

THEA

The approach of summer hit me hard. It would be an understatement to say that I had become thoroughly undone by my studies and that I needed to take a rest. My body needed to go in a deep freeze. I decided to focus on the Indiana University summer workshop on Narrative and Language. I headed off to Bloomington with the ostensible project of giving myself the requisite time for a regeneration. Little did I know that my time would be spent in portraiture of one of Bloomington's shining stars, Dorothea Harken. Or by making her privilege to the wisdom of W.D. that I would create a monster whose aspirations would have no bounds.

The confines of Bloomington would seem to define the limits of Dorothea's reach. Sure, she had stretched the limits. But how far could she go in a one-horse town—plenty far. She had graduated high school with all the adulation of her peers. Who could embody the charms of nature so consistently? She dazzled her rather provincial audience with the definitive proof of providential intervention. How could a newcomer contradict such indubitable evidence? At best, I could only observe her wiles in action. After a year in college, she decided that she did not need the abstract deformation of her natural appetites. More to the point, the academic community could not bear the assaults of her superior wit or her sheer natural marvels. The world would have to wait for her stupendous discoveries until after she had traced their concrete evolution. So I felt that I could only enhance the talents of this wonder, almost like a damn redirecting the forces of powerful river. I accepted that challenge.

—I know that you mean well. It's not as if it's my tutor. College just wasn't for me. Someday I'll go back. It'll just be a snap for me. But for the time being, I just want to pursue my destiny on my own.

—We could say that you're reckless

—I think it's almost a skill.

She gave me that insane smile, something that almost seemed acrobatic.

—Don't think that you're going to make me feel guilty about something. I wouldn't call you a friend if you'd leave me that vulnerable.

—If you have a natural talent, you just have to use it.

—I guess that I do.

I felt truly that any more time at IU would only prove disastrous for her. She needed an Institute just for herself. An intellectual playground. For the time being the Bloomington social scene might provide her stimulation. But I was afraid that she might exhaust the appeals of the locale before the summer was out. Perhaps that was my vocation. To instill in her a thirst that she could not quench. To eventually feed her ambitions in a way that only the world would do. As such, she could live up to the destiny that was obviously already hers.

From quite early in her adolescence, she was afraid that her physical appeal might be her ruin. She had to guard herself against succumbing to the easy victories that the small town offered. She had seen girls whose dash had been so fleeting. Where the fires of youth burned out in the mundane demands of the East River Mall. Sure the Chanel counter had its mysteries, but too many girls had drowned in these fragrances. Boys who went down around them lulled by the pungent aromas.

Disaster were sure to accompany her if she gave in to easily to the immediate delights.

She had known too many princesses of the heartland who had bartered away their future for a night of passion. She needed to release her treasures in measured doses. To always remain the banker of her wealth. Watch it accumulate and never let its value fall, particularly against rather meager rewards. Such were the curses of life on the prairies.

One evening we were sitting together on her porch. She seemed to be fidgeting in her seat.

–What’s wrong?

–Nothing. Nothing at all. I just can’t sit still.

–You have to learn how to relax. It’s one of the arts of a true education.

–I know how to relax.

–Maybe with a drink in your hand. But it’s eleven in the morning.

–I don’t need you referring me on ways to get my life in order.

–Who didn’t have a healthy breakfast?

–Quit making jokes at my expense.

–What, a rough night.

–I turned down this guy and I don’t think that he took it to well.

–So why are you suffering.

–I don’t know. I think I needed a romantic fix.

–That’s all you seem to get.

–I like to maintain my rosy complexion.

–I thought that exercise did that for you.

–I do it when I can. But I’ve just got a good disposition by nature.

–On an evening like this, I wonder what would be the perfect emotion for the situation. I sit here long enough and give into the mood. I think that I can find it. I can smell the hay that has been cut in a nearby field. And the corn stalks. The goblins of the night.

I listened to her and felt that I could capture the same feeling. That we were perfectly attuned to the same harmony. If I could just reach over and kiss her. But this would only disturb our awaited consonance.

–Can you sense the splendor of the night?

–Whatever are you talking about?

She looked at me with one of those strange looks. As if I had taken things too far again.

–You can see the stars so clearly on a night like this.

I breathed deeply. Refreshed in this instant.

She wanted to say more. To see more. But this would only disturb her utter complacency. Perhaps her greatest fear. If she gave in to this realization, she could never leave Bloomington. The discovery that was so critical to her identity was held just beyond her grasp. The is was the ultimate frustration of her sentence. That it would not be commuted soon enough. that she would expire before she had tasted the exotic flavors about which she only dreamed.

This was the essence of her being, a passion to destroy. What I had first mistaken for recklessness was much more radical than that. She couldn’t resolve her confusions to a ride on a lover’s motorbike. A plunge into the quarries. A night of spent passions.

She was on to a verity about her life, about life in general.

–There’s a strange beauty in destruction.

Like a spectator watching a burning car. Attentive to the threat. Being held by the awesome power. Wanted to jump in. But held back by the heat.

Later that night we snuck into this private lake near her place. The two of us swam in our clothes. We floated and looked up at the honey moon. It sent a wide reflection over the water. I dove down into its craters. She wanted to follow, but she was giggling as she looked at the image. Her fits of laughter made her susceptible to swallowing too much water so she stayed on the surface. She watched me slip under into the sky. And when she looked up at the sky, she imagined that I was wandering somewhere on the bright satellite.

I came up like a monster skulking in the depths. This reinspired her fits of laughter. I joined in and started to splash around her. She got a real thrill from this.

–I want to stay like this forever.

–You know that you can't.

–I just want to. It's our moon. You'll never forget any of this will you?

I looked in her eyes. They mesmerized me the same way that this honey moon worked its spell. It was lovely. I wanted to remain with the perfection, but knew how deeply this was an illusion of this moment, this summer. The wondrous night chill that absorbed both of us.

I wanted to kiss her more than ever. Some way of preserving this attraction. But I knew how illusory was this artifice. She only picked up my desire to break the spell.

–You have to leave that alone.

The next day she made her point with such force.

–You know that I could never fall for you.

I felt a little hurt but didn't not let on.

–We're too alike. You know all my secrets.

I didn't want to contradict. I coveted this moment and let her talk on.

–You know what it's like when your emotions take over. Sometimes you hate the person that you're with. But that's part of the charm. The destructiveness.

I imagined this aura that she exuded just drying up under a sun too wicked.

I came back to pick her up that evening but there was a car parked in front of the house. I knew what was going on. I couldn't very well go in. I drove off to Willy's and had dinner. What a let down!

I knew that I was getting caught up in my summer project. The hideous give and take of her self-absorption. I offered her an audience like no other.

–I'm going to Hollywood some day. I'll dye my hair and take acting lessons. And sit by the beach. I'll be discovered.

She didn't realize that she was already being discovered.

–You know how love has such a charm. Two people holding each other so close in the night.

–Dorothea, do you really believe that?

–I believe the holding part. The love is all a sham.

I wasn't sure if I should feel victorious or not. I wanted to ask her what really went on last night. I had this image of her going for ice cream and left it at that.

–I think that I'm going to be busy most nights for a while.

I didn't want to hear that.

–Are you taking acting lessons?

–You could say that.

Again her giggle.

I felt a rush of blood to my head. That intense faintness. I wanted to hold on to something.

–You really should find a girl of your own. You’re getting positively humid just hanging around here all the time.

–Are you becoming bored with my company?

–To the contrary. I’ve never felt so inspired. But it’s not really that good for you.

Besides. Aren’t you working on some school project?

–That doesn’t take too much time. I like hanging around with you.

So we negotiated an uneasy truce. Could it really last the summer?

What was happening to my summer plans? I was becoming enamored with by this high school heart throb who herself could not adapt to the rigors of college life. And here I was contemplating some magnum opus. The two of us seemed made for each other. I could admit to a summer of dissipation, but couldn’t I let my life spiral out of control in Bloomington.

An afternoon in the library helped my composure. I made my seminar at 4. The prof was more than helpful in reawakening my intellectual thirst. But this only seemed to increase my longing for Dorothea’s company. I didn’t want to head by the house and frustrate my desire. And there was little else to do in Bloomington. I went home to plough through the pile of books that I had collected earlier that afternoon.

I got to thinking about that narrow line between word and object, impression and the thing in itself. All I could concentrate on were Dorothea’s lips. This was the core of my new philosophy. This was the inspiration of all of Bloomington.

–You can’t hold me responsible. You now what my nature is. It’s always going to turn out the same way. I can warn you. I can share my affection with you. But ultimately, this is something that can’t be helped.

Perhaps Dorothea was trying to tell me that her affair had been turning bad.

–Is there something that you want to tell me?

–I don’t like to look backwards. I prefer to tell you about my plans.

–Are these new plans?

–I don’t think that I should wait to begin my acting lessons.

–So are you going to go back to IU.

–There’s a community program that I’m going to enroll in.

Already she seemed to be limiting her aspirations. Worse, she found that community theater was rife with rivals. It had been so easy to wow the male members of the company. But after that initial wow, she gave up on the rather pedestrian concerns of the group.

–Your desires didn’t hold you up for a long time.

–It got so silly. I couldn’t take it. And the play was so stupid.

–So what are your plans.

–I thought that you could tutor me.

I didn’t realize what I was getting myself in for. Or was this the ideal for which I aspired. With no suitor to disturb our adventures, I felt that I finally had her undivided attention.

Key to her education was an awareness of self. I felt that I needed to constantly counteract her devotion to image. She was convinced that she had already tapped the source of her identity, and everything about her personality would flow from that initial realization. But the source often seemed an aberration from the actual movement of these internal forces. Was this the heart of our project, to shine the light on this ultimate obscurity? Or did she only want to enhance what she already knew about herself?

I looked at that crazy smile. How could I communicate its hypnotic effect? Its total resistance to any sort of taming. She knew something so elemental that any education would only deform the richness.

–In destiny do we only find out about our ultimate misery?

What was she saying?

–Isn't that why you spend time with me. To offset the actual roots of your melancholy—your knowledge?

I thought about the misery that she seemed to create for her pursuers. Did she only expose the fundamental vanity that drove them all?

–Maybe that's why I see so little future in love. It's just a way of making you accept responsibility for someone else's pain. None of this can be helped. Things happen. I just go along. We're all caught up in the same whirlwind. We can't resist. There's nothing that we can do.

I felt the turmoil of an Indiana tornado heading my way. I wanted to admire the majesty but I felt myself getting torn apart by the danger. I needed to take shelter.

–You're not saying anything today.

–I'm listening.

I was supposed to be the teacher. But I was making notes on her lecture.

–That's the way that I am. But I want to be so much more. I haven't really done enough. Maybe I need better clothes. Or a new haircut. I feel so weighed down by my past.

What past? Was there anything here that wasn't blown around by the wind?

The present was her loveliness and nothing could ever take that away from her. But in Bloomington, this was proving to be a curse. Destiny would not be a contemplative destruction but only a useless waste.

–Let's go for a drive. This conversation is becoming oppressive.

Her hair got tossed in the wind. She shook her head to express the fullness of her liberation. Her smile got bigger.

–Just keep driving. I don't want to go back home.

–You don't really mean that.

At first I thought that she wanted an excursion. But she sought more than that. An eternity.

–I want to leave Bloomington now. I don't want to say good by to my mother. I'm sick of it all.

–You could at least wait for the summer to end.

–I don't want this summer to ever end. I want to go somewhere that I can go barefoot all year long.

I feared staying. That I would become one of the many drowning in their misery. But I

had bigger plans.

–We can't leave yet.

I smelt her perfume. The originality of lilacs.

–Or we've already left just by wanting to. Dorothea, you need to read more.

–I will. But right now I can't sit still.

–I want you to kiss me.

Did I hear her right? Nothing further was said. Perhaps I was just continuing my fantasy.

I fell and resurrected in that brief moment.

When we got back after I ride, she told me that she had to nap. I went back home and started to work on my essay for the seminar. I was going to present next week and I needed to be better prepared. I thought about the possibility. I thought about her dreams. Just to get her on the right track.

I was crazy with the overall promise.

–Let's go on a picnic.

–I hate to eat outside—all the ants.

–It would be so much fun.

After my revelation of the previous day, this would be the perfect opportunity. We went to the grocery store and stocked up. Her mother helped us make sandwiches and we were off. We went to one of the state parks. I pulled out the picnic basket and set the table. She was excited, beaming.

–I snuck some wine from the house.

–Is it OK to bring wine in a state park?

–We'll make it OK.

The wine seemed to loosen her. That eye seemed to close, and she could move without surveillance.

–It's so much fun hanging around with you.

–Thanks for the complement.

–I mean really it. You listen to me. Except when you try to teach me those lessons.

–I thought that you wanted a tutor.

–Not that kind...you needn't come by tonight. Ray is taking me back.

It sounded like she was talking about an inappropriate gift being returned to Macy's exchange. What could I say to contradict her.

–The lessons are going so well. Sure they are. But I need a break. You're a guy. You must know what I mean.

What ever did that mean. I was a guy, and I couldn't understand it all. Ray seemed to me entirely antithetical to her transformation.

–You like my car.

He was talking about his restored '67 Mustang.

–I did it myself.

–I wished I had those kind of skills.

I really did when I was breaking down on some backwoods road. As if that was the only breakdown that she would ever contemplate.

–Don't make fun of Ray.

How could I help not making fun of Ray? This whole situation just spoke to me of a profound absurdity. At moments like these, I counted down my days in Bloomington. Dorothea would have to improve on her own. Whatever I could offer would be meager compared to what experience had in store for her.

–You are getting jealous.

–And you don't want me to.

–Ray and I are having fun. I told you that. I can't go against my nature. I can't be something that I'm not.

–But I thought that you wanted to throw off these provincial bonds and fly.

–Don't exaggerate. I'm hardly myself when I'm with him.

–But just the fact that you feel that need.

–You don't know what it's like.

–A while ago you were asking me to understand because I knew what it was like.

–Quit being difficult. I'm not always going to do what you like.

–It's not just for me. Maybe this once would be a good beginning.

–You knew it was coming. You knew it all along.

–I get forgetful.

–That's rather convenient.

–It's so easy to talk when it's not about you.

I left rather graciously. She pretended for me that she would not spend the night with Ray. I hardly believed her. But I wondered why she was making such a fuss.

–It's about you.

She would tell me later. I didn't get it, but she continued.

–You want to have this image of me. I'm just helping you conform.

–But if it's not you, it's worse that you pretend to me.

–I'm not pretending. When I'm with you, it's how I really want to see myself. But when I'm with other people, it how I really am.

–That doesn't sound quite right.

–Not how I **really** am. How I act. But it's like I'm not all there. I'm there going along with things. But part of me is holding back. Looking at myself from above and telling myself that this isn't who I am.

That was a fine consolation for me. I went along like her puppy. Only understanding those prolonged moments when she was there. And languishing in a confused tragedy when she was not. So much for my fate.

Did she let him kiss her? How could she resist. When was this secret self ever real. She could do all the pretending that she wanted for me. Why couldn't she just tell the same story to Ray. This is what happened to her Hollywood ambitions, what was happening to all our dreams. They floated away down a summertime stream. And as she bathed in these waters, I felt a helplessness in this running panorama.

Maybe this was a detour from my former pursuits. That I was just here to witness something. If I interfered too much it would never have any of the delight that had initially fascinated me. But in a sense, I was only feeding off the luster of her attachment to Ray. She could act out her confusions to me. But the sum of it all was this rather deep commitment to a

vision that held nothing for me.

What had inspired my distraction? Indiana was supposed to be a time of intellectual advancement. But I felt like I was moving backwards. Even my ideas for my paper were seeming trite. What did I really understand about narration as I was getting spun around in a story in which I had no control.

–You just want Ray to do me wrong. Then we can share in our misery. Don't think if I left him that I'd be with you. I've made that clear.

–I thought that you weren't with him.

–You know what I mean.

The more that I prodded her the more she felt a necessity to defend her connection to him. My worst fear was that I was the catalyst for their being together. After all, I created a need for her that she could not satisfy in her limited situation. It only meant lending more credibility to this fling with Ray.

I still expected some unearthly fortitude from her. I made her silliest remarks into something profound and then got disappointed when she didn't follow my image of her. I hardly put such faith in Ray. But then he never really confided in me.

–Sometimes I think that the only reason that I'm with Ray is because you harrass me so much.

What could I say to that? I felt firmly caught in the game.

–Before Ray, I knew this guy who made all kinds of promises to me. How we'd move to Chicago. He didn't even graduate from high school. He's working in his dad's garage. Imagine me married to that guy.

What a preposterous story. Her skills at making up thing was getting better and better.

–What about your Hollywood dreams?

–I don't think I have the talent. It's hard for me to be something that I'm not. To say words that aren't really me.

Where was the prairie moon of a few nights ago?

I felt that I needed much more than these locals. Already I expected to hear more if there was any hope of me hanging on. I was face to face with the limits of her experience. The game was much more of an entertainment for the Bloomington natives. But it seemed outworn for my taste.

I think she had an inkling of my fading desire. She wanted to challenge me.

–If I'm no longer to your fancy, you can just go. I'm getting tired of your moralizing.

–What?

–Just go.

I didn't want to wait around where I wasn't wanted. She had done something that was rather strategic on her part. She really didn't expect me to do anything. It took her aback when I just got up and walked off the porch.

The next morning she called early.

–I was such a rude one to you last night. I don't want to lose you. I cried myself to sleep.

I wanted to touch the damp pillow. I needed the evidence. My credulity was being stretched. Sure I had neglected my studies. But my critical faculties weren't completely dulled.

As I contemplated this image, I could feel the refreshing honesty of the cool pillow case.

I kissed it.

–Dorothea, I am rather busy this morning.

–Let’s have lunch. I’ll make you something. I want to make up for my boorish behavior. Whatever would her penance entail. I was finally getting a glimpse into the tortured soul.

–Do you think that I’m crazy.

We ate salmon sandwiches with tea.

–No. Just inspired.

–What does that mean?

–You’re a creative soul. But your application is escaping you.

–I’ve tried to really apply myself. You know that I just didn’t take to college.

–You can’t live in your mother’s house for the rest of your life.

–You’re being mean. I have no intention of living the rest of my years in Bloomington.

–You’re starting to talk like a character in a Jane Austen novel.

–Don’t insult me. It’s not me who talks like a book.

–Touche.

–So maybe you could tell me something that I could read. I mean the summer is ticking away.

–You could say that.

The early afternoon was touch by a friendly breeze. We continued our lunch in the shade of the porch.

–When you leave, and we don’t see each other again, you won’t forget me.

–I couldn’t forget you.

–I’ve never known anyone like you. You’re so different than all the guys that I meet in Bloomington. I think that’s why I’m so afraid of myself around you.

For once there was no pretense in her. I was a little shocked by her candor. She hugged me and then kissed me on the cheek. Then she returned to her tea.

–Don’t think too much of all that. I just get sentimental now and then.

She knew that she had affected me. I felt the full press of her affection. But she casually held back from the comfort of her chair on the porch.

–It’s not like I’m leaving any time soon.

My paper went well at the seminar the next day. I had my talk with Dorothea in the back of my mind. I told the group about the phenomenon of an underdeveloped character whose lines of intersection attain such a level of concentration that the character starts to dominate the narrative. I examined the emergence point when a writer recognizes the character’s dominance and how this relates to the author’s initial portrait.

This was a world that had nothing to do with Dorothea, and still my experience with her echoed in my presentation.

–Perhaps you’re trying to influence the critical response with this construct. You want to see that connection. It like an irrational belief in ghosts.

The professor came to my defense.

–It’s not like he sees something that isn’t there. The phantom effect is totally a product of the narrative. Moreover, the writer’s recognition of the phenomenon adds another layer to the narration.

I wanted to celebrate with Dorothea.

–That reminds me of things that you’ve told me before.

–I guess that it does.

–We really should do something together.

–That would be so cool.

–I really want to, but Ray’s leaving for two weeks and I told him that I’d go for dinner with him.

I had turned down an engagement with some of the other students to rush over to Dorothea’s. Now I wondered about my choice.

–I’m really flattered that you decided to share your success with me. It’s just a bad evening for me.

I could already envision the Mustang pulling up. I dreaded that arrival.

–I better get going.

–Why don’t you stay while I put on my make up. You could help me pick out a dress. The humiliation struck me as overly intense.

–I’d like to, but maybe I can still catch up to some of the other students.

I had already committed myself to an exit. But I wondered where I could really go. I decided to head back to the bar where everyone had planned to hang out.

I drove immediately there. But they had all left. It was getting a little late for them and I figured that they had probably left. This was not a night where I wanted to be drinking alone. I headed down to the courthouse and parked my car. It was a late sunset and I watched the bats encircle the courthouse tower.

I imagined time shutting down then and there for good. What could I make of all this. I had proposed a life, but I had not really embarked on the journey. The summer was becoming the ultimate detour. I wondered if I was going to make it back to the main road.

I thought that I saw Ray drive by in his Mustang. Dorothea was at his side.

I let the image dissolve before me. It was followed by this intense desire to be with Dorothea. To be with her for the rest of my life.

I felt feverish. Bloomington was taking me over. The thought that I heard noises from the tower. The bells rang. I needed to sleep.

I could detect a pattern to my time spent here. The longer that I remained, the greater would be my attachment to Dorothea. I could name my ailment, but my cure only provoked more symptoms.

I was leaving myself more susceptible to her. She could also convince herself that there was a glimmer of hope left. Ray was not real for her. But she was settling. She had been uncomfortable with her rebelliousness. Ray offered her just enough of an adventure. At the same time, he was becoming proof against her flirtatiousness. Wasn’t this the trap that the small town represented for her? She had told me as much. As long as we talked she could find some comfort in her gradual dissipation. I became a convenient excuse why she didn’t have to do anything else to resist her influences. I was feeding her comfort.

My thoughts started to gnaw at me. I placed myself as a voyeur on her time with Ray. I could see myself climbing a tree and looking in the window. How far did she take him. Was he a good lover? I felt these vampire visions take hold. He ravaged her like some monster.

–I know what you’re thinking. That he’s using me. I get what I want from him. In fact, I’m using him. There’s really no future for us together.

–Then why don’t you break up now.

–We don’t have to break up because we’re not together. Especially not now. He’s gone for two weeks. Let’s just enjoy the time together. I don’t want to think about Ray at all.

–We won’t.

Was this going to be that easy. I already had the demon planted in me, and I didn’t want to let go.

–Let’s go to the state park tomorrow.

–It’s going to rain tomorrow.

–What do you want to do?

–We could have a story hour. We could make up ghost stories, and you could read to me. Was this the thing that held us close? I could be part of her imagination.

–I think that the courthouse is haunted. I saw bats flying around me .

–Those aren’t bats. Their pigeons.

–At night? They’re bats.

–You’re insane.

–No, really.

–I think that you’re a vampire.

–I thought that you were, too. I’m sure that you are. I can see teeth marks on your neck.

–Those are mosquito bites.

We both were laughing hilariously.

–The vampire is going to get you.

She spread her arms like wings and ran at me.

--That was just crazy when you jumped in the water.

She looked at me with a quizzical look.

I could remember jumping in to rescue her. As I pulled her out, she became all cold. I pulled her close to make her warm.

–Thanks for jumping in after me.

Her face had an angelic glow. She smiled.

–What are you looking at?

--Huh?

–What are you looking at?

She stared me in the eyes.

–You want me, don’t you?, she purred. Kiss me.

I did. She fell in my arms.

I whispered.

–Dorothea.

