from her drink.

–It is really late.

–Silly. Just sit down. Relax.

I saw the snow collecting outside. Or course, my vision was premature. I needed snow now to smooth my exit.

–Do you sense this power in you. Almost mystical. I can feel it when I have sex. I really

got into meditation for a while. It was so relaxing.

She sounded like a tour guide.

–It helped me with my intimacy. I could never let myself go.

She breathed on my neck. A hot, hot heat. And I let it overcome me. I imagined surrendering to her kiss. I put my arm around her, and we sat there.

–You know what I’m talking about. That power. It’s inside. Deep inside, and it radiates outward like concentric circles.

I was holding back. Why wouldn’t I give in? Her lips seemed so tender. For a moment I was drawn back to a moment on the stairs with the angel. I laughed at my sentimentality.

–Sometimes you have to give in to your passions.

–But don’t they make you hold on. You talk about freedom. But it’s just a way to hang on to something that is so fleeting. That is why you told me that you have TB. The sense that it’s all running out too fast before you have a chance to hold on to it.

–What do you want? You want to fuck an idea. Get yourself so wound up your conscience and then just plunge it in. To make you feel whole. You’re not going to feel whole. Whether it’s with me or with someone else.

She wanted to impress her story on me. A story of seduction. To get off just by hearing. The more that I remember the experience, the more that I am drowning in it. She admitted to her sickness. I could not. Did that make me immune. Or was I only gloating over her so that I could deny my own feelings. My fear of fucking it all up.

–I told you that you can stay. You can sleep on the couch. Or come in my room where it is warm.

I wish that I was drunk. I could even retreat home with that sense of being full. Even if it would only last for a while.

It was all too stark. The apartment was frightening in its sparseness. A desert of feeling. Two bodies grinding away in the bedroom. That would give it all a sense of life.

Belle pushed me against the wall.

–If you stay with me. I’ll show you who you are. You’ll feel it down here.

She made a pushing gesture from her waist down.

In narrative, I would avoid the contact. In actual experience, I would immerse myself in Belle. I woke up in my own bed. I had run home all the way. I was coughing when I got back to my place.

Belle was living with a friend three weeks later. The spider and her lair.

–You were really a dick to her.

–Chloe, I didn’t sleep with her.

–You sucked the life from her. I bet you went home and beat off. And thought about her. She felt this sense of coldness. And you just stayed immune. Got off on your aloofness.

–I wasn’t aloof. I just didn’t connect with her.

–As opposed to some shadow. That’s what you’re chasing. It’s your own shadow.

–It’s not like that at all.

As I left Belle's I could sense someone following. I looked in my mirror and noticed a police cruiser trailing me. It hadn't turned its lights on so I decided to ignore it.

I turned south and was getting closer to my neighborhood. But I had to make a few meandering turns. The cruiser was still on my tail. Just as I turned into my part of town, the cruiser's lights went on. I stopped and waited for the officer to come over to the car.

–Licence and registration.

–I was just seeing a friend.

I handed him the documents. He looked at them and then shone his flashlight in my face for an incredibly long two minutes.

–There was a report of a robbery. But it was a black man. Would you mind stepping out of the car.

I got out of the car. He brought me over to the back of the car. I was ready for some kind of sobriety test. He pointed to the rear of the car. He was looking at the plates.

–What does that mean, EA?

–It's just a tag. An idea. A nickname.

He looked puzzled.

–EA.

He gave me my documents back.

I drove off.

I had class the next day. She was on the stairs. She had stopped on the stairs. Almost to let someone watch her. The light from the window bathed her face in light. She became part of the light. Particles of dust in radiation. My hand passed through her.

She smiled.

–Do you know what that is?

–I have to get to class.

I wanted to know what it was. Why was this happening like this?

–I need to know her name.

Her smile became bigger.

–You'll find out. Ask around.

–Delilah.

She smiled again.

–Dahlia.

I could say anything more.