–That’s not my name. My name’s Magda.

Was she trying to throw me off?

–You don’t remember falling in the water.

–I was never in the water.

–Your clothes were wet. You took them off when you got home.
 –They weren't wet from falling in the water. I was just hot and sweaty.
 –You fell in the water and you were shivering.
 –That's silly. The sign said to keep out of the water.
 I thought about the kiss.
 –What are you trying to make up, you silly boy?
 I couldn't figure out what was going on.
 –You don't remember the mill. By the falls.
 –The mill.
 It had started to rain and we took shelter in the mill.
 –You're making this up as you go along.
 –I'm just trying to remind you of what really happened.
 –That's just a crazy story.
 –It is pretty crazy.
 –I do remember this mill. It was some guy named Todd. An older boy. He sort of forced me in there. But I was able to get away. I never told you about the mill. How did you know?
 I was getting confused with her changing stories.
 –It's not like I'm moody. You're always pouting about having to spend time in Bloomington. At least I have dreams about being famous.
 She gave me one of her poses that caught the fading light of the day.
 –I like you. But sometimes you just go off with your stories.
 –They're not so wild. You do remember a mill.
 I thought about going there with her. Trying to provoke the same experience. Relive the memory. Help sort out all these details.
 –I really don't want to go back.
 –I want to go back to the mill.
 –I can't.
 I was mesmerized by her eyes. Floating–light–lovely.

There was this fear on my part that my attachment to her would only get me caught in this intrigue that only repeated experiences from her past.

–I don't want you touching me in the same way that you did.

I remembered a kiss. But what was this touching.

The two of us were too reticent to repeat the events from yesterday.

–Magda?

–Yes, lover.

–What if he finds out?

–Didn't he pay you to follow me?

–I was just following you on my own.

–And he gave you an excuse.

Dorothea had show a real hesitation when I mentioned the mill. I wanted to go back there. But the drive seemed to great. It wasn't something that I could spontaneously do.

If only I could revert her some other way.

–Sometimes I black out. I do all these things that people tell me about. But I don't remember any of it.

–Have you seen anyone?

–I have. But he couldn't do anything. The blackouts are getting more frequent.

I wondered if Dorothea had moments of blacking out. It seemed too sensitive to ask her. I knew that she would deny the black outs even if she had them.

–I have guys coming up to me saying that they know me.

–That happens to everyone.

–No—they no details about things in my life—it's really scary.

–You can't let it take you over. Don't let it bother you.

–It's not like that.

–What is it?

–Do you want me?

I turned away. I didn't know what to say to her.

She becomes entranced.

–It is a room flooded by light. And there is an audience that I cannot see. They want something from me. I am with a man who really understands my body. Grasps my hands and holds them down. As we move together, he takes hold of my neck.

She didn't want to reveal any more and was easily becoming frustrated by the confusion.

–I have too many things to do tomorrow to go on another picnic.

–What is going on?

–Things. I'm supposed to do with friends.

She was actually reliving the scene from the day before. Not in images but in sensations. A dream with lingering feelings.

–Let's pretend that something had gone on. There's things that I do sometimes—not really things that I mean to do. just things that sort of happen. We all do that.

–So you are admitting that something went on.

–I'm not admitting to anything. When the things happen to me, they're not about me at all.

–Then who is it about.

–I was so overtaken by what I saw that I started to rub my self over and over again. I was getting so aroused that my panties were getting moist.

>>I didn't what to stop even though the scene stopped before my eyes.

–Go on!

–It's not about me. More of a movie that I was watching. That was the really ugly part. It felt good at the time, but it made me feel guilty.

–What's going on?

–Nothing that I want to confess to.

–So you do feel bad about something.

–Not bad. I feel sick. I told you about my dizziness.

–I thought it had some cause.

–It usually does. But I've had this feeling of not being all together.

I can never betray my own heart. To that I must be true. Even if it is promised to someone else. if it does not feel the vibrancy of that love, then it cannot serve that promise. And the promise, for what it is, is just a lie. So how can I ever betray my heart if I am true to what it feels.

–I don't think that I shall ever betray my heart.

–Dorothea, that sounds like a contradiction.

--If I feel love, then I need to be true to that love. I need to share my feelings with my lover. But if my heart does not stir with those feelings, then I can't go along with the strains of romance.

–That seems absolutely silly to me. You're simply creating a heart to justify your whims.

–You can't say that. I know what I feel.

He thought of me as if I was an insolent child.

–It's not like I've done something wrong.

–That's for you to say. You've given him all these strange looks.

–He's a strange man.

–But he seems to take a fancy to those looks.

–You can't tell what I really want.

Betrayal offered me a particular delight. Not only did it highlight my passions, it seemed to extend potency of my feelings. The risks of getting caught added a sense of danger that continued to ignite my feelings. As well, the lofty aspirations of my man seemed to encourage my attachment to the stranger. Jealousy was a constant challenge to me. I could not let my attachment for the stranger subside under such intense pressure from my keeper.

I need to get free.

–Do you really think that jealousy can really be an inspiration to anything meaningful?

–It's just a rush.

–It only increases the possessiveness of the relationship.

–Or the entire lack of it. When you're with a partner who has no expectations other than the physical, it such a total bang.

–But then time, all time starts to slip from you.

–You can't keep making this other worldly thing about love.

–You're the one with the supernatural fantasy.

–What's that supposed to mean?

–The secret lover.

–I never talked to you about anything like that. Where did you get that idea.

–It's not an idea. It's real.

–You don't know what I'm really like. It's all in your head. You can never feel my feelings.

–That's becoming painfully obvious.

If I could find somewhere eternally still. Desire only stirs because it seeks a state of ultimate rest.

I could feel the otherworldly appeals of his charms. That it was already part of me—inside me and growing.

–If you can't be up front with your lover, then there is really no hope of real intimacy.

–You’re sounding like one of those books in the supermarket.
 –Maybe they’re right.
 –It’s the other way around. You have feelings, and then you try to explain what’s happening in words. The words can never duplicate the passion.
 –But they can inspire it. Or they can easily demolish it.
 –Don’t I know.
 –Passion isn’t something that exists in and of itself. And if you don’t try to affect them, then they just affect you.
 –That makes no sense.
 –It’s like a work of art. You shape it. You make it happen.
 –But it works only if it awakens feelings that are already part of you.
My new identity weighed me down more and more. I felt so alive even if I had this morbid fascination.
 –Your words have such magic that I can feel this tingling passing through me.
 –I don’t think my man would take kindly to your flattery.
 –It’s not flattery. It’s real. Your voice is so hypnotic.
He stared in my eyes as if he was trying to pull something from insides.
 –It really doesn’t work.
 –It doesn’t. So why are you staring back at me?
 –I’m trying to block your shining light from obscuring my star.
 –That sounds sort of poetic.
Didn’t a secret love demand a mysterious reply?
 –Your obsessions can never make your love become real.
 –And you think that I have this obsessive love for you. If I did, why do you let me hang around you all the time?
 –This is something new to Bloomington. Most guys around here just tell you what they want and that’s it. You’re sweet. It makes me feel like something special.
 Was this just the coy form of her rejection?
Maybe she hadn’t fallen in the water. She jumped deliberately. Knowing that she couldn’t swim very well. Knowing that it might mean the end of something.
 –Your eyes remind me of something.
 –You’re staring.
 –I’m sorry. I’m just getting a little dazzled.

Thinking about it hurt my head. In the prairie moon, she came in touch with some ancient spirit. That energy inspired. She twirled in the wonder of the light. But there was more. She seemed entranced. Not just in another world. She almost became another person. I could see her before me as I had before. But she wasn’t all here. It was so absurd.
 –Dorothea.
 She didn’t even respond to her name.
 What was happening?
 Desire, fantasy—it has the power to take us over. But there is usually that separation. She was being drawn completely into the dream. She even walked differently.

–I don't know what was going on. I was there talking to you. We were both looking at the moon. And then things just got carried away. There was absolutely nothing that I could do.

–And you think that I believe you.

–You better if you want to be my friend. It was all true.

–It couldn't be.

–I read in this book once about these mysterious powers. Like an entity that travels in the air.

–The vampires again.

–No really.

I listened but it sounded too silly

–It's like this erotic power.

–Erotic?

–You know what I mean. Like this sexual demon that inhabits the body. But not from the present. From a long time ago.

–And it makes you want to have sex all the time.

–No. It fills me with this strange power. Quit laughing. It's real.

–I'm not laughing. But it sounds like a bad sex movie.

–I really felt it.

–OK, you did.

–It bothers me that I felt it and you didn't.

–I'm not closed to the experience.

–Have you had psychic experiences before?

She smiled. I felt this shiver. Like I was privileged to something really special.

–Once with my mother...

I wandered as she told me the story.

I saw her as a Cinderella at a ball.

–This was the world meant for me. I was always promised.

–Let me kiss you, and we can break the spell.

–I'm waiting for the prince.

She snapped at me.

–Are you listening to me?

–Yeah, the story about you mother getting sick and passing out while you were at school.

–You weren't paying attention.

–I'm sure that you told me that story before.

–One time I was at home with all the lights on in the house because I was scared. But I couldn't get the light on in the den. I was in the dining room and I could see the light in that room flashing like there was a ghost. I've felt presences in the house. I know that it is haunted. At night, I can hear whispers. The ghosts are active.

–Tell me about the erotic feeling.

–It burns inside. Then it starts to warm me all over.

–I know what that is...

–No, you don't. Then it feels like this entity is taking me over.

–You're not touching yourself.

–You saw me. Did I move my hands beneath my skirt?

–Well, you used muscle contractions. They can induce orgasms.

–Quit being perverse.

–You’re the one talking about erotic ghosts.

–I could sense a presence.

–So be it.

–You don’t want to talk about it.

–Tell me more.

–When it first came over me, I tried to block it out. Just shut it away. But I could feel his touch. He held down my hand. Grasped. Rubbed it. I felt that he was too aggressive at first. But then I felt the source of power and I just gave in. I like how it felt. It felt so good.

>>He pulled my body close to his. I could feel this heat. Almost a fear that I was giving in to. I plunged into this breeze. The humidity filled me.

>>The two of us just fell into each other.

>>–Take me.

>>I fainted in his arms. I awoke to these kisses. And that burning. I wanted him. Intense pangs of hunger spun around me. I kissed him deep. Kisses that surrounded me. They were so hypnotic. So slow and soothing. His tongue became so insistent. I resisted but he drew me in. I loved the coincidence.

>>I felt nothing but ecstasy in his arms. As he pulled me closer, I melted in him. The surrender. I gave in completely.

>>This entity passed through me and I in it. I could not return to waking life. But plunged deeper and deeper in the fantasy. The kiss penetrated deeper and deeper. My whole body was alive. It vibrated with the same excitement.

>>He was mysterious but I knew him so well by his caresses. I would never let go of this love that was becoming more and more omnipresent.

–The challenge of a rival lover who isn’t even real.

She blushed.

–I need to tell you about this. It was the wildest passion that anyone could feel.

–It’s not a memory of something real.

–Wouldn’t you like to know.

–So it was something real.

–If it was, I don’t think that I’d be talking about it

What sustained this illusion for her? Where was the portal that linked her up to this prior experience?

–Do you want to hear more?

–I just want to look at the moon and pretend that there is a passion for me like yours.

–There is.

I was looking at her!

The next day she didn’t talk about her night visitor. But it still bore an impression on her.

–Let’s do something wild.

–What?

–Let's go to the falls.

The land around Bloomington was pretty flat, and I couldn't imagine any falls near here. The falls were about forty miles south. Part of another state park. We packed a lunch and headed there.

–I really like to travel. I was meant to be on the road.

–That I believe.

–You didn't like my ghost story.

–That's what it is a story.

–Don't you ever think that you had a past life. You've had recurring dreams that keep extending their story. Maybe just maybe, it's another world beckoning you. And you have the chance to cross over for good. The real choice in your life. And you just let go.

–I'm just dealing with my decision to come to Bloomington for the summer.

–Do you have regrets.

–No—none at all. But my work is going a little slow.

–You're spending too much time on picnics and chasing ghosts.

The falls provoked a unique power in me. Dorothea gave me her hand as we looked at them.

–I just want to plunge in them and feel the waters run over me.

–It is pretty rocky there and there's a sign that says keep out of the water.

–I never let signs bother me.

–I thought that you were afraid of water.

–I did have a bad experience. Some guy held my head under water. I was going to report him to the police but he was a family friend.

She didn't want to go on about that story. Better to stick to fantasy...

He had that frozen look, faraway and lost. He had nothing to do with anything else in my life. That was why I found him so appealing.

–Magda.

I turned to face him.

–How did you know my name?

–Everyone's heard talk of you.

I blushed.

–Is that how they say it?

He gave me this weird face. Like he knew something about me. He knew what passions inflamed me.

–I know that you're given to another man. But I have something that he doesn't have.

–And what is that. He cares for me better than anyone else can.

–I have life.

Did he mean to say immortal life?

–You seem like a demon.

–And you complement me so well. Maybe that serves something so well in you--so well.

I gave him a haughty smile.

–So what are you here for.

–Games.

–And I am some kind of prize.

–No, I don't mean that. Games...the river and all that.

–The river.

That association of the man and the river. Something that my lover suspected.

–Those no goods. The gamblers and the thieves.

But he seemed so dashing.

–Your ways seems so different than everyone else from Indiana.

–I'm not from here. I'm a man of the world.

She thought of Evansville. Of sin. Of that strange appeal.

–Maybe we could go somewhere.

–I think that my man is coming back.

–If it was me, I wouldn't have left you alone so long.

–I'm an independent woman.

–Independent about your satisfaction.

–Whatever do you mean.

–In your heart of hearts, you know exactly what I mean. When he kisses you, whatever do you think of.

–I think of him. Of the beauty of the kiss.

–And the passion that is to follow. Do you think of the passion that is to follow.

–Or course, I think about that.

–From him. Really! You don't let your mind wander. You don't feel that promise but never the answer. There is something that is always wanting.

He stared me deeply in the eyes.

–Don't stop!

My passions tore me up. I could never satisfy my desires without getting away from my man. But all my life had been devoted to this life. To keeping everything that I had.

Who was this brash stranger. And if I gave in to him, he would eventually be off like the wind. I had heard of these men from Evansville who had destroyed women.

I could feel that wind blowing over the prairie. When I looked at the moon, I felt this longing. I was not meant for a life so fragile. I had to break the glass.

I let him leave without saying anything. My lover found out about our game, and his jealousy was ferocious.

Worse, my guilt was even greater, and I could feel it affecting my every experience. It spread over me. This paralysis. I realized who was this man. He was not just a stranger. he was strange because he was so familiar. He was death. My death. And he appealed to me in the way that my passion engulfed me. I burned with a radical intensity for this new lover. Someone who could take away the fear that I felt for my man.

And a passion spread over me. I could feel death pulling me in. It was coming over me in a more and more affective way. I embraced death. The permanence of my passion.

The absurd fumbling of my lover. How he would pleasure himself and only suggest a glimpse of paradise for me.

The parasitical appeal of death became more and more appealing.

I dressed as if I was in mourning. My new lover came to me only at night. In the day, I became more and more pale as he sucked the life from me. At night, he would draw me to him. This passion brought us both to life.

My man noticed how my demeanor changed. He encouraged my dissipation by his cruelty. To separate myself from him, I would lock him out of my chamber. I refused to see him at night.

He called for a doctor who pronounced my condition. He prescribed drugs that only left me more and more isolated. Hallucinations. I seemed to invite my demon lover.

He would even haunt my daytime. It became harder and harder to distinguish day from night.

I imagined taking all the pills that the doctor had given me. My man discovered me at the last moment. I almost expired. But the doctor's efforts revived me.

I had an attendant by my bedside. My demon would never come to me while she was there. Or he seemed to have this perverse desire to invite us both to play.

I slipped away and reunited with him. In the morning, I was found collapsed on the bed. It progressed worse and worse.

I was so frail. I did not want to keep up my strength. I gave in. I loved my new condition because it separated me from the living. I could now travel to my heart's content.

I understood the stranger's offer, immortal life. But it was the promise offered to the damned.

I walked among the living but I was dead. I lived the curse and tried to pass it to them.

One night I penetrated my man's sleep chamber. I came to him with evil intentions. To finally take him over with the spirit that haunted me. His wits saved him and he cast me from the room. The attendant came to his rescue and took me back to bed.

I was placed on death watch. It was so gloomy and chilling. I felt at peace.

They only saw me prostrate. In my heart, I traveled at night. I sought my demon and he found me and the two of us rode the night.

He drove deep into me and found a power that I had never beheld. We were married to the night, and in this darkness we held together.

We sat on the bed together. I was looking at the pillow. How it embraced her head each night.

–What are you doing? I said that you could come in her. I didn't want you playing with my things.

I laughed.

–Things are changing about my life. I may not be able to spend so much time with you in the future.

–What are you saying?

–That I have my own life. You need to be prepared for that.

–I'm the one with work to do.

–I just want you to know that you are special to me.

I didn't know what I could say to her.

The late morning light peeked through her curtains. I became immersed in that fragile glow that reflected off her face. Like china. I tried to preserve that feeling.

–You have to let go of me.

I couldn't. I felt the attachment grow stronger. Even as she was pushing me away.

–*I love you.*

–*That's not going to make me stay.*

–*Then I'll come with you.*

–*And leave all this behind.*

–*I've already left it behind.*

The agony is how we have to follow our fantasy until its end.

–What are you doing there?

–I'm doing a puzzle.

–I didn't think that anyone had the patience for that sort of thing.

–It's Niagara Falls. Have you ever seen it?

–In another life.

–Really. I'd love to go. Maybe we could take a trip there.

–I think that it's meant for lovers.

–We could pretend.

I only felt my love come alive when I thought that we could do away with the rival for my love. My man kept me as a prisoner. He threatened my life. Only his demise would really satisfy me.

I thought about the mill once more. It had such a dominant presence in her experience. No wonder she made the reference to the Falls. It all fit a pattern.

I wanted to pursue it to its roots. Maybe this would illuminate my attachment for Dorothea. But our contacts seemed to emphasize the mundane. She made assumptions about our relationship. she wanted me to drive her places. Do weird favors for her.

–Can't you go to the store yourself? –You're already coming over here.

–If I stop by at the store, it's going to take more time.

–And you have better things to do than spend time with me.

–I'm not saying that. You just need to take some initiative.

–You sound like my mother.

–Heaven help me.

–It will. You just have to ask.

–I'm asking. But you keep making it harder and harder for me.

–Very funny!

–You're a riot yourself.

He'd never agree if there wasn't a promise of something more. Each new embrace revealed more. I was using him towards my own ends. But I couldn't let on. And the more that I needed his services, the more that I forgot about what else might be my actual reward.

–*What has made you so cold.*

–*His jealousy.*

–*He had his reasons.*

–*So do I. Hold me closer.*

–I'm already squeezing you with all my might.

A reticence had always marked Dorothea's encounters with men. Publicly she was a bundle of confidence and flattery. But when she was alone with a man, she entered a trance. She let them lead her through the forbidden. That way she could always deny any depth to their connection. As the summer dragged on her attachment to Ray became more profound. She became intent on divulging the details of her intimacies.

His tongue stretching its trail along her back became a perilous invitation. She no longer could deny the depth of the physical union. Her whole body vibrated with her new realization. I was an uncomfortable witness left to recognize affinities that were too strong for words.

In my head, I still held an uncomfortable image of her in a paralytic immobility while Ray had his way with her. For some instant she felt a glimmer of pleasure. But it was contorted with her hesitancy before his advances. She gave way. She couldn't help it. There was something so reassuring about his concentration. Nothing distracted him from his purpose, and she felt a sense of complete unity with him.

For days she could think about nothing more than that glimmer. In the heat of her mind, its passion started to burn. From that moment forward, Ray's touch held this strange fascination for her. She craved nothing less than it.

Even if there was a sense of fear, a twinge of guilt, she felt the wave start to overcome. Ray's arguments had struck her as entirely reasonable. Even if Ray was closer to her Bloomington background, she had hoped her character was breaking from its origins. But there were no reasons that could hold sway against the incredible pull that she now experienced. She tried to find some kind of depth in her other preoccupations. But everything just said the same thing. She felt like a damn that was waiting to burst. As she resisted, the pressures became more and more incredible. She shuddered before this immensity.

She had never been one to hold in these feelings. Her extroverted nature made it so easy to act out all her feelings. But if she let on too much, she condemned herself to a passion without any recourse. She didn't want to let go of her former reserve. She overcompensated by trying to be too social. When Ray wasn't around, she'd call me up almost as a safety valve. I read much more into these calls and thought that there was some cooling in the ardor for Ray. She was only preparing a more profuse flow.

Before all this attention, it was next to impossible to convince myself that she held all this affection for Ray. It was easier to convince myself that the wolf would always chase the lonely messenger through the woods. And that she would need the services of an equally predatory hunter to give her rescue.

–I'm fine.

Those words seemed to paralyze me. My vocation itself was endangered. I could hardly offer her confidence. And it was difficult just trying to protect myself.

Sure she said she was fine, but I recognized a fire burning out of control. I needed to tame the flames.

–Isn't there anything that I can do?

–You're great. You're really great. But there's nothing at all that you can do...nothing.

I wanted a stronger reassurance. Or a clue that my actual suspicions were well founded.

There was something that Ray couldn't offer. He never would. But he would make her independent in more untenable way. As the practicalities of life crept up on her, she would have to take cover more and more frequently. But for the time being, he offered the perfect refuge. She continued to refresh herself in this oasis.

It was inevitable the direction that her passions would take. She could not keep her growing admiration on an abstract level. She was transforming before my eyes. The bubbly social butterfly was becoming weighed down with her new affection. And her meditative side was assuming an all too real physical bent. Just thinking about his body brought her into communion with him. This affective intercourse only became more profound with each minute. She was setting herself on a course where there was no turning back.

I wondered if full path of this relationship could sustain the complexities of her emotion. Given the rather one-track attentiveness of Ray, he could do nothing but go along with her metamorphosis. If I challenged the extent of his actual commitment, she only took it as the actual confirmation of his feelings.

—After all, he's actually part of this. He knows all kinds of things about me that you don't understand. You don't have his patience. Or his tolerance. All you do is make fun of Bloomington.

—I thought that you were the one that wanted to go to Hollywood.

—That may come in good time. But sometimes we have to appreciate what we have.

She reinforced my realization about all the shortcomings of Bloomington. What was I trying to hold on to? The myth was dissipating before my eyes.

I tried to create some story to accompany her ascendance and my demise. I could inspire no Cleopatra. The summer heat seemed unbearable. I avoided the nights on her porches lest I had to further confront my growing disadvantage.

Long days in the library and early bedtimes offered an immediate cure for my woe. But she still needed my counsel.

—I really think that you may be right. I'm letting the physical cloud my judgement.

—Are you telling me that your love may not be all that?

—I'm just saying that I don't know what's happening to me. Just because you do something with a guy that affects you in a deep way doesn't mean that either of you really feel anything that deep.

—Have you decided to finally pursue pleasure for its sake?

—You're making fun of me.

—I can't help it. You've been parading around this little tryst for the last month.

—It's not like that. I asked you here because I thought that maybe you could help. But you're just making light of the situation.

—I'm not making fun of you. It's just that you've let things progress too fast.

—You can't say that. It's not happening to you like it's happening to me.

—You wanted to talk to me about things.

—Maybe you've just got your own interest and their getting in the way.

I could feel a hardening of her attitude. This was where she had worked so hard to convince herself that Ray was the right guy.

—I'm finally doing something on my own. Something that means so much to me.

And the small town mirror was becoming so vivid to her. That rebellion that ended us only being a side road back to the same end.

–You had doubts.

–But maybe you helped me figure out what I really want. Who I really like. He sent me flowers.

–He did. Let me see them.

–They’re inside.

They had opened up triumphantly in a vase on her bed. I lay on her bed next to the stuffed animals. She curled up on her easy chair.

–It feels so comfortable in here with you.

I smiled.

–Don’t take it the wrong way.

I didn’t.

–You’re right again. Things have been moving too fast. I just can’t catch my breath.

She described a sex scene with Ray. She paused before a very vivid moment.

–And my body just opened up to him. It said, you are mine. All the tension of that day just faded away. I showed him myself with utter frankness. The raw honesty was overwhelming. I almost came before he crawled inside me. I could hardly feel him moving in him. He was so much a part of me. And then I just burst. I gave him everything. I couldn’t hold back. I don’t know what to do with all that intimacy.

>>Part of me feels that there’s got to be something else in his life. I feel like he could just crush me. I need you to bail me out.

–You have what you want. What more do you want?

–I’ve given something, but I don’t think that I’ve gotten anything back. I just feel so totally alone. That’s why I feel like I just want to be with him all the time. Like I’m becoming some kind of addict.

–Part of that is imaginary. You’re just giving in to that feeling.

–It’s not imagination. I’m aching inside. I can’t do anything else.

She curled up tighter in the chair. I wanted to hold her but I lay back further in her bed.

–But he doesn’t know.

–He’s go to know.

–He doesn’t.

–Then you can’t trust him.

–You can’t say that. You can’t say that at all. He just feels so great when he’s with me.

–Leave it a that.

–What’s that? Great is everything.

–What’s the problem?

–I want him to say something. I’m afraid that this is just about sex. I heard rumors at school. And some of those stories about him were true.

–But he’s settling down. He’s settling down with you.

–That’s not enough.

–I can’t say what he needs to say. I can’t be Ray. You’ve already closed me off.

–But when you really love someone...

–You’ll do anything for them.

–I still feel held back. I love what he does to me. But sometimes, I still freeze up. Or I lose my passion. Unless he just drives me crazy.

–You don’t seem able to do anything else.

–I am getting tired. You’re going to have to leave soon.

–I was just getting comfortable.

–Get off my bed.

–Your bed.

As she came closer, I took a pillow and swiped her with it.

–OK, I’m going.

As her passions overflowed, she saw that she was at a crossroad. Her desire sent her over the edge. It gave her the reply that she needed from Ray. And she used me to admit things that he never could say. All these things together made her attachment to him all the greater.

As she spread her legs for him, she could sense that internal glow. She gave all of herself to him. She could feel his tongue on her inner leg. He left no doubt about the limit of his pursuit. His kisses felt so great inside her. This glow became inflamed. Even in retrospect, she returned to the same fire. This was the certainty of their connection.

Her whole body came alive. His caresses radiated from the concentricity of the fire. It burst outward and throughout. Each moment reflecting on the connection brought her closer to that same explosion.

Where she had previously protected regions of her body, now she surrendered all to him. She wanted to mark this passing over. To write the possession on her body.

He could taste the intensity where these magic regions withheld their awesome powers. His tongue explored the turn of the flesh. So supple and responsive.

She cooed.

–When you’re uncomfortable with someone that you meet, its hard to let go. Sometimes when they touch you, you tense up. You mark these points of denial that you just won’t go past. Boundaries. This really messes with you. You don’t feel like your body’s whole.

–Maybe it’s trying to tell you something.

–I know. That’s the whole point. But when you give in, then you’re really sharing something deep. You can feel your soul swallowed whole by your lover.

–That sounds very descriptive.

–That’s how it is. That extreme cold afterwards. When you need his arm around you.

–It really doesn’t sound that fun.

–It is. Let me tell you. This is nothing that I’ve ever felt before.

–But you were so tense before. It’s just a new balance of your emotions. Don’t take it for more than it is.

–I’m not. It’s wonderful for what it is. I remember it like it is. Keep it this way forever.

Where she was so talkative with me, she craved her introspective moments with Ray. The two of them lay next to each other and held on so tightly. Neither wanted to admit to any hollow between them. There was such a certainty in the flesh. The response was a stark contrast to the other doubts that beset her.

She turned over to kiss him and lay on top of him. He pulled her closer. The flame

reignited. They again yielded to the explosive passion.

–I don't want to end up not knowing. There are some questions in life that can't be answered. You just have to live with that. And if you get too concerned that there's something else, then it'll only destroy. Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you.

–What are you afraid to tell Ray?

–I don't want you to try to undercut our relationship. I just need you around.

–I'm not one of your little bears.

–You know what I mean. This is so confusing. I just don't want to crack up.

I wanted to somehow restrain her. But my protests only fueled the relationship. It was only when I was silent that she admitted to fundamental incompatibility between them.

–Once your lover has given so much to you, you feel that you have to give something back. I just go crazy about his body. Kisses on his chest. Whispers in his ears. Just staring in his eyes.

I felt that she was now trying to offer me lessons. It was a little tiring for me. I needed to break their complacency.

–I love squeeze his butt cheeks as he enters me. It reminds me of our extreme affection.

–This is getting a little graphic for me.

–At first, it was hard for me to go down on him. But now that I feel that I am inside him, it seems so natural to take him inside of me.

–That's unbelievable.

I didn't want to give in to her phallic musings. The next thing I knew, I'd be hearing her laurels about the thing itself.

–When he puts it inside me, I just feel so much together. Like this was meant to be. We just fit together. I love it when I can ride him.

She giggled.

I envision another scene. They are sitting at a table. He runs his hand through her hair. Something too intense for her to bear. She moves her head slightly to accept his gesture. As if he is making up for all those other guys in her past. The abusive ones. That set her up for something.

–Please forgive me. I'm not trying to hurt you.

She had no room for forgiveness.

Ray wasn't like that. He offered her a promise that felt so real.

–It's not just what I feel. It's what I know. And I have this need. Something that I want to show him.

But now the showing started to take on so much more. It wasn't just another surface.

Her hands ran along his legs. She pressed her face to his stomach. She held him. She opened her palms against his thighs.

He ran his hands through her hair. She tossed her head to accept his gesture. A thread of memories passed through her. Perhaps experiences that had nothing to do with him.

But more than anything else, she could feel him grow inside her. She wanted to really hold him. to leave no doubt. It wasn't just her idea. It was all real.

She ran her hands down along her body. There was a strange release in her body even as she felt him tensing up. She kissed his thigh.

–I know his body better than he knows it.

She also knows something more frightening.

–Go in.

She could perceive his concentration.

–Could he keep it going?

Her tongue was gracious and constant. She drew all of him inside her. She watched him disappear as the world engulfed her.

She was everywhere. Her kisses became more tender.

All his body becomes more and more part of her. His power now unavoidable.

Everything about him was completely transparent for her. Rather obtrusive.

Did he take this for granted. That was her fear. As he got more and more excited this left a hollow inside her.

–I need you to offer me some reassurance. What can you say to me?

–Don't stop. You make me feel so good.

I wondered did he ever say that. Did he give any significance to any of her thoughts?

–Have you ever tried different sexual positions?

What was she trying to ask me.

–Something about being with Ray. He makes me feel so free.

What was free?

–I just get so afraid when I reach that point. It's just about enhancing that high. Feeling as jacked up as possible..

she didn't want to think about anything else. Way beyond his pleasure. Or him living inside of her. This was it! The pleasure just for its own sake. Something seemed to shake her from the inside.

She could feel herself floating in space. Now she reached that point where space seemed to answer back. that burning that spread all over her. The quelling. Then bursting past that point.

IT.

–Do I need to tell you about it?

So physical without any place to escape. So dynamic. She gave in to him in all its explosiveness. But it has nothing to do with him. So athletic. All about the rawness of the feeling. It attacked her. It stripped everything away but that brutal realization. Even then she would not abandon its regime.

She had positioned him to do nothing less than provoke that extreme.

She wanted to reach to something in him. Particular in their conjunction. But all she could feel was the separation. And this incredible feeling. The two of them were tied so close. But for now this had nothing at all do to with him. It could have been anyone.

–You're leaving something out.

–I told you everything.

–You're really telling me too much. Still you've left something about this conjunction.

–That's what frightens me so much about all of this. It's driving me crazy. And I can think of nothing else. He no longer has anything to do with this. But then he has everything to do with this. If I really let him care, then all he can do is destroy me.

Wasn't this the destruction that she had always coveted? Now she held it close to herself because this was all there was. She wanted to get past all the conveniences. Just to hit this spot.

–That's why it's all about Ray. Because any other guy might think that there's more to this than this is. There can't be.

She was out of breath, but she would not give in. She worked him to death.

–There's not much more to me. I'm human. I'm not a bloody machine.

Machine or not, she had found the on switch and would not let off on it. At first, he felt amazed by the discovery. But now he faced the brutal flip side. Without this assault, they would be nothing. What he had casually given in to was the essence of their connection. No wonder he had never asked anything real of her along the way.

For what it was, he was convinced of his own prowess. That he was the cause of all this action. Worse, that she utterly needed in him.

In some negative way she did. Negative in that she could not attain this same place with anyone else. He was rather brittle in his lack of understanding. He almost thought that there was something that he should know. This only made him more powerless.

All along he had wanted her to strip off all the masks. He thought that this made her subservient to his deepest wishes. For all appearances, this seemed to be the case. He felt that he could ask anything of her. This was the tragic part. She had made the ultimate sacrifice. At the same time, she had crossed over to the other side. She assumed an entire independence. She roamed a nether world.

So he welcomed the succubus as she made her way. She could not suck out his being because he had totally given his being to this pursuit. At its most intense point, he also realized that this had nothing to do with her. In that gasping they both clawed at each other. He was immersed in the massive flow. He drowned in her. He was so involved with her that he couldn't share anything else. His work was his and hardly affected her world. She almost forgot what he did. She let him talk on. And he revealed nothing of substance.

He could have worked in a dairy or serviced copy machines for all she knew. Dinners really didn't cost that much in Bloomington. He promised to take her to Chicago or Indianapolis. They did make some short excursions. But something about their coincidence was so overwhelming as not to allow much time for anything else.

He feared this might be his downfall. But he already had his eyes on a house and visions of setting down in Bloomington. Although there was nothing really settled about their relationship. They almost needed jealousy to sustain it. She was still suspicious of his friends. She felt that there were all trying to come on to her. This also seemed like the perfect excuse for his dalliances whatever they might be.

Even nights late at work seemed to be reason enough for her anger. She arrived at my apartment crying a few times. The evidence was mounting. But the passion was so extreme that she wouldn't let up. Even with an arm full of evidence, she still found herself running back to him.

–This is just becoming about sex.

And she did want to take him apart the minute that he crossed the threshold. But it was more to make up for something that he could not offer. He would never offer. Something that he refused her.

She felt that she was taking over his place. I hardly saw her at her mother's any more. It almost became reason to avoid driving by there.

I remember seeing them out once. They had been driving around and stopped for ice cream. I was on an evening walk just on the edge of the ice cream store parking lot. I deliberately avoided looking at her. By the time she actually cried out, I indeed seemed too far away. I didn't want her making a display for me. Ray had no doubts about what I thought. He knew that something was wrong, and I could only remind him more of that.

For my part, I was tired of being used. She had offered me a special place that she was so quick to dismiss.

In her heart, Dorothea knew that there was something hopeless about her attachment to Ray. But she couldn't make the break. That didn't stop her from provoking a blow out at the same ice cream store. He had been angry that she had spent most of the evening with a former love interest. He kept returning to the same even over and over again.

—I'm trying to get into my cherry surprise with real cherries, and all your doing is giving me shit about this afternoon. You were late from work. What do you want me to do? Spend all the evening at the house waiting for you to come by. It wasn't as if your called.

She ended up tossing the ice cream at him. Everyone was laughing and that just made him more pissed.

I was never clear about what followed. She ended up over at my place screaming and banging on doors. There was something about him driving around the parking lot and just screeching his brakes. She even claimed in one version of the story that he had driven his car at her. But under the circumstances I doubted it. All eyes were already on them. I couldn't believe that he'd risk all those witnesses.

—They were real cherries.

I laughed. We both did.

I imagined the deep red stains all over his white shirt. He was probably at home with stain remover at this very moment. Was this the trials of love?

—I wanted something like this to happen. I wanted him to break up with me.

—Why don't you break up with him?

—I'd be devastated if it happened.

—So you just let it happen. And you waste your time until it does.

—I don't have the will that you think that I have. This is way too adult for me.

—You're the one who have dreams of living with him in Bloomington.

—The way that you say it makes it seem like such a bad thing.

I touched her hair. She pushed my hand away. Her face was still streaked with tears.

—I don't want you to think that your part of this. I'm just over guys. All guys.

She stared at me with one of her weird stares so full of meaning, so silent to the both of us.

—I loved how we used to sit on the porch and just tell stories.

She was overcome by the past as she always had been. Her life seemed much better to her as a movie that she could play over and over again. That's why her time with Ray was such a contradiction for her. Too much was happening at once. She had none of the breaks that gave her a chance to catch her breath.

–I almost have to break up with him if my life is going to mean anything.

–I guess you do.

–Don't make fun of me?

–Did he really drive his Mustang at you. That would have been a mess if he had hit something.

–Especially me.

–He would never do that would he?

–He was really driving like a madman. I could see murder in his eyes.

–You're just saying that so I'll be more sympathetic with your position.

–You are?

–That goes without saying.

She had me wrapped around her little finger. That gave her the confidence that she could do the same with Ray. It also marked the limits of our connection. She'd let me sit there with her. But when Ray wanted her back she'd go running.

This time there was something more serious about their break. It was the rest that she needed. But she became very restless when flowers did not arrive after a few days.

–Maybe, he's over me.

–I don't think that he appreciated being embarrassed in front of everyone. He built his reputation on taming your wild streak.

–If you put it that way, I never want to see him again. This is not the rodeo.

I really laughed.

–You don't like being tied up now and then.

I think that I hit a nerve. She suddenly became all white.

–Did I say something weird?

I could sense a darkness about her Bloomington childhood. Something that she had never really explored with me. I was really surprised. I think that I myself was so caught up in the dazzle. What had really inspired the butterfly's flight.

–Don't look at me that way?

–What way am I looking at you.

–You know. Like I've done something wrong. You just feel because of all your knowledge that you know who I am. I don't know who I am. How can you know?

–I observe.

–I'm not a character in one of those damn novels that you are reading all the time.

I really didn't want to insult her. Her battle with Ray had opened a deeper hurt. One that probably could not be mended with him. For the time being, this convinced her that she would be able to get over it all. If she just kept to herself, then he'd call. She didn't want to be another one of his conquests. She didn't look back fondly on that part of high school.

–Ray called and apologized.

–I thought you were the one who threw the ice cream.

–He said that he deserved it. He's going to take me to Indianapolis for the weekend. He's got a hotel and we're going out to a restaurant. It sounds so romantic.

–I guess that's what you need.

The resolution had been so easy. I had really hoped that she might come to some real

understanding about herself. She was right. I was getting caught up in one of my novels.

It was excruciating trying to deal with her time away. It was only for a weekend, but I really felt that she had made some breakthrough. I had been holding my breath all through this adventure with Ray. I felt that she was doing the same after the fight. She made some real steps in separating herself from the experience.

But now she was running headfirst back into the same thing. I didn't have her confidences to share. I called some of the grad students to meet me for drinks. But it all ended in an early evening, and I was left to myself. This only made things more difficult. What was I supposed to do. I wished that he would just disappear like a stain. But there was a certain indelible quality to the cherry ice cream stains. Stains that would never come out. They reiterated how close they were. And even as I felt it fade, I was still convinced of a reality in her life that would never have anything to do with me.

Perhaps their bliss would only end up reminding the ultimate hollow that existed between them. Even the ardor would be so intense, that its dissipation would only remind her of the actual intent of the trip.

He had promised so much to her. This was all that he could offer.

–The dinner was so wonderful. I had braised beef.

Corn fed no doubt. The culinary arts of Indianapolis were impressive. I needed to restrain my cynicism.

I was reminded of a delight that held greater appeal for her.

Dorothea spent most of the next couple of weeks moping around. She refused to call it a break up. She wouldn't make it clear whether or not she would resume her friendship with Ray. For the time being she merely acted as if he didn't exist. Due to her overall gloom, this seemed strange. But she suggested that the actual source of her doldrums was some hidden cause from her childhood. That this was just the window that opened up the old hurt. Even her mother thought this was bizarre. But there was little that she could do to guard against a deepening of the depression. Her mother left Dorothea alone in the hopes that her independence might guide her through a particularly dark moment.

Perhaps I could find a glimpse into this lethargy. But she was convinced that I had nothing to do with her mood and felt it best to try to shut me out as well.

–You can just go about your day as if nothing has happened. It's entertainment to you. This is completely real for me.

I thought that she was selling our connection way short.

–Dorothea, you're being a real creep.

–That's easy for you to say.

I don't think that I can save myself. First the trembling. Why is this happening.

–I'm going to be OK. I just need some time by myself.

Then the shaking. Just all over. And afterwards, the muscle ache. Worse, it all implies something deeper. The fear.

I see my body coming apart. All the shaking is doing its damage. I can see the lines in my face. It's all cracking. Noises in the night. I can't sleep.

I need something to sleep.

–It's not about Ray. Ray has nothing to do with this.

–Maybe we could do something today.
 –I’ve got this massive headache and I feels so weak.
 >>Do you know what it’s like when something that you really want it taking away from you. They once tried to throw away my toys. As some kind of punishment.
 She was making up stories to explain.
 –Like a severe allergic reaction from which there was no hope of coming down.
I need to be sedated. To just quiet down. I need to take something.
 –I just feel all damaged.
 –You taken it too far
 –From long ago this was something that I had to pretend had never happened.
What would be your scene of cruelty.
All of this seemed like an illusion.
 –You’re just doing this to yourself. You just have to stop.

–You don’t really have a chance here.
 –What are you saying here?
 –Just because I’m not with Ray doesn’t really mean that you have any hope

–Are you in this too?
 –Where have you been all this time?

I can feel a plot settle around me. As if this story has sucked me in deeper. This Ray. Why am I in Bloomington?. The image of Dorothea starts to loom larger for me.
 I am trying to grasp the damage.
Do you know what I am talking about. It happened a while ago.
I thought that this was all about Ray.
It is about Ray. I couldn’t stop him.
Look at my wrists.
What have you been doing to yourself?
I’ve been trying to get it out.
That’s the only way to really get it in.
 –How is it affecting you?
 –I want more. I want someone who can offer me a little more.
Where did you put it?
 –Where did you put it?
 –I put it in a place where no one can find it.
 –I can find it. I can get it out. If it wasn’t you, it would be me.
I can feel the damage—something left inside of me...I feel like a sponge...all wet pressed down...all seeping out...
 –I need you to trust me.
 –Trust is something that I never feel good at. I’m not too good at it.
 –Who’s going to look after you.
 –I can take care of myself.

This is where the story gets really weird.

–He’s trying to kill me.

–Isn’t that what love does. It does this ugly turn.

I can’t help but go under.

Did you see her lips—so kissable.

I feel this disease in me

It really doesn’t hurt. You learn to live with it...you end up getting off on it...

That’s a really unusual turn.

You just have to get used to it. It’s just going on in the had.

You can’t get used to something that’s not part of you. That you can never make part of you.

I feel this chill, this paralysis. All these unfinished tasks. And what I begin, I cannot finish. So there is nothing that I can get done. I remain in the paralysis.

People around me try to help. But they are not here with me. They are all in the audience, trying to make it better. But it is comfortable out there and the spotlight is on me. They pretend to encourage me. But they just want me to entertain them.

I feel this dull lethargy. Choking. Sneezing. But a dryness. What is this? I feel like I am allergic to something. So unspecific. But something shaking me.

It is the middle of summer. I feel the heat greater than ever. I sweat; I feel faint. And in the heart of this heat a fear, a chill, the deep freeze. A shuddering. I am shaken to the bone by this. At first without physical form. And then gripping me with my shivering. I need to pull the covers over me.

There is no rescue. The eternity of this summer. Endless because of the prospect that I will be over come before its end. I cannot pretend that the fall will bring relief. the end might strike me before my plans for the future set in. This is an eternity of the now!

The day is so long and stretches into night. The light says it all. It penetrates. It does not leave any escape. This is my nightmare.

I embrace the phantoms that surround. I try to use their shapes to brace. But they pull me down. The night makes itself know in its transparency. Humid but so thin in its form. There is no shelter. It is oppressive. It unfolds around me. I can peel it away and there is the daytime asserting itself.

I feel nauseous. I balance myself. The dizziness. The pains in my gut grow worse. I eat. I cannot eat. I feel intense pangs of hunger even when I have eaten.

Is there anything that you can do for me. The shortness of breath. I am waiting for something rather uncertain.

Just one good night.

Something more intense begins to impress itself. Nightmarish in its quality.

I can’t sleep. I don’t want to sleep. I feel that I am being dragged. Held under. My breathing becomes choppy and irregular—gasps.

I try to catch myself. I sit down. I am immobile, but I can feel that I am being tossed.

This is not me. Who is doing this to me? Is there a form or a person doing this to me?

I cannot focus my intent. No wonder I am easily taken advantage of.

I know this story. Someone has taken me prisoner. They have tied me to the bed. They have gagged me.

I want to stop this.

My end is close.

He's going to do all these awful things to me. Going to choke me. I'm not really part of this. I'm watching myself.

I can feel it burning so deep inside. Too deep to touch.

A dull itch over all my skin.

I have been touched by it.

How it penetrates and enters the blood. I can feel it flowing through me.

I am being invaded. It is not just physical. It is a spirit that is taking me over. Like a ventriloquist it moves me, it speaks for me, it is taking me over...

I can barely move. Words form but nothing can be heard. I am witness to a spectacle but cannot tell anyone—what is happening?

Gesture, trying to explain. But my movements are too rudimentary to form words.

Uncontrollable shaking. Noises. Squawking. I feel the sounds but I can't hear them.

There is a nightmarish effect. A quaking all around me.

This spectacle. I am displayed. Again these flashing lights.

We are looking at you?

I try to make a game of it. Go along. Wait for the visit. I know what's going to happen. I won't let it happen this way.

—If you say something, we're going to hurt you.

—More than you've already hurt me.

I am looking at myself on a screen.

Surrounded by another audience, all giggling.

—Why didn't they give her more?

—They will that comes later.

Now I feel like I am being operated on. I am spread out on a table.

—We need to replace this part.

—Replace it. Just take it out. Take that out and put this in.

What are they talking about. I want to resist but the anesthetic is too thick.

Or not enough,

—I wasn't supposed to remember this.

—You don't have control over your memory.

I twist and turn.

—You didn't tell me that this was going to happen!

—Just relax. Once you get past the initial stages, you will enjoy it.

But it continues.

—Just keep working.

Trying to turn the channel. I don't want to watch this anymore.

Words are being said for me. They are not my words.

—That looks pretty on you.

—It does.

Say it doesn't. Just stop this from happening.
I have to go along. I relax and feel these waves come over me. That sense of doing something wrong.
–Don't worry. They tell you that it's bad. But they're just keeping it for themselves. I want to be rewarded.
–Don't say anything and we'll give you some toys. I have all the toys that I need.
Don't say anything. Is this the beginning? I get so chatty. But it's all silly. And when I really want to say something, nothing comes out. Can you help me?
Put your hand in my mouth and pull out what it in there—those words that harden in the mouth.
Here are your words. We are giving them back to you. They are all so useless. I accommodate to the feeling. This makes me feel much better.
–It doesn't matter what you say. It never does. It's what you do.
–This is so much fun. Do it again.
–We're going to photograph you this time.
–Show us what you can do.
No, the flash hurts.

The flesh is flesh.
I want you to like me. Do you like me. I can make you feel better.
–You have to promise not to tell anyone.
I want to tell someone. I'm telling you. Are you listening?
–If you show me something, I'll show you something.
I think that I understand what you want. You want to see more. But you have seen it all.
–There is one thing that you haven't shown me. Your fear.
I can feel hands wrap around my neck
–This is not very loving.
I have trouble breathing.
–It's your cold. Did you take something for it?
–I thought that you were the doctor.
–I'm not a real doctor. I'm just playing doctor. But take this and you won't feel a thing.
I go all numb.
–You have to do more to me if I'm ever going to feel it.
He squeezes harder.
–This is all just a game. Tell me when to stop.
I want to say stop. I wanted to say stop long ago but cannot form words.
–Stop!
–I know how much you like this.
I need to hide. There is so much light. Too much light for me to take...
Where can I escape? –How old were you when that picture was taken?
Did they take the other pictures. Where are the pictures?
–You're making a game about your past.

–That’s why it’s the past. It’s gone. You can laugh about it.

It wasn’t really me. I can say that all the time.

–I’m engaged now. A wonderful guy is going to take me away from here.

–Take you away from me.

That’s not funny. That’s not how it happened.

Flash!

–You’re on the big screen. What do you think?

It hurts. Take it off.

–You really like scenes like that. You want to repeat them. You can’t get off unless someone is being hurt.

That hurts too much. To much for words.

–So when you have the chance you don’t say anything. You save it up

And then it all just goes boom!

–Like the pigeons. They’re getting on somehow.

–You didn’t tell her.

–No one can tell her—it’s sort of hopeless!

–It is!

I get excited about what is not there, What is implied. The touch always promising more—another touch—layer on layer.

I want you to show me something, something that means something.

The night is already long.

I watch this from the outside. It is not about me.

I hear about the action. Can’t you move.

I think that I’ve been poisoned.

–Didn’t you wait around to see what happened.

I collapsed in the bed.

I know what is going on. what they won’t let me see.

What they won’t let you see, what is suggested.

It feels so soft. Softer with the touch.

Are you curious?

You know what curiosity does?

More than that.

Do you know what I am talking about?

You won’t let me see until you are able to touch it. Can you see it.

I can see it and point to it.

–I want to see more.

She gives in to the touch. That feels so good.

–It always does.

Give in to the touch.

Do me again that way.

So you see what I am point at..

Give in to touch.

That feels good.
Wow.
–I didn't think that you could do it right for me.
His desire coalesces in a knot.
–You're not going to be successful.
Let me touch it.
It's not a place. It's not in a place. you can't touch it.
–Did you see his touch?
Flapping around. The big effect.
Wiping around.
–I can make you all clean.
–I feel that I am missing my life.
The licking. Trailing all around.
Follow the path down until you hit a KNOT!
Separate the threads. Get your hand stuck in there. Expanding.
Can you feel it flower?
Get out of my way.
Easing the hands in. the face all absorbed in the kiss.
I can feel it all over. An atmosphere. Suffocating. I am trying to hold my breath. Tell me a secret.
The only secret is what you see.
Knotted.
Can you touch it.
–I'm Just trying to escape.
–That's what a good kiss is.
–Can you get me to your place.
–This is your plan for escape.
–Can't you do anything.
–I can take out the garbage.
–Can't you say anything. All you do is cry.
You slide down. Creep down until you can't stop.
–It feels so good. I can't do anything about it.
What are you hiding behind that hand.
–My pleasure. I am hiding what makes me feels good.
I am slipping down.
We slide together. It feels so good.
–It wasn't supposed to happen like this. IT was so fast.
–Make it happen faster.
Kiss me hard. Kiss me harder.
And the kisses have this substantial form. Like a mass.
Won't I ever be forgiven?
You brace for the collision.
Look in her face.

–I'm looking at myself in the mirror. I feel so old. What can I do.
 –Let me take your troubles away.
 She feels it way down in the heart of her body. Creeping down.
 –It's coming over me. I feel that I've been poisoned.
 You can't stop. What are you hiding underneath your hand?
 –What you cannot touch.
 But he crosses the line. This is what you have to break. And she feels it extend across her body.
 I can feel it.
 She extends her leg. He kisses the leg. He rests his face against her leg.
 Are you becoming excited.
 He buries himself in her flesh. Is this enough. Will this last. Her skin is so supple. It give to him.
 –You can't ask for more than this.
 He kisses her leg.
 You kiss my leg. The kisses move up the leg.
 What do you want? What are you trying to tell me?
 That this won't last.
 Make it last. Make your kisses last forever.
 I feel like a star. Like everyone is watching me.
 The flesh knots tight. It suggests so much more.
 The kiss.
 You swallow it all up. Refresh. This has progressed to far and you can't stop. You just let go. You open up so wide. And he just slides into you and into you and into you.
 Have you crossed the line? Are you excited?
 –Are you going to do something?
 –I want to take this into me.
 –What?
 She rests her face against his.
 It's time to move.
 –I need to leave.
 –I can show you more.
 That it is immediate. The two of them are together. They rub their bodies together. So aroused. I can't contain her.
 Her body runs against her. His tongue incenses her. The flapping. The palpitating.
 –Don't hurt me...this feels so good.
 I give in.
 The strange balance between seeing all this and being in it.
 –I can't contain all this.
 It's going faster and faster.
 –I want to get in on this.
 –Just let go.
 You can just give in.

Touch it here!
Once you have made the touch, there is no holding back.
It's over now!
Wait. Lie here and relax...let it explode for you
I need you to show me more.
–Show me more!
I slid over him.
There is no restraint.
What you've given to others, you can also give to me.
Just let go.
In the room, you can hear noises.
The sighing.
She is surrendering over and over again. It feels so tender.
–You need to really go through with it.
What you need to show...
so luxuriant. It radiates.
He can feel it by looking at it. He is getting so used to it.
It hangs before you.
What are you going to allow me to do?
–Whatever you want.
Kisses everywhere.
So luxuriant that it just passes over you.
They look so funny in there together.
It's getting me so hot. I want to touch myself.
Where is that?
You know.
Hold me tighter. I don't want to be alone.
She opens so wide for him.
Wide enough to let us take a peek. To let him watch himself. That makes it so easy. He
just slides in and moves over her. Over and over.
I feel like I am doing it to. Cascading reflection.
–Don't yell at me!
–I won't. Move it down a little more.
–That makes is feel better.
–I can move so easily.
Can you expose it to me? The mark. Can you hit the mark.
–It feels so easy.
It's happening all the time. I give you something and you give me something back.
–It's happening all the time.
–Can you give me a little extra.
–Where?
They laugh together. They pull closer for a really deep kiss.
It all feels so casual as the both of them just give in to it.

I can't pull this together. It's too much to take.

–Take something for it.

Are you laughing together?

We slide along together.

Pull me close so I can hold on until it explodes.

–Are you still thinking about it?

–I meant for this to happen.

–They left some metal in my head. Some kind of damage. It was never me.

–What?

–There was a man in my room. I could see him behind the shutter doors of the bathroom. He was moving—I could see his shadow. I tried to stay still so that he wouldn't see me. But he was there. He was watching me. He wanted to do all these things for me.

–It's only a nightmare.

–He's still here. I can feel him still here.

–None of it was real. Absolutely none of it.

–I don't want to leave my room.

The rigors of Dorothea's recovery were wearing me down. I could feel the damage affecting me. I had a friend—a sculptor—Lee. I had him stop by to see her.

He got her out of the house. He got her to come to see some of his work.

–He's real good.

–That's why I wanted you to see his stuff.

–Why didn't you tell me about him before.

–I did. But you never listened.

–He seems like such a nice guy.

I brought over some Keats to read to Dorothea. She wasn't a big fan of Romantic poetry. But the readings seemed to quiet her down.

The recovery was gradual. She started focusing on other interests. Ray just became a bad memory.

–I never loved him. I just decided. I don't know what it was. But it was a silly mistake. It was the sex. I never thought that it could take me over like that. And now I know that it really did not. There are other things that are more important in my life.

She smiled.

–Like you reading to me. I just wish that I could go somewhere.

–Give it time.

She ended up going somewhere. Chicago.

–I have something to tell you.

–What?

–Don't get mad. But you've been building up Lee so much. And he's a nice guy.

–He's a friend of mine. What the hell is going on?

–You and I are friends. Nothing more.

I went pale. I felt empty.

It had been a trust that motivated my introducing Lee to Dorothea. I didn't think that he would mess things up by coming on to her.

–It wasn't like that. I always liked her. She had always been friendly to me. It just progressed sort of naturally.

I saw her as frozen in stone. One of his sculptures.

–Now I'm a work of art.

–What's wrong with you.

She seemed to collapse on my floor.

–If you weren't going to be pleasant, you didn't have to come over. What the hell were you doing last night. Are you sick. Didn't you sleep.

–You could say that.

She was trying to remind me of something.

–Are you trying to get back at me for something?

–This is not about you. Lee is so creative. In all ways. I feel like I'm part of a work of art. Next to him, Ray was a brute—a hunter chasing a rabbit in the woods. I always felt like his prey. Sex with Lee is just—so different. I told Wendy all about it. She said that a man like that is so rare and you just have to hold on.

–I guess that you're over your blue period.

–You could say that.

But could she really. Lee's creative moments were often marked by a need for isolation, and this only fueled a contrary sense of independence on the part of Lee.

–I guess the fights are just part of love.

I didn't need to hear any of this. I also needed isolation. I needed to write up my work from the seminar for possible publication.

–I think that I have a paper that I can develop.

My summer adviser seemed pleased.

–You've been distracted for a while.

–I hear that my mentor is going to be lecturing here next week.

–We're honored that he's going to grace us with his presence.

–A more realistic greeting would be in order.

–A note of sarcasm.

–Praise must always be tempered with some realism.

After a week of solid research, my efforts were greeted by an early morning call from Dorothea.

–Lee and I are breaking up.

–You're calling me this early in the morning.

–We had a blow out last night. I got my stuff from his place. He's a monster. I never want to see him again.

>>He called me moody. He said that the only way to overcome my depression was to do something. That's all I've been doing—things for him. I cleaned his place. Did his laundry. Made his meals.

–I'll be right over. We can go for a drive.

I drove over and we headed for the country. We drove aimlessly.

–I love how I can call you up at anytime.

–I’m going to be leaving Bloomington soon. It’s just for the summer.

–One summer does not a lifetime make.

–Very cute.

–Are you and Lee done?

–That’s not really for me to say.

–I thought that you left.

–He threatened me. He punched the wall and left this big hole. He wanted to hit me.

–You’re sort of overdramatizing things for my sympathy. Remember—he was my friend.

–Thanks for introducing me.

–I could have told you all that. I never meant for you to have slept with him.

–Now you’re acting like you’re my dad.

She curled up in the seat as if she was six years old.

–I know what you’re doing.

I knew too well. We drove off into the day. Into the heat. It dried us out. It made her more confident again.

I needed to work continuously with the visit of my mentor around the corner. Once he arrived, he’s expect me to fulfill his every whim. I didn’t know how I could divide my time between Dorothea and him. I felt like leaving town at just that moment.

All my time in Bloomington, my experiences with Dorothea, only confirmed my work on narration. What we feel, what we can touch, all this only echoes how we cast ourselves in a story. And when we try to peel back the layers of attachment, we only find a possession. That we are held in fascination by our own experience.

–I’ve thought about my depression. It’s not really part of me. I just think that I’m part of something. But I can’t really be affected by my imagination. If it’s just a story then I can put it out of my head.

–I’ve told you to do that all along.

–But then they’re these real things that have happened to me. And they’re no more real than something in my imagination. I can’t put those out of my head.

–I guess that you’re just going out of your head.

She laughed.

I wished it was that easy to put away the arrival of my mentor. He would rip my work to shreds. His books on psychic research and narrative were seminal in the field. He almost took it as an affront that I was charting my own career.

–You should stick to writing pop songs!

His words still echoed.

I heard from my adviser that he had already come in by train and was waiting at the hotel. I had no desire to head down to the Holiday Inn for a lecture.

–Do I really have to go to see him today?

–He did ask about you. But I could pretend that you didn’t get the message.

–I still want to finish that paper. I'll see him in the morning. You invited him. You keep him company.

I worked most of the night on the paper. I got up and had something to eat and then headed over to the hotel.

When I got to his room, his reaction was standard. No greeting. No desire to hear how I was feeling. Immediately he ripped into my paper.

–Where did you get a copy?

–From your adviser for the summer program.

–I've changed some things. That's only a draft.

–Really. What about this point of possession that you talk about? It sounds a lot like my absolute point or the node of perdition. You suggest that the possession disturbs the plane of reality of the character. But the absolute point is entirely a result of the character's reality.

–I'm not saying that the possession point has no relation to the character's described experiences. It resides at the heart of the character's memories. It entirely shapes how the character relates to her everyday reality.

–But the absolute point has always to referred to a specific experience. A trauma in childhood. Even a psychic visitation.

–You're positing a psychic reality as a way to deal with a weaknesses in your analysis.

–But the experience is real. That's the problem with your paper. It's confusing. You have to describe the phenomenon in a way that a child can understand.

–It's so simple. I've been trying to explain it to you.

–But you never elucidate the background for your explanations.

–That's because you're holding on to this absolute point. It offers the character no real lines of freedom. Everything is a given from the characters experience. Then you assume that the character makes this minute decision that help create identity.

–You can't have the character creating itself. It violates a fundamental rule of narration.

–And what is that?

–The possession point gives the impression that the character can decide to ignore the influence of real events on behavior. That the attachment to a trauma is no more than a phantasm that can be willed away by some elaborate exorcism.

–You're accusing me of engaging in mumbo jumbo.

–That's what it sounds like to me. These are lines of force in the narrative. They are the conditions of will. Therefore, they can't be willed away.

–But they act in a nodal way. They are entirely influenced by the character's actions and perspectives.

–In essence, you are dismissing even your possession point.

–I'm saying the point coalesces from those actions. It creates the actions and is also created by it.

–But you're turning it into an entire abstraction. No one could even see such a thing or ultimately experience it.

–I'm not ignoring the influence of a trauma. But you have to deal with it in the form that it affects the subject. And this manifests itself in a multitude of ways.

–Ultimately you are saying that the self creates it own absolute points.

–Yes.

–But that contradicts the idea of the absolute.

–The absolute is entirely a construction on your part.

I knew that this was his sore point. His reputation was based on his definition of these absolutes. No character could create the absolutes. No analyst could discover them. They were given the world by the Lord Narrator himself in his seminal text: *Narrative Nodes and Fundamental Absolutes*.

I could see his face getting red. No doubt the action of an absolute point.

–That’s the influence of that semiotic crap again. Creating things that don’t exist.

Denying things that do.

–Trying to feed your God complex.

–I’m just trying to get to the heart of the weaknesses in your work. You need to admit as much.

–To whom...to you...

–I’m not your confessor.

I wanted to challenge his interrogation.

–Characterization can entirely alter the forces of a narrative. It creates lines of narrative that challenge and often contradict the primary demarcations.

–But you’re ignoring social realities. It’s an entirely apolitical way of seeing the text.

–No! The social is engaged at every stage by the narration. That is how the politics of the text is created in the first place. Otherwise, the conditions of the present are indeed absolutes and can never be overthrown by another social reality.

–Clever. You’re going to accuse me of Hegelianism again.

–And you’re telling me that is not one of your primary influences.

–There is no dialectic in my work. Dialectics is only an effect of the surface. It’s a perdition node. Your work does the same thing. It assumes a level of freedom that is illusory. In so doing, it undercuts the aspiration of real people. It is reactionary.

–But your psychic effects manifest themselves in their further exaggeration. The noises that become ghosts and then begin to haunt people on the basis of their past. All these details of interlocking stories. You just order the stories around a single event and leave it at that. There is no transformation of character. No interaction among the characters. The story is lifeless. The analysis works for detective stories and horror. But it can’t explain the form of a good novel.

–You’re turning the novel into something that it isn’t. You’re giving far too much credibility to taste.

–It’s not taste. It’s creativity.

–Your paper is the perfect distraction for the summer institute. But it will never have any real impact academically. You have substituted theory for real scholarship. You need to spend more time in the library. Moreover, you are confusing perdition nodes with the absolute point. The absolute point creates the perdition nodes, not vice versa. There are some nice turns to the paper. Some good examples. But the overall concept is flawed.

I had enough of his criticism. It was my work not his. I was feeling that same disenchantment with academics. Wondering if my summer wouldn’t have been better spent working on my novel. I went over my experience with Dorothea and compared my approach to

my mentor.

I wanted to cut out then and there. This discussion seemed to be getting nowhere. But he wanted to treat me to lunch. Not that Bloomington is noted for its restaurants. And I didn't want to be subjected to further dressing down his hands. But I felt obligated for my adviser. It might help my recommendation at the end of the summer program.

–I hear the shrimp is real good here.

Really. That was almost all they served on their highly diverse menu.

–You are going to eat.

–Yeah. I had something before I came over to the hotel. But it's going to be a long day.

He gave me his absurd smile—that mix of dominance and connivance.

As he sipped on a martini, I waited for more of his harsh judgements.

–It's all a question of reality, of life. People don't act on the basis of these hidden motives. Things that they can't see. Sure it all makes sense on paper. But it's about things that they can feel for themselves.

He was only reminding me of my frustration with Dorothea.

–That's what happens in narration. The story teller tries to make up for the turns of reality. He uses magic to brace the character for the inroads of experience. It's all a defense. But living. That's where you have to take off the safety belt and just go for it.

He was eating a clump of bread filled with butter.

–You're trying to guarantee things from the sidelines. But we only live by jumping in the water.

His metaphors were getting sloppier as the lunch rolled on. No doubt the arrival of the salad or the entree would be another excuse for him to prove his point.

–No one is going to ever act according to the plan that you are setting out. That's why you're not penetrating what appeals to people about literature—that it's alive. A real story. You accuse me of attachment to detective stories. You're feeding melodrama. The characters can never get past their immersion in trauma. They drown in it.

>>That's not how it works. The art of seduction. Women...men...we all want to feel better than we are. You only remind us of death. Possession, obsession. It becomes an end in itself.

>>That's how you are with people. You won't let them go. You dissect their lives like ants and then you expect them to act like they do on the ant farm. People want their freedom. Freedom only comes from reality. It's cut and dried.

–So simple.

Should I have sat with pen in hand and just made notes as he went on?

Was I trying to act like the puppet master with Dorothea? There was something that I didn't understand. Something that had nothing to do with me, because it had nothing to do with her.

–You look for possession. Because once you have the subject in your grasp, you're the only source of their escape. You know what this comes to...

–I'm not a jailer.

–But are you enjoying life. Do people enjoy being around you? You have to know that we all want the same thing.

He dug his fork into the shrimp. I could feel them jump under his forcefulness.

I was trying to turn my attention away from his criticism. To leave the scene completely.

–I remember another incident. A long while back.

What did he want to tell me? This was the revenge of the absolutes. That he would always have some new story of origin to me.

–Is this about my father.

He smiled. It reminded me of the game of inventing ghost stories around the table.

I remembered the mill. The look on Dorothea's face when she first passed through the door.

–You can't tell the story without becoming part of it. You want it to progress. And it will only progress if the acts of villainy continue.

Who was speaking to me now?

–You never wanted Ray and me to be together. But we were together and there's nothing that you can do about it.

This was the possession point that she clung to. As long as she described the events in the same way, the effects lingered. They clung to her in the same way that his embrace had held her close. She couldn't let go of that magic. That was where she had come alive. She needed that possession the same way that I needed the horror story.

–Nothing ever happened at the mill. It was all part of the power play that you were trying to pull on me.

–What power play?

–Before the mill, there's something else—the fountain. That we had met at the fountain and pledged our love, ancient and eternal. And then the mill happened and stole me from you. But that romance is crazy. My life was set before I met you. You showed me things. But they were things about my experience. All the rest you made up. Sure, I didn't have the best time with my mom. But it was my life. I told you things. But they were things. Not the whole story. I'm the whole story. And when I shut the book for you, you have to keep it closed.

I felt that the two of them were working together, Dorothea and my mentor. Even her vulnerability had only been a lure. As if he had coached her from the beginning. Said all the things that I wanted to here.

I couldn't tell whose face that I was now looking at.

–What do you want me to do now. Get my hair cut. Get it dyed. Get a make over. Get new clothes. Do you just want me to look like your fantasy so you can peel back the layers and see yourself.

–As I said, your confusion is total. The node is not a fixed point. And the fixed point guarantees the interaction among the nodes. It's that simple.

It really appeared that way for me.

I needed to rest before my mentor's lecture. Or had my rest already begun.

–I'll need a wake up call.

Narrative Collisions: Nodal Rests and Absolute Motion

You have a test. You've thought about it for days. You've poured over the books. It becomes part of all your waking experience. The facts and figures. The charts. The nursery

rhymes and acronyms to remember the material. And then you take the test. You put the books away and resume your everyday life. It's a year later. And you realize that you never made the exam. You slept in late. You're rushing to make it and your car won't start. You decide to run to the exam. It takes forever. And when you finally get to the room, the building had been demolished to make way for the new campus pool.

Of course it's a dream. But for the time that you experience, it has all the hallmarks of a real experience. Because it's based on an actual experience. A real test with all the anxieties that surrounded the test. Just because the test is over doesn't mean that you can just bury those anxieties. Those lines of force still operate on the psyche. This is the heart of the story. The dream. It captures in a fuller way what the actual experience cannot. The nodes of the lines of force.

Why do I suggest that these nodes seek a resting state? Look at the story. It's a fairly standard form. You've heard it before. Not just because it's happened to you. You share your dreams with a friend, and she's had pretty much the same experience as you. The dream does the same thing that the test does but in a more realistic way. It lets you put the experience to bed, hence the resting place. So what's so unusual here. This is just the dream work that Freud referred to. Nothing new at all.

But I've always suggested that the nodes were not themselves fixed. The illusion of rest. The comfort of the dream. There is no turmoil because the test is firmly a part of the past. But the dreamer seeks for more in reliving the experience. Except for the very few of us who never had problems with tests, the anxiety is real and constant. For some it becomes an agony. And even if we sail through the test, we never attain the facility that we would like. We are slaves to the test taker.

There's some humor in this. Intellectual bondage and submission. The riskier sorts dress up in rubber and feel the need to act out these nightmares as a way of gaining control of the same. But there's no easy way. It's all about risk. Acting it out doesn't make it any easier to grasp. It just distills the risk. It makes it more resistant. It mutates. It is still potent.

There is the risk, the real risk, the risk of the real.

You're dreaming. Your heroes of youth, your favorite rock band, have shown up at your place to party. They're telling you how great it is to have you along. And you're so excited You're just about to partake in the those guilty indulgences when you wake up. No pleasure stick for you.

Damn! I can't even have in dream what is denied me in my real life. This is hopeless for you.

The dream story tries to bail you out. But it cannot. It has resolved on its absolute point. What is worse if you simply go along with the dilemma presented by the dream. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

There is no actual comfort from the dream. The only thing that caresses you is your frustration. Your story can be the launching pad. But it cannot overcome its absolute point. Looked at in that way, the story only marks nodes of perdition. You rush after these oases. But the mirage fades. You have confronted the absolute motion of the tale.

What was he trying to pull on us? His lecture was full of weak arguments and shoddy

examples.

I saw my adviser at the reception afterwards.

–It’s impossible, but I feel that he was addressing me in his lecture

–Impossible. Hardly. I sent him an advance of your paper.

–What? I have only just finished it. There was so much that I changed in my final draft.

–But the main points are pretty much the same. It’s a good paper, a very good paper.

Your mentor has a grudge. I know it. You know it. I wouldn’t have had you do the research if I didn’t think that your arguments aren’t good. But he can still help you.

–Like he has before.

–No. I talked to him about the earlier draft. He’s going to help to get it published.

–He’ll have it sent off to a couple of reviewers who’ll just butcher it.

–You’ve tied things together too closely for anyone to do that. He realizes that the field is changing. He can’t do anything about it. But he figures that if he complains about it that it still makes him part of what’s happening. He knows that he’s not in the center anymore.

–I’m glad that you can be so confident.

–Go talk to him. He’d be flattered if you said something about his lecture.

I went to get a drink. I needed to prepare myself for the showdown.

–I guess that I had to take the risk.

–So you caught my references in the lecture.

He gave that weird laugh.

–I thought that you might have brought me a drink. Sort of a peace offering.

–I didn’t know that we were at war. But then my initial suspicions about the lecture were true.

–What?

–That you had my paper in mind.

–I’ve been putting this together for a while. It’s just a brief of some of the points made in the book.

–I read the book.

–And I read your paper.

–Not the final draft.

–Bring it by and I’ll take a look at it.

Despite my adviser’s comments, I still was a little reluctant about sharing my work.

–I could stop by the hotel this evening.

–Don’t be too late. I do have plans.

Really.

I didn’t want to make the effort. To go back to my place and then have a copy made and then have to go back to the hotel. I felt like I was making a pilgrimage to a shrine. He no doubt fed off such a metaphor.

I again spoke to my adviser and then headed back to my place. It was sort of dreary gathering up the pages of the paper so that I could take it to get copied. How long did I have to keep playing this game. I had come to Indiana to get away from him, and now he was following me here.

I reread the paper once more before I left. I was struck by the radical difference between

my work and his. He would never accept the criticism.

*She was seventeen when it happened. Her body was permanently reliving the same event
He used a beer bottle on her. It scarred her face*

–He was just angry.

–Why did you let him do it? why did you let him get away with it?

–I needed him. I just did.

–Why didn't you just leave him

*–You don't know what it's like when you just need someone—when they really care for
you—down deep.*

–You can't call that caring.

But she couldn't go back home.

Something that he offered her that she came to expect.

–Babe, no one has that look that you do. That little shake.

It couldn't help but remind her of the catastrophe.

*–I don't know what it was. After it happened, the sex seemed too good. Maybe he was
trying to make up for what had happened.*

*At times, she imagined that it wasn't him. That she was with someone else. The event
had seemed to open up something in her. In certain light, it seemed like none of this had
happened. As if had been taken care of.*

They'd watch her turn as she walked around a room. That memorable walk.

*She pranced for her audience. She wanted someone to rescue her from him, from all this.
That's what she dreamed about.*

Had Dorothea sought catastrophe to explain what just seemed unsettling to her?

*It all made sense. If there had been no incident at the mill. But only a carelessness on her
part. How could she take it all back.*

–I just want to start over. To close my eyes and pretend that none of this ever happened.

–You're thinking about Hollywood again.

*–I'm just thinking about somewhere other than Bloomington. I really liked Chicago. I
could move there and take acting lessons.*

–Be a small fish in a big pond.

She like the swimming imagery.

–I'd love to swim way out to sea. Then no one could ever capture me.

–That's the mermaid story.

–It's a charming story.

–There aren't any mermaids in Indiana. It's too far from the ocean.

–Just some beached whales.

We both laughed.

*For a while, I thought that he might be avoiding me. Did he hate me? Had I come on too
strong?*

I looked at my face in the mirror. Nothing showed.

*I gave that adult gesture. One that had been with me for so long. Was this my scar—my
curse. The pout. The look that sought his sympathy.*

–Were you looking at me?

–Whatever gave you that idea?

No one would ever know what had really happened. I would never tell the secret.

–Why don't you sit down.

He gave me that long distant stare.

It was almost seven by the time I had the copy made. I knew that it was rather late, but I wouldn't have time tomorrow.

I could feel that weighty tension as I took the elevator up to the fourth floor. The hall seemed longer than ever. His room was way down at the end. When did they ever fill a place like this.

When I got to the door, I could hear voices inside. I thought that I had yelling. I was late. But I couldn't turn back now. I knocked on the door.

–I'll get it.

I heard a woman's voice.

Dorothea answered the door.

–What?

I felt crestfallen.

–What are you doing here? I didn't think that you... What are you doing?

–I've heard you talk about him. I thought that he could advise me on my studies.

–Is that all you're doing here?

–Quit being so jealous. Nothing is going on. We just talked.

–You could have said something.

–You don't own me.

–It just would have been nice.

He now came to the doorway.

–Your little friend came by. I told you to be here early.

–It took a while. I wanted to get you the final copy of the paper.

–I don't have time to look at it now. Dorothea, I'll meet you downstairs in five minutes.

I just have a couple of things to talk about.

–See you...

I said my good by to Dorothea as she walked to the elevator. I wanted to say so much more. I could feel the hardening of her attitude toward me.

I heard the elevator doors open and close.

–What kind of game are you playing?

–Game. You're the one playing the game. She's a woman. She had needs. She tells you about them all the time. You ignore her. I'm just doing what had to get done.

–You're not talking about washing a car.

–It's the same thing with your possession point. Nothing that you talk about is real. You just won't take the risk. You want perfection, and it doesn't exist. You're a hopeless sentimentalist.

–I listen.

–You only hear what you want to hear. It's the same with all of us. But you never to anything to change your condition. She wants to be touched. Lovingly.

–You’re not saying...

–Things happen.

–She said nothing happened.

–She tells you what you want to hear.

–And what is that?

–You want to keep believing that she’s a sexless creature. You’ve idealized her to the point that she isn’t even alive. All your talk about possession points. You’ve got it absolutely wrong.

I could feel his rapier plunge deep in my side.

–I’m only trying to help you. Now give me the paper, and leave everything to me.

The paper was just the ruse. This was about Dorothea all along. I felt that they had been planning this for years. That I had just been lured to Indiana for just this purpose. I’d head back to her house and it would be unoccupied. That he’d hired someone to play her mother. Another one of his elaborate games.

It was my job to create a history for her. Then I could be deluded by my own history. The triumph of the absolute over the possession points.

W.D. appearance seemed particularly irksome for me. I had trouble even saying HIS name. It made no sense. The Institute was prestigious. But there was no reason that it would ask him to lecture. Most of the faculty were in profound disagreement with him. He had sworn that he would not go to the Midwest. I couldn’t figure it out.

–So this is W.D.. I’ve heard you say so much about him.

What was her game?

–You don’t own me. There’s things that I wanted to learn. He was the only one who would oblige.

Real knowledge is written on the body. All other speculation slide off its smooth surface. The kiss lingers because the understanding already burns on the skin.

–He’s like a snake. He just insinuates himself in your life, and then he strikes.

–He’s honest. He gives me what I want. He tells it like it is.

–I thought that nothing is going on.

–Nothing that is any of your business. He’s a handsome man. And he makes me feel good. Something’s just seem good at the moment. As he says, what else is there.

Needs require some kind of gratification. This is a psychological certainty. Otherwise, the self loses all hope of stability.

–Hope?

–Hope.

–The girl doesn’t want to become your summer research project. If you’re not going to give her what she needs, someone else will.

–Like you. You just create more confusion. More needs that can’t be met.

–She wanted it.

–It? What the hell is it?

I had trouble sleeping. Just thinking about him rolling over on her.

–I needed a sex fix. There’s no harm in that. I’ve just been feeling so much tension lately.

–And that's not going to create more tension.
 –I don't care about it enough to make it affect me except in a positive way.
 –That's not enough for me.
 –You're just too much of a moralist.
 –Or too aware.
 –You only have a limited awareness. In love you have to let go.
 –Love?
 –What I love to do
 W.D.'s visit now seemed like an imposition.
 –What about the mill?
 –He took me there.
 –Recently?
 –No long ago. For lessons.
 –Long ago. He's never been to Indiana before.
 –Is that what he told you? He was a friend of my mother's.
 This was getting more and more bizarre.
 –I just wanted to learn about things. He was there.
 –Learn about things—that's why they have libraries.
 –You're becoming such a downer. You need to chill.
 –I'm trying.
 The story became more and more interwoven.
 –Where did your mother meet him?
 –What about my mother. You haven't been listening. I said that I'd like her to meet him,
 that they might get along together.
 –You never did anything at all with him.
 –He's not my type.
 –That's not what he said.
 —He's messing with you.
 –Tell me about his lessons.
 –Lessons. I stopped by to give him a copy of your paper.
 –What copy. I had the only copy.
 –And you dropped it off at my place. The department was closed and you didn't have
 your key. My mother let me dupe it at her office. And you took the wrong folder. I didn't have
 time to catch you. And you weren't answering your phone.
 –How did you know that it was him? What his name was. Where his room was.
 –You talk about him all the time.
 –This is getting silly.
 I fell back to dream.
 –Are you tired?
 –Dead tired.
 –I can get this published, but you'll have to make the required changes. I've made some
 notes.
 My adviser called me the next day. W.D. had stopped by before heading for the plane.

–He really like the changes that you made in the final draft. He told me that he couldn't have done better himself. You just have to make those changes that he suggested.

–What?

–He said that you wouldn't even have to make any changes.

–So he like the stories that I used to support my idea on possession points.

–He was amazed how close they seemed. Where did you find them?

–This book at the back of the stacks. They thought that they had lost it.

–So it finally turned up.

–Indeed it did.

I remember a conversation that I had had with W.D.

–When a woman wants you, she offers herself like a gift.

–Is that how it is with you?

–When it's in front of your face like that, it's not like your going to say no.

–What are you talking about?

–IT! You know like it is...what you want, what tells you that you want IT. It's like a doorbell ringing.

I resented his intrusion. His gross certainty.

–Even if there's long term expectations, satisfaction has to be instantaneous. You can't survive on expectations. If you have a need, it's got to be met. That should be obvious to you.

–I'm not denying that. But you always make it so mechanical.

–Is there something that you want me to be sorry for?

–It's not about regret. It's just about taking stock.

–You can't save up time. What happens now is now! You can't make it right by doing something in the future. You just have to live!

–Even so-called not living is a form of living. What you end up doing every moment adds up.

For W.D., instant satisfaction was just that. For his instant. Even if the feeling still lingered in his partner, he couldn't deal with that slow simmer. His focus was already elsewhere.

–It's no like you think. If I cherish someone, if someone is attached to me, that's a reality—I deal with it...But you, you're trying to protect something that doesn't exist. That image of Dorothea that you have, that you want to have forever. It never changes. And she does. It just makes you both frustrated.

There is a solidity to what he sees. Her legs are firm. An aloofness in her stance. He surprises her. He put his hands each her buns. She does not look behind her. The touch is bold and certain. He slides off her gym shorts. She is ready to draw him in.

This is it. His hands butterfly around her. He stimulates her.

They measure each other's bodies. She tests his arousal. Her caress is aggressive. He welcomes her challenge.

His desire was rich and tart. And he savored the tang that gripped him. It was constant. And he floated on the high. He could feel the touch without touching. But more than that. It rendered him unconscious.

That impression entertained im. It sent the blood rushing. He floated inside it. The surrender. Enfolding. Going so deep under. This is all there is to it.

Beyond the actual sensation. The lingering effect. He floats on that. He can call on it at will. It is his eternity.

She is there when she is not. Her body weaves its way into the textures of all his experience.

He kisses her. She takes a breath.

–Kiss me again.

Just the look and they have taken it on forever.

–I need you to say something to make it right.

–You're wonderful.

It didn't make any difference. Their embrace overwhelmed. In their approach, there was no room for doubt. They pulled closer.

She buried herself in his flesh. She submerged into breathlessness.

Everything was this. The growing attachment between them.

He let himself go. His desire to make it right. What he wanted to tell her. His sense of direction. All of it. He let and just released himself in the experience.

And the echo was now constant. Their bodies roar together.

He squeezed tighter. He focused his attention towards this feeling. Its mass. Part of what he felt he took from her, took away from her. This extreme was all encompassing. Even as it seemed to subside, his concentration kept it so intense.

Sheer will. He was coming up against this projection of himself. She encouraged it. Her hands worked their way up his legs. He thought about that. The gentle surprise of her kiss.

They could both feel a fatigue. Sweat growing cold on their bodies. And they pushed that tension. She wanted that. She needed that. The physical exertion. She smiled. The kiss was so extreme.

In this kiss, he could separate himself from her. Not from her body, but from her will. And in the process, he took over her body.

He found himself testing the balance between them. He could no longer divide his will from her and the two of them moved closer and more insistent together. She became absorbed in his embrace. And he used her drowning, as a way of rising to the surface.

To think about her was now to think about her body. How she had adapted herself to his every whim. Even her ecstasies were only challenges to more intense feelings on her part. She loved this sense of contest that he offered her. If she let up in its pursuit, she would feel so much less of herself. He valued the limitless persistence in her. She would not recoil from his probing. He engaged her without reserve.

The physical contact affirmed a new certainty for her. Anything that did not enhance the physical was idle speculation. The lesson was so pointed. It stayed with her for days. Nothing but this. There was a frightening depth to the understanding. She had loved the wonder that had always distracted her. And now this distraction was her wonder in all its immediacy. She could not daydream. Now her longing was palpable. To strip him down to his naked desire.

There was almost a pain that accompanied their conjunction. The brutality of the touch. What she wanted so much. A need to increase the stimulation by any means possible. He

chuckled at her new found aggression. For him this was the basis of their connection. How the body could reveal and how each understanding only pin-pricked a new opening. The needles made her jump.

The connection was this rubber band being stretched. He loved the pull. He anticipated the snapping back. Without that slap, they could not encounter the massive character of their feelings.

–Kiss me harder.

What did that mean?

The kiss could not be separated from the electric sensation on the lips. A light shocking. As the two of them came to life, there was no hesitation in how they each worked the other. He could feel her push him against a wall, spread out his arm. He felt weak and inspired at the same time.

He could only give in.

She never made it clear how they had actually met. Something about a wink as they passed by each other at K-Mart.

–I can't really imagine him having been in K-Mart.

I'm sure that they had met on some other occasion.

His delight as he watched her smile. That's all that he needed. She caught up with him in the parking lot.

–I know you. Everybody does.

It didn't go exactly like that.

–What are you looking at?

She started beaming.

–I need a favor from you.

–What do you need?

–I want you to give me a gift.

–I hardly know you.

–You were the one who said that you know me.

The twist in her smile sharpened.

–What are you saying?

–I want you to give me your underwear.

–What?

–Take off your panties and give them to me here.

She blushed.

–What if I'm not wearing any, she said knowingly.

He could feel a physical contact with her. A brushing against her skin that seemed to hold them.

–I want you to show me then.

–Show you what?

–That you're not wearing any.

–I didn't say that.

–So you are. Then give them to me here.

–What if I don't?

–What if you do?
 –I'm with a guy.
 –I didn't ask for anything about the guy. I just want the panties.
 –I can't give them to you.
 –So you do have them.
 –I'm not telling.
 –I can imagine you sliding them on this morning. How they hugged your sense of freedom.
 –I was in hurry. I hardly felt anything of note.
 –You knew the feeling. That kiss, that caress, that inserts its way into you. The tickling, The tenderness.
 –So, if I give them to you.
 –Sliding off. Catching against your leg. They've had their moment. Their proximity to you.
 –I can't very well take them off in front of everyone in the parking lot.
 –That's part of the dare.
 –And what are you going to do with the panties?
 –I'm going to cherish them.
 Already he could sense his invitation insinuate itself.
 Already too far to turn back.
 –I could take the panties off.
 She loved his affront.
 –And then what are you going to do. Whip it out in front of everyone? You don't get turned down often?
 –I only ask what the other person really wants. It's what you want. Dorothea.
 –How do you know my name?
 –I know. Just as you know me.
 –I'm not going to fuck you in the parking lot.
 –So where do you want to go?
 She couldn't contradict him. Again she blushed.
 –I want your panties. I want you to reach under your skirt and pull them off. And as you do, I want you to think about the sense of freedom that your action offers you. Wherever, whenever.
 –This is all in your imagination.
 –But you like it.
 –You've got a dirty mind.
 –And you've got a body to go along with it.
 –This is ridiculous.
 –You haven't moved to go to our car.
 –What are you going to do with the panties.
 –You've already asked me that. Take them off!
 –No.
 –I want you to sign them. I don't want anything from you.

But she could already feel him going down on her. The spontaneity of his tongue. The lulling sensation. Filling her all over.

–You like it.

–What?

–Your little daydream. Here I have a pen.

–What do you do? Collect them. Play weird games with them

–This is your soul on earth. As you really are.

–I can't give them to you. At least not here.

–So you want to go some place?

–You could buy me dinner.

–I could what?

–You know. Sparkling conversation.

–What do you want to know that you don't already know.

–What are you doing in Indiana.

–Is that where we are?

–Don't be silly.

–I forget so easily. Especially when I'm looking in your eyes.

–Does that sort of trick often work.

–What trick?

–Cheap flattery.

–It's not flattery. You've been mesmerizing me since we I saw you in the store.

–I don't remember.

–You know me don't you?

–I told you that I did.

–Really. More than that. We know each other.

–I told you that you can't catch me off guard that easily.

–I'm not playing with you.

–You like something. It's pleasing to you. You just say how you feel. Only I'm not that something.

–But it would be so easy to give in.

–That's what I've been doing all my life. Now I take my time.

–But there's still something here that you want.

–Eternal life. Is that what you're offering. A ticket to paradise.

–I offering to get you off like you never have before.

–I told you that I have a guy. It's not like he has some major deficiency.

–But what does he have to talk about?

–You haven't said much about anything but fucking and going to heaven. You sound like a degenerate minister.

–And you're the little lamb that I've come to rescue.

–I've got something for you.

–What?

She handed him a pair of cotton panties.

–I was expecting something more daring.

- I'm going shopping at K-Mart.
- You're in heels and a skirt.
- You want to reach under the skirt.
- I already have. Didn't you get a little turned on as you touched yourself?
- Does this ever work?
- You know what I'm talking about.
- I did since I was thirteen. Don't you have any other tricks up your sleeve.
- I could just take you here on this car. And you'd love every second of it.
- So what's holding you back.
- A sense of decorum.
- I've been waiting for you to just whip it up.
- And you're already up for it?
- I'm not going to help you along, if that's what you're asking.
- I'm not asking for much of anything. I've got to go.
- We haven't done anything.
- I have to go.
- It was just starting to get to be fun.
- You've got my name and phone number.
- Phone number?
- It's all on the panties.

He folded them over to see. His fingers edged over the soft cotton. He lost himself in the turns of the fabric.

He had his souvenirs. She wanted something to hold on to. She could feel herself slipping under his phallic dominion. Without him, she sensed a profound isolation. He claimed to hate such longing. But something in him seemed to thrive on it.

She wondered if her desire was sucking down into this whirlpool. And all her resistance only added to the feelings of emptiness. This only fueled her need to get lost in the game. It may have been the cause of some satisfaction for W.D. that he could induce this hollowness in people. It was the source of his strength. Where others felt this confrontation with nothingness, he acquired a feeling of omnipresence. He never touched the darkness and seemed to deny it in others. On that basis, he thought that he was doing her a service.

–You're just romanticizing the self. You feel that you can do anything and when you can't, it makes you feel as if you're going to crack.

He engendered the tremor in the personality. There was also a sense of delight in his activities. Beyond the attendant pleasure, he drew greater reward from his dominance.

–You lose yourself in this awful moral dilemma—and why? You enjoy yourself. Take it for what it is. You can't purify yourself by holding back. You savor what's offered. You push it to its extreme. You do what the body tell you. Or you push the physical to its limits. All the nostalgia is a perverted desire to hold on to time when you cannot. Once you lose the ability to express yourself, you have nothing.

He shocked her. He highlighted the venality to her previous endeavors. He gave her no place to rest. By focusing on her guilt, he tried to burn it away. And even if he did not, he

sharpened her attachment to the physical release. There was no catching her breath. Such weakness would only sap her endurance. The respite would only give her the illusion that there was some secret to reveal when there was none. He didn't want her lost in some meditative reverie. He wanted her to feel the ultimate pull of her desire. To take her to a place where consciousness could not survive. In this rarity, he floated and he expected her to do the same. Her moral attachment made her susceptible to the worst forms of remorse. If she did not dispel this grief, then the self would crush her.

–You've got it all in reverse. You assume this self is a thing in itself. It's not. It's just the after effect of past pleasures. You are on an inevitable course, you need to just push yourself along it!

What he was saying started to become confusing to her. He wanted her to journey into this wilderness, but she needed some reassurance to brace herself.

–You can feel the body. You sense the tingle. How it starts to burn. How it overwhelms you. Don't be afraid of that feeling.

But she was. He challenged her pleasures. He drew her into levels of pain that she found unbearable. But once they subsided, she wanted more. She knew that she was way beyond where she had been and there was no way that she could return to where she was. She wondered if she had been somehow damaged from the process. As if he had created a monster. Someone that no one would ever want. It almost made her a slave to his whims.

–It's nothing like you think. Take back your pleasure and live for it. I'm only a vehicle. Make use of what I tell you. What I show you. But heavens, don't get attached. That's what your confusion is doing for you. It makes you feel like there should be some kind of resolution, and you know what that means.

He couldn't dispel the tainted feelings that beset her. He used this to propel her to deeper and deeper states of excitement. Gradually, she encountered the same sort of numbness that surrounded his personality. She hated it at first. But it gave her access to intensities that she had never know before. She got to know her body. Not just in pleasure, but in every other activity—exercise, sleeping, dreaming, eating—she floated on this new high.

What was it that made her hand come alive when she touch his flesh? It was not just the palpable form. The realization that she could penetrate into the very thing that sustained his life. More than that. The world seemed to sing the connection that she had to him. She believed that she knew something about him, about his body that no one had ever known before.

–Once you give yourself to that dominion, there is no escape.

–It's not like you're a phantom. Once you've given in to my touch, there are parts of you that cannot resist. Even if you try to maintain this front. That's the way that it is..

–For you maybe. That's why you need to explore. Take other partners. Experiment.

–I have experimented.

–I don't want you to want me. I want you to want it.

She knew what he was talking about. How he worked to make her gasp for air. To not turn in when she felt herself in the throes of passion.

–There is something in the utter denial of enjoyment. Just to sustain the wanting.

She felt pinned against a wall. Ready to take him into her world again.

–This all depends on me continuing to come back to you. You're contradicting your

whole discipline.

–That’s not how it works. It’s about the effect, not the cause. I’ve just explored the vision more than most. I’ve learned to get beyond the perfumes and now I love the decay.

–I’m seeing myself making love on a pile of trash.

–If that’s what you need to remind you what you are made of, so be it.

–Was that a low blow.

–There is no high or low here. It’s getting to know your desires. What you really want, what you want the most is something that you’ve already had. The more that you think about it, the more that you feel attached. The harder it is to break.

–From you phallic dominion

–What’s that supposed to mean?

–What you want. What you’ve always wanted. It’s like a religion that soaks in the skin. It’s not like I want you in me all the time. It’s more than that. It’s your echo in everything that I hear. The whisper that’s always there. Lending this weighty feel to my isolation. You start off by trying to liberate, and instead you see another love slave.

–And that’s who you are?

–And you too. By enslaving me, you are also enslaving yourself. To your discipline. To your procedure.

But his games were also creating meaning for her. They seemed to direct her focus and make the moments of isolation much easier. She now gave in to sleep. There was no hesitation before bedtime. The insomnia seemed to be a relic of her past. She was joyful.

Could she attain that phantom state that he suggested? She wanted to tempt herself. But now she was settling for something that was more mundane.

Away from her, he was more resolute. Her search was fatiguing him. For once he wanted to tell her that this was too obvious. She was making more of it than it was worth. If there was a real search, then she was lost in it. She needed to get back to the physical realities. He thought that he was doing the same. He was again attaining a fascination for the geometry of pleasure. The slopes and curves. The crevices. The twist. The dark caverns. What was shown and was withdrawn.

So he found a direct response in her body. It was his magic. Supple and attentive. He felt like he was playing a well-crafted musical instrument. If she had know his imagery... But he could not give up on his pursuit. He was simply making use of all his experience. She claimed to know something. For the moment she was only a good player. He left it at that.

For her part, she claimed experience, but it was her freshness to which he was most endeared. The bite, the slap, the pull, the twist—all this was so new to her. Sure she had attained a dexterity. But she was hardly aware of her limits. And he was only too ready to oblige her need for guidance. She thirsted for his provocations.

–Don’t choke me.

–I wasn’t.

He tried to pull back. Regions of intimacy that now drifted into clear aggression.

She slapped him. Not to end his exploration, but to push him harder. She slapped him harder. And again.

–You think that I like this.

He was adamant.

–That’s not your role to challenge me.

–Are you supposed to be the master?

–I just don’t want you introducing elements that aren’t part of the game.

–Don’t you want me to tell you when to stop?

–I do. But it’s you who can’t stop.

–I told you to stop choking me.

–You told me that you had your limit.

–For good.

–For now.

–I didn’t like it.

–Why did you start this.

She slapped him harder. There was no doubt about her intent. He kissed her. She gave way.

–It’s going to be harder and harder for you to pleasure yourself after this.

–Now you’re turning into a moralist.

–I’ll kill you if I have to.

–And this is allowed.

She was playing his game—answering a physical dilemma with an intellectual puzzle.

–You’re a piece of shit!

–Then leave.

–That’s just what you want. You want me to hurt, to hurt you, because you tell me that you aren’t involved.

–It doesn’t bring me pleasure at all. But you get off on pain. You’re a sadistic bitch, and I’m showing you what you are. It’s not pleasurable to me because it has no effect. But it gets you off. You need. You’re an addict.

–Fuck you!

–Really! You just want my big hard prick in you. Just pushing so hard and deep that you can’t think about anything ever. But I don’t want that. It’s not my phallic dominion, it’s yours.

Or was it. All he could think about was being inside her. The ring of hair cut so strategically around her pussy. He could feel himself separating the layers of skin. Sliding himself inside her.

She was just that for him. In its most exquisite form, she was had become the reassurance of the physical. He sensed her pride as she pranced around the room.

–It’s not like that at all. I just feel good. For myself. It has nothing to do with you.

But he pinned her against the wall, and pulled her skirt up. Lost himself in its fold as he ate her out.

–I want you to be inside of me.

They fucked hard on the floor. She rode him harder and harder until even he disappeared. There was nothing there but that initial provocation. She became the phantom and felt herself disappear.

He could not admit it, but the crevices now marked his fear. He had felt her magic and it disturbed him. It was a power within which he had become totally absorbed. She could

obliterate his presence.

Surrounded by this sorcery, he could feel his will slip away. He was meant to serve her, not himself. Her affront was bold and without precedent for him. Why couldn't he simply ignore her impulse. But he had been lured by his own sense of assurance. Only now she drove him. His body dripped with sweat, and he shivered as it cooled. The shivering became an absolute shuddering. He was face to face with a being so awesome.

He wanted to collect himself. Not to give her the apparent credibility. But she had become part of him—of his very physicality. To get rid of that influence was now to threaten himself.

—I need to go!

He got up but soon came crashing down. He wanted her to help somehow. But she stared at him. She was hardly finished. She let him know of his shortcomings. Tried to resurrect his ardor. There was little left in him.

—I thought that you had something to show me.

This was where her flesh asserted itself. Not subservient to her partner but always extending beyond. She held her breath as she drew him to her. Sucked him away. As he left the room, she giggled.

And he was absorbed in the nether world. Now only a sliver of light.

—Is there something that I can do to help?

He wanted to answer back, but with what. As the whole room shook, she realized that this was part of her power. She was simply answering him back before he had a chance to speak. She relished this expansiveness of her being. She didn't want to give back anything to him. No other man could ever see a trace of the W.D. effect. He had never been here.

She loved how her desire was able to rewrite completely all experience. Her purity was the inability of anything to touch her. She had passed beyond all effect. Where were the resources that he had nurtured all his life?

—What just happened?

—Who said that?

She looked around the room.

—I did. It not like you can turn me into a rabbit.

She laughed. You don't know the half of it.

—You like to hop?

—Don't be silly.

—I'm not being silly.

—You don't know what you're doing. You start playing with those powers, and they'll end up consuming you.

—How do you know?

She had her glimpse, and she wanted more. Her musings in Indiana could hardly contain the massive powers that she now commanded.

—It's not like you think. You're being carried along by something. It's entirely ugly.

He looked at her naked in the corner. He wanted to imagine her consumed by this monstrosity. But he was the one again being drawn in by her certainty.

How could he break her down? How could he remind her the limits of these new powers.

As she again rode him, he realized that there was nothing to do but go along. He had discovered a pleasure that he needed to exploit while it lasted. Before long, she would feel the need to cast him off.

–So I have been successful in letting me go. In freeing you from what you called the phallic dominion.

But this new magic was only a complement to the same majesty that he had asserted. She wanted to separate herself from its hold. But its effects were all too apparent. Anything that did not aid in achieving this same level of stimulation could only be a distraction, a terrible distraction.

–You have what it takes—for now.

He could feel her driving him to death. He needed to bring her down from her high. She was now soaring. There was hardly any influence that could ground her.

He wondered if he could pierce her history. Return her to her Indiana reality even as she stretched into the stratosphere. He saw her fading under the immediacy of this pleasure. Not even being able to enjoy the fruits of further encounters.

Was this that same horizon that had limited her before? As she got closer to it, it became a real limit not a receding line. She could feel herself falling off the edge of the world even as she approached her Hollywood. Was this the vicious revenge that he had threatened?

Now she realized how all this had in fact been his doing. Even he was not aware how he could bring this episode to a close. But the door was swiftly coming to a close. He felt it shift.

–What’s going on?

–You’re realizing that there’s nothing to hold on to. This is all a reminder of something that you’ve felt before. For what it is, you realize that you are still not satisfied.

–But it’s good for the moment.

–And then what are you going to make of it? What can you make of any of it?

–I can ride it for the high that it offers me.

–And when it is gone? Or if it returns, can it ever have the same charm for you.

–It’s like the sun. I never tire of a sunrise.

–But the sunrise will not sustain the incredible appetite that you have developed.

–What can I do about that?

Your love is the star that guides me through my eternal night. Is there no hope for me or for our love? I can feel your presence inside of me. And with each day that loves grows. I can feel it move in me.

If this love is real, why am I so lost?

I know that I feel my parents’ pressure to act like everyone else. I am not ready to start working and get married. I hate it here. I wish I was never born.

Such sweetness should not go to waste. I am young. And I can feel the sap flowing through me start to slow down. I am too young for death.

I know I have been silly with my feelings. I need to exaggerate how bad I feel so that I

might understand why I feel the way that I do. What makes me the way that I am?

Someday I'm just going to leave this place. I'll go in the middle of the night. They won't even know that I'm gone.

I just spend hours staring at myself in the mirror. Looking in my eyes, just staring as if it's not really me. I drift off. If they find me like this, I won't even be in my body. I will have just gone away.

I hate Indiana. I feel like a tree that is rooted here. All that I can do is spread up into the sky. Birds visit me from some exotic lands. I want to follow their song. But I am held to ground. I want to escape!

I think if some stranger came here and offered to take me away, I'd just go with him. No matter how repulsive I found him. No matter how he made me sick. I could always leave him when we went somewhere else. I just need an excuse. I need someone's reason.

Why don't I just leave on my own?

I guess that I don't seem loving seeing that I want to leave on my own. But that's what I thought our love was about, that you were going to do what's best for me. You were going to get me out of this awful place.

Each day I feel that I am fading away. It's not as if it's anything physical. But the more time that I spend in Indiana, the more that I feel that I am the living dead. I wish that some force could just zap me away from here. Supernatural intervention or the such. If I think about it enough that I can just imagine it away.

My mother claims that these feelings are just selfishness. If I just got on with my life, I wouldn't feel like this. A girl with a future is a happy girl. But, Mom, it's not like it's still the fifties. I don't want to be precious on the prairies. Just get me out of here.

I know what my mother was taught. If a girl just made herself attractive, then some man would marry his fortune with her. All these strong young Indiana farm boys. A boy from college who had studied agribusiness and was working in a bank. I've seen it. Culture. We could take in the IU symphony or something. I could get lifted up to heaven and then dropped in his arms. What a dream.

What a nightmare! The poor kid whose aspiration will never extend beyond Muncie. Maybe he'll take me on a trip to Chicago. Just a visit so that I can keep up with the latest fashions. So that I can stay ahead of the other girls in this hell hole. What nonsense! I just want to get out of the Midwest.

My mother calls me a gaudy hot house flower. She doesn't even know the sun under which I bloom. Oh, Mom!

I know some girls who got into religion in the last days of high school. They felt their roots firmly planted in the fertile soil of Indiana. What bunk!

It is slavery to accommodate to the prison that beats you down. The freshness of spring only turns to its blackened complement under the strong eyes of a ruthless summer. I know. I have been in Indiana in August. Will it ever end, will it ever?

You can only look so far into yourself before you start to come up empty. If there's no inspiration around a girl, she just withers on the vine. I know. I was meant for something more

than this. When will my messiah come to Indiana?

There has to be more than belief. There has to be something real. Some kind of satisfaction.

When I was younger I wanted to just run away. I knew that I wouldn't get far. That they would just send someone to find me. Or worse. That no one would even notice that I was gone.

There is no worse tragedy than to lose one's youth in a wilderness liked this. I look all around me and see the waste of lost dreams. Visions clouded by the years. The frustrations. The failures.

At what point do we stop hearing the call. I am afraid of that happening to me. That I will get lost in this world of appearances. Of temporary fascinations. Of illusions.

I know that my friends have come to believe the myth. Marriage is forever. One kiss and you will be taken away. Just surrender yourself. A surrender to the eternal spring. Only the winter settles down mighty quick and mighty hard. And all future summers are cursed. Cold and rainy. I know that feeling. I don't want to give in.

Why haven't I left yet? I feel paralyzed. I wait in suspense that someone might take me away. Where is my rescuer? I just have to get out.

I know what I am afraid of. That the realities of a big city will crush me. Send me back on my knees. I can't give in to my fears. What awaits me is not as bad as this hell that I now endure. Oh my!

I don't know what's wrong with me. I've been sick the past few mornings. I wake up all dizzy. I'm vomiting. This is all fucked up. I don't want to think about it. Trying to pretend that it's something that I've eaten or something that I've drunk. But it could be worse. I'm afraid that I'm pregnant. That I'm carrying your baby. I don't want to sound callous. It wouldn't be the worse thing in the world. I think that I'm a heartless bitch.

I already feel that you are inside me. Growing in me. But this is not something that I want. I'm too young for this shit. I took all the precautions. I never did anything stupid. Not like the other girls around here who throw caution to the wind. I mean if I was pregnant it would change everything. It would mess up my life. I'm having trouble just trying to figure out who I am. This would add too many complications.

I'm not ready for you. I want to say that I love you. But I'm not ready for you. Not now. Maybe never. It's funny how something like this makes me think differently about us. I thought that I'd give you my world. But this is more than too much. This just drives me crazy. Not in a good way. Just in a delirious lose my head sort of way.

A lot of girls around here figure a baby will set their life straight. It's fucked up. But that's what they think. They'd just do it to have the guy stay with them. Or just to have someone who really loved them. Not really a baby. More like a pet.

I sound really selfish but come off it, girls. That's why they look the way that they do. They already eat too much and don't exercise. I don't want to end up like that. All that bull shit about inner beauty. If you let the outside go, the inside starts to rot along with it. That what I could become. Getting pregnant is all part of that same thing. Losing control.

It's not like we ever have that much control. I always feel like I'm on a roller coaster ride. That's why I don't let anything get too serious. I just want my childhood to continue. I'm not ready to quit school. And I don't think that I could work and have a baby and stay in school. I'd give up.

I know how terrible this sounds. If another girl read this, it wouldn't help. It would just make her more depressed. I know all the beautiful stuff about having a baby. But, dear, it ain't me, it ain't me.

All my fears are groundless. I'm not pregnant. I'm sick. Really sick. I've got a fever of over 102 degrees. I'm shivering. I feel like I'm dying. I know that sounds overly dramatic. But I really am that sick. It's as if I'm being punished for something I've done. I don't really feel that guilty. What have I done?

Maybe this is the guilt that I hold in me.

I feel like I am always sick or recovering. I need to become stronger. My liberation. As if all this illness announces a new me.

I am using my sickness as a front so that I can discover my inner beauty. As I feel that I am decaying, this becomes my best excuse that there is more to my life than my flashy pursuits. I really believe none of this. The flash is the only route to something uplifting. Why do flowers reach for the heavens? That is when they are most attractive. Not when they droop under the hot sun. When they resist. Their appeal is in their defiance.

It is only cruelty that denies the physical image its due. People want what I have because they can't have it, not because I'm keeping something from them. Beauty is in demand because it is so coveted. My vanity aside—look at the world. The sublime ecstasy of a rushing cataract. The brutal assertion of a rugged cliff. The flight of a hawk on its supreme mission. Nothing distracts from the stark quality of the seen. Any mystery is made apparent by the struggling forms as they cut their ties to a constraining earth and force their ways headfirst into the abyss.

I find it comical when I can give my poetry free rein. If I see it so well in nature, what is holding me back? What I don't see. What eludes my physical presence. My ghost!

I am not giving in. That is what happens in a small town. Everyone becomes absorbed by these obligations. They just get sucked down as if a power got hold of them and forced them into their conventional life style.

I am still laughing at myself. I sound so silly. That is why I can't leave because I can't rise above the very thing that hold me on the ground. And I pretend that love gives me the ability to fly. I cannot soar.

When I write, I like to smoke. I now how silly it is. How it makes my room smell like an caphouse. I don't care. I don't care. How can I?

Each puff is like the end of a sentence. I put the cigarette down to complete a paragraph. But I rush through the thoughts so that I can get another puff. This is me. This is what I have become. Cigarette butts in an ashtray. Or an empty coffee cup. I need that kick. And then I feel my energy dissipate.

No doubt my thoughts follow this punctuation. It is the only thing that separates me from

the world of dreams. I stop. I continue again. I light another cigarette. Or is a dark mood, I light one from the other. It's not risky, it me rambling, unable to get a grip on my life. As it just drifts out of my control.

That is why I am so fascinated by fashion. By my appearance. By the dreaded mirror. I paint my world to resemble what I see in magazines. To become what I see. To become what I want to be. All the appeal of a sophisticated look. To dress up. You look so grown up.

It's not like that. I am just escaping.

Sometimes I wonder if I'm not a different sex. A freak. I'm making myself into something new. Ha! Does that sound good? I am Dr. Francesca. Oooo!

At the same time, I fear that I will just become a victim of my own pleasures. That I just can't stop.

That is what I really hate about Bloomington. People don't know when to quit. All the moderation is just a cover for their obsessions. That is why people gain so much weight here. They are trying to eat their way out. And they can't stop. It won't work. But they can't stop.

What am I becoming?

My ghost tells me. And their ghost tells them. This is the legacy of the bloody wars here. The genocides. The ghosts will not be silent. They have found new hosts. I am one!

I have discovered the best disguise of all. I am the mask for a more demure host. Boo!

Where can I hide?

Do I want to eat, or do I want another cigarette? I've decided not to eat for two days. I haven't been hungry. I think it's the after effects of my illness. As if I was ever really sick. I think that I was getting depressed about the way I looked. I went shopping and I could see my reflection in the window, and I thought that I looked like the shop girl. Suicide.

Why is the body so sensitive? If it could just resist these silly moods.

I need someone to tell me what to do. To slow me down. Thank the spirits for this ghost.

I believe that you are my ghost. That is why I trust you. That is why I want you to tell me things. To share your secrets with me.

Of course, there is a secret that I cannot give you. And in sex, it is what is most sought after. That is why you have pushed me. Why you have made me accustomed to pain. Why I see a nobility in suffering. Why I like to hurt you. Why I am your monster.

My confession makes me so secure. It protects me from you. It protects me from my confessor. Even when I give in, I have learned to hold back. That is perhaps a secret of being female. That is what you most desire and can never have. Sex with you is my attempt to humiliate you. To make you something helpless and ugly because that is how I really see you.

You have been my guide. You have shared such wonder with me. But down deep, you are just another bloodsucker. That is why you have been so valuable to me. You know how deep to bite. Suck away. Drain me, bitch. I subsist without blood in my veins.

I am learning what every male already knows. That writing is a form of sex. To have what we cannot. It is even more brilliant than any memory. It lets us recast memory as we would like it to be.

I almost feel that I am making love to myself. That is why I am so attracted to the physical world. The importance of beauty. It is the pure air that is too rare for all but the

excellent. And I have been called to this promise.

I know how ruthless I sound. But that will not stop me. I want every girl in this ill-fated town to look at me and know a way that they can never be. Little Lucys filling out their fuck chart. Fuck away! Liberate yourself. Hate yourself! Eat up! Get lost in your insatiable lusts! You bestial buffets. Get fucked up the ass. Enjoy every perversion and delusion as it bloats you in the worst imaginable way. Hide your love as it transforms into a never-ceasing appetite, the mongrel that roams the street ready to transmit its rabid ways to any in its path. Take to the streets. Fuck, fuck, fuck!

What do I want? Your devotion or your denial. Don't look me in the eye. Don't interfere! It's all the same. I don't need you. You need me. You want me! My young body. To get back what you do not have. Or never had. You want your tongue to wander up my legs. To open me up to unknown pleasures. You'd have to drug me to make me think that there's anything mysterious going on.

How am I acting different from these homegrowns who pass their time smoking dope? I've been to their rat shacks. The smoke-filled rooms where the contact buzz can knock you to the ground. It's just another excuse to eat yourself to death. Chomp down. Loose sex and alcoholic ways make it all seem right.

Can I really say not me? Not me!

I can feel the calling of your high and hard one. What you think that I cannot deny.

I hate you, PENIS!

I am getting tired of this nameless chugging. It might as well be anyone and it often is. If it's really sexual, it gets to that point beyond all caring—just the explosive feelings. Or the lack thereof. That loneliness that seems more incredible than ever.

That is my addiction. My refusal to come down. And the only way is to face the threat of utter collapse. That has become my sweetness. And now I admit my passion. Only in writing can I feel its severity. You deny me because I am denying myself in the most sever way. And I love it for being what it is. That I want nothing for anyone else. I want you to fuck me for me, not for you. FUCK YOU!

Your poetry is shit. This is not about our bodies. It is about our words. My body is my word. And you want to run your affections over it, your nostalgia. FUCK YOU!

You can't have it. You can't have it. You could never soul mine like I do. You stop short with your romantic imagery. Romance up your ass. I'll put on a strap on and be the MALE for you.

Isn't that what you're doing for me, flower boy?

Sex is my work and you have made me a slave. How you want to give me the world. How you want to take me places. Where can you take me? You can't even fuck that well. While you're inside me, I can feel you lose interest. The fluctuations in your uptight member. Bang, bang, poof. Hold on for more. There's that moment when I just want another dick in me, or up me. Your replacement. And every replacement deserves another.

Fuck you, men. I want a woman.

I wait so long. I plan so long. Don't come over. I don't want to see your face. I just want a more pleasant tongue licking me. Knowing my timing. My flutter, my ups and downs. This is what I have always wanted. The pliant lips. The fresh flower. The consistent touch. This is what I want! Not you, but something of tenderness. Something that is really hard, not the illusion of hardness. That is what this city is. Why I hate Indiana. The illusion of hardness.

That is why these local girl get into some good ass fucking. Because it still feels hard when it is not. I just want something new. You need to get new. How are you going to do it?

Men just write to get the penis that they don't have. And I just write to get rid of the penises that I've had already. Lady loses a dick!

I go on, and I get frightened by my frankness. Sometimes I just wish that we were together all the time. Like we were meant to be together.

I am afraid that my sickness will keep us apart. I can feel you inside me. And we will spend our days like this. It has taken me so long to realize who you really are. And I don't want you to abandon me. I know that I am being so bitchy to you. But I am just trying to get ride of my doubts. Take me away from here. I know that you can't, but I want you to.

When I meet you at work, it just turns me on to sneak around. I know that they all know. But you love to pretend. But that's what it all is. It is all pretend. I hate it!

It is you who I can't leave. You are my horizon. And I just edge along your limits. I use my tongue to measure your limits.

I have such a dirty mind. I can't restrain it. If I have a dirty mind, then it resides in an even dirtier body. It is not what I can imagine that is the worst. It is who I am. What I do. What I let you do to me. I hate the degradation.

It is not you. It is what I ask for. I know that you are laughing at me. I walk just behind you trying to catch up. I use my advantages to get ahead of you. You use your imagination to conquer my resistance. You have anticipated my silence, and you have filled me in with your words. My acquiescence.

Your fantasies do not allow me room to escape from your domination. You are inside me when I am away. You have left me nowhere to be myself. That is why I need you to fuck me harder. To be unknown with me. A stranger. To take these places from me so that I can let them be. So I can hold on to something more constant.

Indiana is becoming clearer and clearer. I am no different. I have seen these local boys who live as if there is no tomorrow. And when the girls lose these gods, they try to hold on to a bit of themselves. The love of the risk. But is just eats away at them until they too surrender. That is when the nightmare is most potent. When it just gets a hold of you until you shut out everything else. From an appetite that dominates your every moment to a an appetite that just crushes you.

I see that I am more and more pathetic. I will keep coming back to you until you tell me to go. You will. You will grow tired of the game. I already sense that my appeal is not sustaining you. Maybe if I was unfaithful, it would be easier for you. I know that's what got it started for me.

You are strangling me. That is why I stay. You cannot help yourself. Flowers won't

help. Artistry won't help. I don't want to hear your story. I don't want you to keep me. I want you to squeeze harder. To destroy me. If I can't become a ghost in the whole process than none of this is worth it. Nothing will help—NEVER!

I catch you looking at other girls. What are you doing when I'm not around. I want you fuck someone else. Not so it gives me a reason to leave you. So that it makes me feel my sickness, my utter humiliation in staying with you. How am I different than the supermarket wives. I need to take a long look at the tabloids to feel just how it might be.

Where is my messiah? I must admit to what I have known all along. I am my own teacher. You have only robbed from me. And I have let you. I need you to bring me down so that I can fuel my imagination.

The imagination is so powerful. It is not about remembering or thinking. It is totally a balance, a feeling. It's not about pretense, it's REALITY. You try to figure out your imagination. To put words in its mouth. But it's more a feeling discomfort and that is what I feel. A need to explode. Or to surrender. Or to surpass, to soar.

You are my Indiana. My imagination is trying to get off the fucking. Cherish. I cherish the high. I cherish the denial of the high. That is what makes me excited. I enjoy your denial because it lets me know that I have something that you cannot take away from me. This is all so obvious to me, and I still haven't figured it out. I know that I haven't.

I miss your touch. And you have a way to open me up with a random caress. I hate how you have something of mine. And you won't give it back. That is your imagination. You take from me. And that is my imagination: I know what you took and I can't get it back. I know in a way that you never could know. And even knowing, it is not enough to get back.

There is nothing worse than wanting what you already have but cannot touch. That is why I miss your touch. You make me think that you can touch me when you cannot.

This is why I try so hard to not let your touch overcome me. Even in exploring my body, you have left parts of my soul untouched. I do not save them from you. You try to reach them, but there is something about yourself that does not allow you to attain those reaches. You are pretending the same thing about yourself. But I am ageless. Even when I am sick, I am learning my immortality. Look at my body. That is what you love. It will not give in. You use sex to break me, but it won't work. I am whole; you are not. That is why I have to let go of thought. I need to be with myself, with my body. Not away from it. This is what you have taught me. What you yourself cannot really know. You have to be away from your body. You crave completeness, but you cannot be whole. You need me. I have made you need me. You cry out for what you cannot have.

I am learning a discipline. Unlike these Indiana girls who let the world roll over them. They need sex and its comfort until it destroys them. I use all denial to become acceptance. I am the hawk ready to take flight. I am ready because I am already reaching outside of myself.

You are nothing but my detractor. We will meet for a final confrontation, and you will leave all bloodied. I know you for what you are and for that reason, I must devour you. I must first cut you, wound you. Make it impossible for you to hinder my path.

You knew that it would come to this. That is why you have continued to nurture me. You tried to kill your own ghost. But time has overcome you. And when you have failed, it only

confirmed the right to one day succeed.

From one perspective, you have succeeded marvelously. But there is another place, another world where you have taught me too much. And it is too late to hold me back. You were inside me. But now I am inside you. You can only fuck me to destroy yourself. And you think it is all so charming how your discipline now enfolds you and holds you tight. The grip is just feelings its way. I have not yet clenched my fist. And you feel this vaseline-lathered fist come in behind your and just wrench your insides. The pain that you yearn for. I am tearing out your imagination. I need to end your hold. I will reach the skull. It gets you off. Your lust-fuck.

Just when I was getting too familiar. I know that was your initial intention. That I might stay one step ahead of you and all the while take you on the same path. You could turn against me just as I was about to move in for the kill. That is what you have thought all along. But there is no pleasure along this route. This is your unimagined hell. You move your head in agreement at the option that I have opened for you. But you will want none of this. I am telling you a story. Where can we begin?

At matching colors. You should have never let me in your door. You should have moved quickly in the other direction when you saw me coming. I paralyzed you—with reason—what I know but won't let on. Come, come!

When I'm ready to go, you will beg me. Not now. You can't see it. You want us to be forever. I want us to be forever. To hold me and send this energy all through my body. Anticipation. You will hold me in so many other ways.

All this needs to stop. I need to be firm. To bite down in a way that doesn't let you recover. That doesn't give you a chance to absorb the pain. To let your enjoyment augment.

Pure interruption—stop that!

This is no longer between us. This is between me!

And it will all be the same. That in my retreat, you will try to recover all your lost loves and realize that you can get none of it back. Because every former and future lover will be me. Just when you thought that you had escaped their clutches, I will remind you of sweet affection that will not soothe but only burns. And that anguish will make you turn and turn and hate and hate. And you will come to despise yourself. The curse will not be an antidote, it will be your antithesis. You will not be able to help yourself.

The phantoms have returned to ravage you.

Have I done my job?

Do our cruelties enable us to dispel old loves?

My fear—that my mother will read this and know who I am. My wish—that she will find it and force me to leave. Force me to do what I cannot do myself.

My fear—that I will not say what needs to be said.

I am no longer writing to you. You are off the address list.

I am no longer writing to you.

I took a long bike ride today. It was almost dusk by the time that I headed back into

town. I got lost in the fields, in the endless flow of nothingness. Worse than ever, I realized that the country had little to offer me. Even the promise of getting away is so meager.

The sun can get oppressive. It makes you want to shed your clothes. Sometimes nakedness is just that—comfort. But for the girls from the farms, even in their natural state, the nakedness says something sexual. I have no doubt about that unuttered truth. That the heat swirls around you until it touches you deep inside. And if you are afraid of yourself, then this touch unleashes desire. You can't restrain yourself. Next thing, you're just rolling around on the ground while some lout mounts you. I'm the first one to admit the truly liberating power of a good fuck, but these girls have absolutely no control. Love and sex are pretty much the same thing. Watch out. No wonder everyone turns out they way they do here. Their independence is just fucked away by the hot sun.

I felt so thankful once I escaped all that light into the dark calm of my room.

It's strange. In all that calm, I too felt overcome by that physical sensation. There was nothing dignified in my emotions. I wanted you to come right over and take care of me. And then to leave right afterwards.

I still hate you!

I am better learning about the transformation of Miss Indiana. Once sex has become the one and only thing, how does a girl convince herself to go to work. Hell—after work, she can rush home and worry about nothing else but her guy—WOW! It's so clear. Open me up. That's why at every break, she calls up the fucker to tell him how much she misses him, how much she is missing if he's not around. The subjugation of Emily.

Hello, hello! Break doesn't come too soon. Maybe a snack while you work so you can hang on until break. Or double the snack if you can't eat and work. Less stress, more chews.

Gum, a cigarette. You want to swallow.

Open me up.

The taste. A kiss.

—Work has made me nasty. I need a shower. I need a nap.

What do I need?

I can't complain. I need to go to work. Work is that screaming complaint for everything that's been taken from you—everything...

I'm not crying... Flipping through a tabloid. Fashion mags just don't say enough. They don't get you close enough. And you can't get any closer.

—How long until break?

The next step is that you feel this need to lecture the other girls. You don't really say anything; you just give them that scowl.

—How long until break?

And that's what a tabloid is—one long lecture. A lecture to the girl who can't stay thing...to the girl who is getting too thin, starving herself to death...a lecture to the reader how she just has to do one little thing to make it better. HOW?

Don't complain!

You really didn't listen. I told you and you really didn't listen. And then you stop listening. Really stop. Just get a bigger TV and some more videos. A new VCR and close the

door all weekend. You don't even have to go out for food.

Don't move!

Why am I telling this story. All the managers in training. Or the waitresses saving their tips... You can own part of this dream.

-I've been thinking about opening a video store.

-People have satellite. They can get pretty much anything they want.

-I'll get special stuff.

-You'll get porn.

-We can keep that in the back section.

-Behind a curtain. Like in a porn shop.

-Hey, I think I know that guy.

And that what they come to expect—proportion and perfection. They just pull on you and reshape you—turn you into something different. Something freaky. You've got this house, and you live in the rec room in the basement and you spend all the time watching these porn videos with some guy who eats pizza all day and then works late at night while you stay home and watch the videos that he won't watch while he's there. But he's helping with the mortgage. And this is paradise.

You don't have to worry anymore.

There's not very much money in real estate here. Or in a jewelry store. Maybe they'll build a new mall with an apartment complex with a pool.

-I hate using a public pool. I don't really like how I look in a bathing suit?

-You look great.

-I just can't stand those guys who leave beer cans by the side of the pool.

Where am I going with all my Midwest dreams. I'm getting carried away. I don't care enough to turn this into a real story. It's really too depressing for me. If I could just become enough of a part of it. I can't. I just can't.

I just want to learn a little more of their story. To understand.

It's not all the same. Honey who looks great in a bikini except that trash-can of a guy who took a broken bottle to her face.

Just a small scar. A reminder. As it gets hotter, that bikini hugs her frame with more certainty. Enough to get some other biker going.

-You really like guys like that.

-I know that he'll go down on me. And all these girls have told me about his dick.

-I've touched.

-Did you put it in your mouth?

-He's a fucking loser.

-You gave him a hand job.

–Hell no! He waved it in my face, and I thought what the fuck, get it away.

When the sun dries her suit, she pulls on some hip hugging jeans and invites me to take a ride in her convertible. We drive to some biker bar. And while I'm waiting inside, she gives her version of the blow job to Mr. Wheels. This is her car parked behind the bar. And I go in the bathroom to take a piss, and I can see her head bobbing up and down.

–Does everything have to be vulgar to you?

–Not everything. It's just that my body does things that I regret later on.

–Is that why get high at ten in the morning. What kind of life are you going to have?

–I got this weird job in a massage parlor.

–Weird. You could say that again.

–It's not like I really mind. They let you wear surgical gloves if the guy wants a full job.

–So what's a partial job. The old in and out.

–Some of these guys have asked me for the weirdest things.

–Sex.

–One guy wanted me to pee on his face. He's that freaky guy that I see around.

–What kind of job does he do that he's willing to waste his money on something so frivolous?

–You should do something like this. You could save your money and move out of your parents'.

–I could move away to the city and then get a job as a stripper.

–It would make you independent.

–So you're waiting for some obnoxious pig to ask you to suck him off in the washroom.

–They have private room for that sort of thing.

–I never knew so much about so little.

This was what was missing from small towns. A bona fide sex industry. Sure they had a sex shop and massage parlors.

It was all freaking me out too much. I had visions of trying to wash off this thick grease from my hand. Cum that look more like motor oil.

I'm not going to take that shit in my mouth.

–This is your rent money.

I hate what I have become for you. You relish that I am your concubine. Your calls late at night. You don't even pretend anymore. I think that I hear from you just when you can't get another girl to stop on by. I know it. And you ask me for the weirdest things. Things that guys only ask when they have been to massage parlors too much.

Video stores stuffed with crap action films. Virtual snuff films.

That is what I am for you—the ultimate sacrifice—to destroy what you love...

What remains... the emphasis more and more on my lithe body.

His hold is more and more sure and less and less certain. What can he do to compensate. Fucker, what can you do?

Even when I do not talk to you, you are still here interfering with my life. I can't deal

with any randomness, any waiting for someone else to figure out what they have to do. It's all about my life from now on. Not you. Not even me! I am beyond myself. I need to follow my plan for my life.

Just as you need to remember me, I need to forget you. The body need not remember. Memory can interfere with its certain path. It can weigh it down in illusion and nostalgia. With such restriction, the lover can never strike with certainty. She is fatigued. Useless.

No one will ever catch me. Not you. Not my mother. No one. And that is who I have become. I have taken away the watchful eye. I can do whatever I please. And it will have no after effect. I have rebuilt myself so that I have only one concern—pleasure. My pleasure and no one else's—my pleasure.

In this I am so unlike the other girls here. They wait for things they enjoy. But they never enjoy what they have at the moment. They say they like it. Their suffering. Their beliefs. Their flowers. They want so much more but can never ask for what they really want.

Even my friends are only slaves to their desires. They wait with a sense of waste for guys to come back to work. They watch stupid movies to fill their time. They want surprises when there are none. Everything in their lives is so ordinary. This awful wait. Sex games.

It's not a problem for me anymore. The only thing that I'm waiting for is the bus out of here. Fuck you for ever. I won't even remember.

Why is it so much easier to write this sort of things than to actually live it? Maybe you can drive to the plane in Chicago. What kind of escape can that ever be?

It's three in the morning. I've called your place a bunch of times. I want to see independent from you. I can't. I need you to come get me. And where are you? Banging someone new. I haven't even left yet. I'm going to find you and cut it off and the I'm going to make you eat it. You think that I'm kidding, mother fucker. You're next!

Such is love. Our best torturer.

I've been studying the bus schedule. I don't think that I want to leave. Not yet anyway.!

I can barely move. Words form but nothing can be heard. I am witness to a spectacle but cannot tell anyone—what is happening?

Gesture, trying to explain. But my movements are too rudimentary to form words. Uncontrollable shaking. Noises. Squawking. I feel the sounds but I can't hear them.

There is a nightmarish effect. A quaking all around me.

This spectacle. I am displayed. Again these flashing lights.

We are looking at you?

I try to make a game of it. Go along. Wait for the visit. I know what's going to happen. I won't let it happen this way.

—If you say something, we're going to hurt you.

—More than you've already hurt me.

I am looking at myself on a screen.

Surrounded by another audience, all giggling.

–Why didn't they give her more?

–They will that comes later.

Now I feel like I am being operated on. I am spread out on a table.

–We need to replace this part.

–Replace it. Just take it out. Take that out and put this in.

What are they talking about. I want to resist but the anesthetic is too thick.

Or not enough,

–I wasn't supposed to remember this.

–You don't have control over your memory.

I twist and turn.

–You didn't tell me that this was going to happen!

–Just relax. Once you get past the initial stages, you will enjoy it.

But it continues.

–Just keep working.

Trying to turn the channel. I don't want to watch this anymore.

Words are being said for me. They are not my words.

–That looks pretty on you.

–It does.

Say it doesn't. Just stop this from happening.

I have to go along. I relax and feel these waves come over me. That sense of doing something wrong.

–Don't worry. They tell you that it's bad. But they're just keeping it for themselves.

I want to be rewarded.

–Don't say anything and we'll give you some toys.

I have all the toys that I need.

Don't say anything. Is this the beginning. I get so chatty. But it's all silly. And when I really want to say something, nothing comes out. Can you help me.

Put your hand in my mouth and pull out what it in there—those words that harden in the mouth.

Here are your words. We are giving them back to you. They are all so useless. I accommodate to the feeling. This makes me feel much better.

–It doesn't matter what you say. It never does. It's what you do.

–This is so much fun. Do it again.

–We're going to photograph you this time.

–Show us what you can do.

No, the flash hurts.

The flash is flesh.

Before him was the fruit of his desire. He could feel the blood rush to his head. his whole body was seized by the apparition. He fell under its spell. From this place he could command all of her will.

He wanted to caress, to let his lips kiss this treasure. Love of loves, he was drawn to this holy place.

He twirled the wheel. She felt the disorientation. He was overwhelmed with the delights of her body.

Fragrant and potent. Here was her spice. He was enticed by its appeal, the entry to the hidden sea. Nectar of the sweet fruit. The waterfall, enriching and flowing. He drank in its wonder.

As he looked at her she seemed drew all his energy from him. He could feel himself flow inside her. The basis of all his resistance gave way. He melted in the image before him

–Give me all you have!

And the energies seemed to work their way from deep inside him. This was the source of all her power. He could not hold back. Like slamming against a wall. The wave rises up and falls against the solid surface. He gave and gave and gave some more.

She provoked the intensity of his desire. Where touch could stimulate and bring her alive. The touch became more and more. She floated in his caress.

Her moist skin only drove his imagination more and more.

He touched. But he could not. This was the eternity of what he wanted. And it was also the basis for his denial.

In this vision he sought the place of his obsession where all the lines of the will intersected. This was her body's hot zone where limbs crossed and expanded. Where she seemed to explode with pleasure as it radiated to her extremities, and then returned back in wave after wave.

–This is where you want to feel the touch. That tickle that will raise you up.

She smiled as he related his seduction.

--I don't want you to smile. Don't want you to even let yourself follow the path of ecstasy. Just focus on the now. The feeling that cannot arrive at its satisfaction but lives entirely in longing. This is where I make contact with you. You are entirely aroused but only to give me pleasure. And each stage of your excitement is only a further acknowledgment of my touch. You want to extend the pleasure. You want to draw off some reassurance for yourself. But you will not let yourself. Here is your discipline—knowing yourself so well but not letting yourself give in. Only letting your body go along for each stage. For me to assume that you are all part of this connection. And we can feel each folding into the other as you swell with the flow. Your blood plumps you up and reveals the heart of your enjoyment.

>>You enjoy only as a performance—only to be seen.

>>That is why I stare at you now. For what you are offering. This if for me to take. When I want. You can no longer object. For you have surrendered completely. It is no longer an exercise of the will. The will is entirely something that is shown. Show because it has already been given.

>>Now when you want to give, it is too late. You have shown yourself and all is already given. You will not refuse. You will not take back. We have both attained your eternity. And so I save the offer for a more inopportune moment when to accept will be a sacrifice on your part.

There was a moment of stress in this offer. She wanted his touch and became so hot as he

heard his words.

–I want your touch, but I don't want you to feel touched. You must want and not receive.

–Come into me. I want you inside.

–NO!

–I want you so badly!

–I want you to touch me with your hand. But I don't want to feel any other part of your body. I want to satisfy myself with looking. Imagining a moment of your purity that is no longer yours to give.

She felt somewhat disgusted by the whole experience. But he was awakening her to another reality. Here the only thing was the discipline that he offered. She could dispel all the fear that she had carried so long with her. She was in transformation.

–Give me your hands. Let me look at what they have to offer.

He let her know that he was not happy.

–You are filthy. What have you been touching. I will give you something to touch.

–That is why I am here.

–Don't speak. Listen.

He grasped her hands and steadied her body on the wheel. He needed her stimulation, but he did not want to follow through with his earlier fantasies.

–Are you ready for me?

She nodded.

He massaged the hands. He made her ready for the contest. He pressed down on the rough edges to make them smooth for their anointed task.

He pressed them wide to test their extension.

–You know what you will have to do?

–I think so. But you will have to show me.

She adopted a submissive tone. This would only encourage a more effusive response on her part. She was becoming aroused. She tried to conjure up his former stares. He seemed more preoccupied with the coming task.

–Spread your hands and make yourself ready to take me inside.

She did as he told her. Then he unzipped his pants and pulled out his penis. It was flaccid. He wanted it like that. This would underline the effects of her caresses.

–Take me.

She could feel his balls as she grasped his penis. It already became aroused with her touch. This excited her. She felt like she was connecting with him.

–Do you like that, baby?

–Just do what you have to do. I don't want you to enjoy it. This is all for me. Can you give without receiving?

She stroked the shaft harder and cupped her hands around it. She worked it back and forth.

–You should feel honored.

She nodded and continued her task. He eased into the touch. Let himself become absorbed in her stimulation until he forgot himself, forgot her and just gave in to the feeling.

–Ah!

He wanted to hold back but her caresses became more and more. Nothing to restrain himself. He would not touch her.

His disgust was confirmed as he came in her cupped hands. She wiped the cum on herself. More than ever, she wanted him inside her. He turned and wiped himself as if this had not happened.

From the table he drew a dildo.

–You know what this is.

She nodded.

–You know what I’m going to do with this.

Again she nodded.

–No, you don’t!

He described to her the marks of passion.

–It’s not so much the effects themselves. It’s the lingering absorption.

–What are you talking about?

–The face starts to bear the impression of regret. It forces you to push out so far that when you recover there is no reserve. You can never rest, and it takes its toll.

–That’s crazy.

–I can already see how it is touching you. You need to restrain your desire.

–You told me to accept the force of desire.

–And you must. But you need to ride its waves. When it starts to echo back in you.

When your longing is too great, then it starts to seep into your being and just rip you up.

–You just want that to be the case. It’s your way of being able to call me back to you. As if I need some kind of rescue.

–It’s not an illusion. It’s real. There’s an expectation that goes along with your exploration. Like you’re trying to make up for something.

–What are you talking about?

–The freeze.

–What?

–When the pain becomes too much, when the pleasure becomes too much, it freezes on the face. It is the ultimate reflection of the experience. The death mask settles over you.

–The death mask.

–Look at me.

She couldn’t see anything.

–You can’t see it. But when I look at you, it’s what I see.

–I can’t see anything.

–Your pleasure is starting to take hold on your face. The hold of the ecstasy. And each time that you fall, the mask gets tighter. When you start to notice how it has taken hold, it becomes such a source of fright. You can’t do anything

She stared at her face in the mirror and tried to detect these lines that he was suggesting. She saw nothing.

–What in heavens are you talking about?

He touched her face and almost made these marks start to appear. She could hardly

contain the weight of this realization. She felt completely crushed.

–Now look.

He passed his hand over her face and miraculously made the marks disappear.

–What is that?

–The power.

–What? Like a warlock.

–Something like that. You’ll know, but then you won’t. Not really. You can bury that knowledge so deep in you. Just project it outwardly so that they take on the burden and all that you feel is the pleasure.

–How do I do that?

–It’s all part of the discipline. Taking it in only when you want. Learning how to take yourself out of the experience when you don’t want to get dragged down by it.

He had made her curious. What was the discipline? She knew that he was on to it. Knew that the mask was not simply the result of a hypnotism. It was all real.

She now felt a sense of destiny. As if she had been fated for this end. She now knew what she needed from him. But she didn’t want to submit completely.

She felt as if she had taken a knife in the heart. Felt the immensity of the gesture. The encroaching pain. And she had just reached in and pulled in out, as if it had never happened.

–I feel it’s all a matter of luck. Of mood. O perspective. Ad bad day and the mask reappears.

–The mask never leaves you. You decide not to recognize it.

–Then it’s just a form of denial.

–It’s a gift. You can make use of it for a while. Once you stop believing, it impresses itself all over you.

It was all magic, and he was a magician.

–But then time will just pull you from out of nowhere and swallow you up again.

–Everyone has a story. They just can’t get too caught up in it.

–Am I doing that?

–I don’t know. How do you fee?

–I feel wonderful. How do you feel?

She felt that he knew something about her so deep and so full of risk . She was on this collision course and there was nothing that she could do to avoid the end. The mask was her way of to face this end prematurely and overcome its effects. She let it press itself against her face, and as she did, its touch subsided.

There needed to be more for the lesson. She felt like she was all wound up in a ball. All these thoughts. All this tension had just wound her so tight. She wanted a relief.

–I know what you want. Just to make yourself feel a sense of comfort.

–And what are you going to do about it?

–Nothing. I can’t do a thing. Go if you need it.

She imagined herself in the throes of passion, spinning around and around. She liked the turns of her new world. More than ever she was married to her demise. It brought a freshness to her look. Something that she would need to end here. In her climax, there was such upheaval. But she was not shaken by it. She gave herself to emotion—an absolute in the trust.

I all her life she had never confronted such a force. She did not want to cave under its grotesque power. But she felt that it had such a hold over her. She did not want to give up herself to something that seemed to have so little in common with her reality.

–What can you really show me?

–Nothing that you don't already know.

But was that so. He knew ways to work the skin, to stretch the muscles, to shape the bone. They had both touched this fundamental of her being. It was not a dependency. A solemn devotion.

–You have to lose something for me.

–A sacrifice?

–If you want to gain, you have to lose.

–What can that mean? An exchange, a deal.

–If you want to see it so grossly.

–Just don't hurt me. I don't want you to cut me.

–Who said anything about knives?

–I'm just afraid.

–Of the end. Of the mask.

–Something else. Something that has nothing to do with me.

That thing. He needed to introduce her to it.

–Listen in the darkness and you can hear it.

Like the turns of a wheel of fortune.

–What is this thing?

–A pleasure machine.

–It looks like a torture device. The rack. Are you going to strap me into the rack?

–Are you ready?

–And then just spin me around and around.

Her sex was displayed in such immediacy.

The next morning's sunlight was little more than a curse for her. She longed for the artificial light.

–What is going on?

–It is happening.

–What is?

–You are becoming a child of the night.

–A what.

–Now you are the child of the night.

The night now closed over her even in the heart of the morning.

–Can't you stop this? Is this some kind of curse of yours?

–I have nothing to do with any of this.

Of course he did. This was the beginning of his discipline. Why he had been sought from the beginning. This was where Dorothea started to emerge from her Indiana past.

–Stare at the sun and watch it disappear before your eyes.

She closed her eyes and could feel it burn from the inside.

–What is that?

–That is nothing. Lie back and close your eyes.

She was now confronted by this massive sun. She wanted to cast off these marks of passion. In the grilling light, she felt it burn away her past. Restore her with the morning freshness. As the midday made its presence, the warmth reached deeper into her heart. There was nothing to distract her from the overwhelming power of the day. With the increasing afternoon humidity, she was confronted the solidity of the air. She lost herself in the gravity.

–There is nothing to see.

–Smell this! Do you know what this smells like?

She gave him a strange look.

–You know.

She did not. Or else she did not want to admit what she smelled.

–It’s you. It smells like you.

She gave him a sickened look.

–Don’t deny it. This is you shivering to get it in. Just begging to get cranked up.

She remained silent.

He caressed her face with the dildo.

–This is not degrading, this is exciting.

–I am not excited.

–Not to have this in you pumping up and down. Ending a boring evening with that morsel of excitement that will prepare you for sleep.

She twisted her lip as if to protest. He traced a line with it that stopped at her lips.

–Tell me how you want to take it.

–I want to take it inside.

She stuck out her tongue, and he dragged it along. She then wrapped her tongue around it. Licked it up and down. Absorbed its salty taste. She mimicked the contact with the flesh. her breathing became regular, and she purred:

–Anything to turn you on.

He did not want to give in to his excitement. He only wanted to maintain the challenge.

–You like the game!

She nodded in approval.

–Come on, baby, put it in me.

He found her invitation ridiculous, but he wanted to keep the interplay going. He massaged her luxuriant hair with the dildo. She shook her head to counteract the movement of the object. It was a magical brush, and she loved its touch.

With it, he reached under the flip of her hair and pushed it out.

–Keep on.

His gestures suggested so much to her. A smile crept over her face.

–Don’t stop. That feels so good.

He withdrew it from her.

–You know what I want to do. I want to push this in and out, in and out.

–Anything that you want, baby!

–Not what I want. What do you want?

–I want you to push it in and out of me. To get it so deep and just keep pumping with this.

–You know that we’ll never get tired. We’ll keep it going all night into the morning.

–I can’t control myself when I hear about.

She was displayed for him. She let the conversation excited her as she anxiously awaited him penetrating her with the form.

–I am so ready.

He moved it around the lips of her vulva. She was getting so wet. He started to vibrate her clitoris as she became more and more aroused.

–Do me in!

It was becoming so easy to slide the dildo around moist skin. She motioned as if to open herself up. But he maintained his path along the perimeter.

He slobbered it up with gel and got it ready to do its mission. His finger wrapped around the shaft and rubbed it all over. She could already feel the sensation of it moving in.

He continued his caresses as she became more and more aroused. With sort of a pop, he plunged it inside her. She eased its passage as she opened herself to its penetration.

–This is going to be so simple.

She gave me a look of hunted satisfaction. He slid the dildo in her and began his motion of moving in and out, in and out.

–Ah!

He was preoccupied in his task. He was working her, and she gave way.

She loses herself in the genuineness of his smile. As they float together, she becomes overwhelmed by their connection. She feels these currents swirl around her. She surrenders to his flow. And she tries to maintain a semblance of balance as she somersaults into rush.

His caresses are consistent and lulling. She folds herself into him. The two of them fall under the amazing edifice of this passion. She grips the sheets intensely, as he is carried along by the momentum. She challenges his motions. He tries to hang on as she propels herself harder and harder into him. She seems to emerge from this.

W.D. was very ill. I drove down to the Institute to see how he was. The myth of the two of them was becoming entangled. I couldn’t deal with it. She was waiting in the hallway by his room. She was trying not to be seen. It felt entirely too real.

–You can’t hold me responsible. You now what my nature is. It’s always going to turn out the same way. I can warn you. I can share my affection with you. But ultimately, this is something that can’t be helped..

–You knew it was coming. You knew it all along.

–I get forgetful.

–That’s rather convenient.

–It’s so easy to talk when it’s not about you.

I moved past her and started to cross the threshold of his room.

–You’re not going to deal well with what’s happening to him.

–I heard you were here. I needed to come by.

–I hate long goodbyes.

–That’s not why I’m here.

–Some kind of death watch.

–That’s not it.

–It’s about her. It’s way beyond doing something.

–How long...

–You don’t really understand. I created her for you.

–And what would she say to that?

–There’s not much to say. That’s how she saw it too.

–I’m sure that she’ll agree as well.

–You know the hardest part is letting go of something that is part of you.

–Is this the man or the philosopher talking?

–This is a friend.

–I never thought of it that way.

–We both had to let her go.

–I’m glad that you can be so diplomatic about it.

–We’re not going to fight a duel over this.

–What could that even prove?

–Exactly.

I smiled. It was enough that I was just there.

–I never saw it coming to end like this.

–You are being melodramatic.

–Time has a way of working in your favor.

–That’s been the crux of the argument. You’ve always been trying to turn the tables.

–I’ve been myself. I’ve laid it out the way it is. You thought there was something more.

I’ve been pretty up front with you. That’s the way it is.

–What way? It’s as if I’ve made it this way to hurt you or something. I never expected any of this.

I thought that I taught you to eschew melodrama.

–You taught me everything but. That’s your forte.

–Like I said., time is in your favor.

I wondered if she heard any of this. Was this her best revenge? I really couldn’t do anything for or against him. It just seemed out of my hands. More than ever, I wanted a clearer sign. I wanted some miraculous event. Something to shake me up. It was a pathetic end to it all.

–I don’t want it to end like this.

He didn’t hear me. I pulled him close.

–You are going to stay for the lecture.

I didn't know what he was talking about. A bit of wishful thinking on his part.

–You are going to stay for his lecture.

–You want me to hang around.

–That's why you came, wasn't it?

–He's on his last legs.

–He wanted you to hear the lecture.

–I thought that he already gave it.

–This is really for you. It his present to you.

–I'm glad that you can both be so magnanimous.

–It's not like this is all about you even though you act as if it is. You've always tried to take away too much from the people that you've known.

–Heaven help me when this is my moment.

–And it is coming!

I felt the idea of the lecture was an intrusion on all of us. It implied that he was making something happen rather than something was happening to him. I also thought that he had already given the major lecture of the session and there wasn't much more to hear from him. It violated everything that he had taught about himself. It made him the very academic that he hated. I didn't like the illusion that things would just continue after he was gone.

This was his legacy to posterity. But he had always railed against that idea. It gave the academy the illusion that it had captured time. He was never that kind of thinker. There was always more anger that motivated him.

We can't stop time. We can only brace ourselves for it.

I drifted into sleep in the waiting room. I thought that he was ready to give the talk. And the stupidest nonsense swirled in my head.

My talk today is about memory. About dreams and memory.

This seemed like it was just some of Dorothea's nonsense pervading his talk. I fell asleep in the empty waiting room and woke up with the thought that I had missed his talk. I made my way over to the lecture hall and it was empty.

–You knew that you were my only audience.

–Why are you doing this?

He could barely stand up. He braced himself at the podium.

–We have this illusion that our memories are our own.

This didn't seem very dignified.

–That they are our only link to what has been and by extension to what will be.

I dosed some more and woke to what seemed more eloquence. It was a packed hall and he paced confidently in front of everyone.

We remake our past and in so doing, we remake our present. If we feel confident, then we give off an air of confidence. People begin to forget our defeats. It is as if they have never happened.

There is this stalemate that we develop with time. It tries to take us over at our worst

moments. *And we come rushing back.*

This was how I always thought of him.

Others see us how we want to be seen. In this way, we can never really see ourselves. I guess there seems to be an element of humor in all this. We think that we have deluded time. Time thinks it has ensnared us. From our wishes, we have created this opponent and we fall for our own story.

He smiled. This would be his final effort and he wanted us to remember him in all his power. If he had to go out like this, then the exchange was worth it. At least for us.

But our memories can really have no effect on what is our actual experience. They are only the illusion that tomorrow will be like today. And we use this expectation to frame how we see things around us. In effect, all we see is memory. And the more that we think that we understand, the more we impose our vision on experience. The less that it has to do with anything of any reality.

How had he been able to make a career of this nonsense? Everyone wanted this sort of comfort. That they could pierce the illusion and that he was their guru. The facade needed to be thicker than ever.

I almost felt that it was her speech that he was reading. That her actions had taken him over and were now influencing his thoughts. All this preoccupation with memory.

Memory is not a picture. It is a balance. Like a feeling among the muscles. It is a feeling based on a feeling—just that. It is not a picture. The picture is only a distraction from the fundamental of the memory. It's a way of understanding what the memory really holds.

All this seemed to underline the primacy of the sexual in her thoughts. Cheap psychoanalysis. Psychology as a substitute for hard thought.

One experience can distort our memories. It can change this balance. A most intense feeling. So that we organize all other experiences around the desire to bring it back.

This was a theory of addiction. All the thinking about the phallus. The temporal manifestation of a psychic economy. I felt it was an attempt to adapt his best thoughts for a popular audience. He no longer needed that audience. Now his audience was more singular. More principled.

For the time being, we subsist in a world devoid of memory. But how can this be? Such is a void devoid of itself. Memory may be just that. A nothingness trying to get out of itself. This is more than just a forgetting. A lull. A forgetting to forget. Memory is that very thing that we try to get rid that just comes back. But not in an intentioned way. In an almost random way. An insinuation.

Sometimes we can't remember because of clutter

It seems like all the risk was being taken out of his thought. Maybe it was the illness. But for the moment, all of that seemed like a silly charade at my expense.

The dream is imagination in all its purity. It is stripped away from all coincidence with the waking state. And it affirms what is the source of all memory in the first place. This belief that the regularities of every day experience will continue. There is nothing else connecting to us any reality except the constancy of this belief. It becomes the magnificent palace upon which we build our whole existence. And the palace is a castle in the sky. So the dream is the only reality.

At first, we surmise that the dream state affirms everything that cuts us off from reality. It

is the frustrations of our waking life that are magnified in state of total helplessness. The death of a loved one, a failed career, a disastrous relationship—all these extremes are relived over and over again in the dream state. In its exaggeration, it creates desperation where there is none. It makes us doubt our everyday reality. It is unfortunate the utter drudge that the dream state registers. Our inescapable collision with our nothingness.

Of course, this desperation only fuels a more relentless denial in our waking moments. We eventuate everything that is our disposal to affirm the power that we have over our lives. Ruthless work habits that push the body to the breaking point give us the comfort that we have resisted the useless condition of our sleep time. Caffeine taken to promote continual arousal give us the illusion of the primacy of the waking state. More than ever, we can cast off the oppression of the dream world.

But to what end. The fundamental truths remain. We cannot turn back the hands of time because the hands of time were never in our favor. We just followed time in its course under the impression that we really had an influence on its currents. As we swim along with the tides, we feel blessed. Poor little fools we become.

We are wrong, wrong, wrong!

It is all about extending the dream state into its true place of domination. There are portals and we need to break through. We are only hopeless because we do not understand the locus of true influence. Everything that has slipped by us, all that water under the bridge rushes around in the inevitable torrents of the dream world. We need to throw ourselves into this maelstrom. This is our passion. To live as if we are asleep.

W.D. was hypnotizing his audience with this drivel. It made absolutely no sense. All this turning back the hands of time. Here was a force who exercised such dominance in his waking state. Just a human tyrant. And he was trying to cast himself as a passive guru of the other side. Maybe that was the intent of the spiritual in the first place. To enable us to extend our personal empires. From the sceptic that I had known, I felt a believer emerging. What next did he have to propose. All seemed so obvious. If there were forces swirling around, then there must be a motivation for all these turns. It was just his intervention which would allow such changes.

He couldn't admit to his role in the new religion. That would be too obvious. He had to let the chaos twist to an even greater purpose. That is what I had loved about his lessons. They seemed so natural. As if they originated prior to thought. As if they subsisted in the things themselves. Whoever gets caught up in this charlatanism? I had been.

This lecture was his revenge. And its confident address was also his way of getting back at me. I wondered as I listened to him if this performance was not all from my benefit. He had pulled me from my own dream state into a lecture hall that resembled the sessions of old. If he was going to pull a masquerade, why was his subject matter so weak?

I drifted back into my sleep. I wondered if the next incarnation might not be more formidable.

—You did catch on. I was surprised that it took you so long.

—Is this how you want to end it?

—I guess you didn't like the melodrama in Indiana.

- It has to be one of your worst performances.
- So what do you want from me. You’ve seen all the best.
- But if you’re going to do it for my benefit, you have to be a little more crafty.
- Let’s just say that it’s not only meant for you.
- Are you sharing dreams these days. Quite a trick.
- That was my whole theory.
- I think that one has already been tried.

What is most critical in the understanding of the imagination is the idea of the double.

- Does the double emerge full-fledged, or does it evolve over time until it eventually achieves full body?
 - Are you making light of my idea.
 - No this is a serious question. Is the double full-form? Or is it more like a father and son who live two different ages? Or is it in between? It starts out with a discrepancy then eventually the father and son match. They are the same person in two different places.
 - It’s somewhat akin to your last idea.
 - Does the double exist in a different moral plane than the self? And what about the opposition between good and evil?
 - That’s not a bad way to think about it.
 - What if the self meets the double?
 - I haven’t even suggested that relationship for the moment. The double exists as an aspect of the self. More accurately, it is the self without all the illusion of the everyday life.
 - But in order to be something like the self, the double needs to feel the effects of everyday life. Otherwise, the double is only the kernel of the self’s activities, and this kernel gets transformed over time.
 - Something like that.
 - But then it’s not really a double. It doesn’t have a form that might interfere with the experience of the self.
 - It’s not so much about interference.
 - This is not an opposition between light and darkness.
 - We’re talking about an entity that pervades our everyday experience. To make sense of this relationship, we imagine the double as another person. But the double is more the original entity itself. It the existence that remains hidden but that supports every manifestation of its being.
 - I get it. Could the entity try to take over the self.
 - Like a possession.
 - Yeah!
 - In a manner of speaking.
 - Does the entity not want to be discovered?
 - You are implying a total awareness on the part of the double. But the double exists in this other world that is not in total contact with our everyday. You might imagine a bridge that connects the two. And not everything makes it over the bridge.

–Does the double save everything on its side of the bridge?

–The double lives in a whole world on its side of the bridge. The self tries to pierce that world. At the same time, the self is barely aware of the world that the double inhabits. Sure there are dreams. But so much of dreams is simply a denial of everyday, not an embrace of a more encompassing experience.

–How does the self open up the other world?

–There certainly is a resistance on the part of the double. It's not by intention. The bridge is built to let some things pass and block out others. Once something gets too upsetting for the self, the bridge has a way of refusing entry. Or it could work in just the opposite way. A traumatic event could be the only thing that affects the self. Only at this point does the self become aware of the power of its internal states to affect how it sees the outside world. Otherwise, the world remains the primary preoccupation of the self. What you want, what you crave, what you can't do without. These are your primary concerns. And the self is always a bridge from one place to another. In itself, the self has no content. Only feelings, aspirations. These aspirations are the very thing that inhere in the double. The balances that make the self the self. But the self feels the need to live up to the images that other have. This is critical to the understanding of the double.

The double is most prominent as an evil demon that interferes with our everyday plans. Sometimes, there is almost a rank perversity in the character of this double. The self lets down all inhibition and simply gives in to all its monstrous appetites. The outside world only exists insofar as it confirms the wishes of the double.

I was being duped by W.D.. It was another attempt on his part to give the audience the feeling that they were indeed participating in deep thought. People were taking notes furiously as if all this was being recorded for the ages. The laurels that W.D. so richly deserved. I found his ghost philosophy a bit childish. It assumed this full-bodied entity that acted in such a preposterous way. He countenanced a simplistic notion of the self in the first place.

This was the stuff of popular philosophy. It gave the casual café attendee the sense that he was doing more than daydreaming. That his double was all the more powerful than anyone else's. By his special attainment, he was way more advanced than anyone else

–W.D., you're just feeding the exceptionalism of your audience. They come to you to make them feel special. In fact, you are acting as the very double that you propose to discern. No wonder everyone expects this shit. You let them in on something that just feeds their damaged egos. It so easy to go along and make the self feel more powerful. All these forces that seem out of its control are pointed out as aspects of the double. If they can just cross the bridge they can regain their lost power. Add all the sex talk, and you've got your monster. That is how we see things. As this story. And you're just a better story teller.

–It all exists at a much deeper level. You are just offering caricature.

–Deep, surface. It's all the same. Even in your eyes. These currents just travel back and forth. And the observer believes that there's more to it.

–That's what I've been saying all along. The observer believes in all these connections that don't exist.

- But you’re just adding one more phantom to the whole mess.
- I’m not adding nor subtracting. The feelings of our everyday are a clue that there is something more.
- Something more. Like associations and beliefs. Simply because they collect in a more constant mass doesn’t suggest any more insight on the part of the self.
- Exactly.
- But your exactly presumes that there is some meaning outside of all this. The very belief that you isolate becomes real once its conviction attains a fuller form. This is really silly. I thought that you might just see this.
- You’re missing my whole point. All this thought that you’re doing is just part of everyday experience. OK. The full-bodied entities. All part of the self. We have these feelings and they are most evident in our dreams. And as our experiences, they only have an associative connection to anything real in experience.
- More ghost talk.
- Hold on! Our dreams indicate the source of the creative abilities of the self. The self constructs the world in action. But it has no real connection to anything. At particular moments, it seems to give us predictive powers over experience. But that is just for now. We build our castle based on just this notion.
- That doesn’t necessitate a double.
- There is another world that has nothing to do with our expectations. It is beyond our dreams. But the only way that we can tap it is in our dreams. If we can surpass the wall that separates the two worlds.
- And the double.
- This is how the self is actually manifest separate from what we see.
- You mean actually latent.
- Whatever you say.
- I’m trying to follow you. You muddle it all by just changing terminology in midstream.
- You’re not giving it a chance. You’re just the realist that you’ve always been.
- People want reassurances. Their house. Their car. Something to protect their feelings. That’s something real. A marker. You park your car. You expect it to be there in the morning.
- Unless you’re roaring drunk
- I think you’ve forgotten your car a few times.
- That’s just my point. The very things that we take for granted could slip away from us under drastic circumstances.
- I’ll admit that.
- So it’s not so real after all.
- There’s the real people that towed the car away and expect immediate payment in cash.
- That’s not what we’re talking about. There’s the feeling on the part of the car owner that the vehicle is a reassurance of some greater reality. It is not and can never be.
- But it’s real until it is taken. And it is real once he gets it back.
- That’s just the source of the bridge. Something to hold all these realities together.
- But there doesn’t have to be this hold. The car driver thinks nothing about the towing company until he goes to get his car and it’s not there. It’s not like there is this invisible force

that links them together, and the force becomes manifest when the car is actually taken. These two experiences relate to each other once the contact is made. The owner comes to look for his car. It's gone. He wonders where it is. It's been taken. He thinks that it might have been stolen. Then he sees the no parking sign, we tow it... And it all makes sense. But there is no towing company for the psyche. You make an analogy that only has a limited application to your base example. There is no double.

–If there was, you are beginning to understand how it make itself know to us.

–But it really has nothing to do with our belief.

–I know.

–But you are rewarding our lack of faith with another level of faith. The new presupposition is no more appropriate than the original.

Our paralysis offers the ideal conditions for the double. The double inheres by what it does not do, not by what it does. And in that paralytic state, the self assumes its form. The self as paralyzed, the double as inert. And then there are these psychic forces that move things back and forth between the two entities. The self forms its identity by trying to freeze these currents. This is the suggestion of solid form.

If we accept reason in the self's endeavor, then we might admit that the self has indeed stumbled upon the actual form of this other experience. How else can the self probe this reality except by observing regularities in its own experience?

There seemed to be more method to W.D.'s madness. I was trying to figure out his intent for this talk. I think that I was getting a clearer insight into his method over the years. Without the facade that he had created, his thoughts wouldn't have amounted to much. But the centerpiece of this cant of his was physical desire. The self could perpetuate the delusion in others would accept the silly exposition. His lovers had done just that. They were paralyzed, and they accepted his vision, just as they accepted his sexual advances.

Everything with Dorothea seemed more prominent due to this realization. I felt it more of a humiliation on my part.

–It's not as if she didn't feel the same way about other guys. I really had nothing to do with turning her into what she is.

–You're as much as calling her a whore.

–Those are not my words. We know each other. We've spent some time together.

–You brainwashed her.

–That implies that she was totally naive when I met her. I just helped her to fill in some gaps in her experience. Helped her to explain some things that didn't make any sense.

–Have you succeeded?

–That's a pretty sly insult.

–You are the one who's bringing this all up.

–You really hoped to have that confrontation with him.

–Hope for.

–You've got something to say to me. I approached him.

–He knew.

–He didn't know. *This was all before you were part of the scene.*

–Scene. *This has been going on for years.*

–I didn't know you until recently.

–That's not the point. *That's not his point. It all works out this way in the end anyway.*

It's his double theory.

–I'm trying to figure it out.

–Go ahead.

–OK. *Let me try!*

–I needed some help. *He showed me things.*

–That I believe.

–He's a great man. *You know that too.*

–He wants you to believe he's a great man. *He's a snake charmer.*

–Some snakes need taming.

–Are those his words or yours?

–It's just a manner of speaking.

–Speak!

–It's really none of your business. *It's part of my life that has nothing to do with you.*

–We can't pretend like that anymore.

–It's not as if you're really part of my life. *It's something that's coming to an end.*

–This sounds even more like his ghost theory.

–Because it makes sense. *You want something more. Something that will last. Things don't last that way.*

–You're doing exactly what you accuse him of. *You have this need. And the more extreme that it gets, the more that you think it corresponds with something real.*

–But that's how it is. *That's how we know that something is real. Our feelings capture all the excitement of the actual situation. We know what is going on.*

–There are real things that support those feelings. *And if you can't deliver, if YOU can't deliver, then it's just your feelings.*

–Maybe you don't believe.

–That is just what he is saying. *That your belief makes something so. And that something so becomes more and more powerful.*

–Like love.

–Like infatuation.

–For you, it's been pretty much the same thing.

–What are you trying to say to me?

–I don't know. *I'm just a little scattered.*

–You insult me than you scatter.

–That's not how you acted.

–I tried to be your friend.

–All this other stuff.

–It's like your dreams. *You want something. And you fill in to make it mean more.*

–But that is the more of our experience.

- There are real things.*
- But you're not doing a good job at getting them.*
- All you can do is insult me.*
- I just want to tell it the way it is.*
- I tried to see things your way. You're just too weird for me. I want things spelled out a little more clearly.*
- Like these other guys have done.*
- You don't know.*
- I can't know.*
- We're here to honor him. Everything else is just superfluous.*
- If he could have finished his talk.*
- What are you talking about.*
- Did you hear it?*
- What are you talking about.*

And now we get to the heart of the matter. Our feelings of loss just confirm how deeply this connection goes. If we love, if we have loved, then our dreams show us how unattainable that love is. We grasp its dominance on the short term. We believe in our lover's reality when she is close to us. But we cannot separate ourselves from that world once it ceases to exist. We try to convince our lover that there is something more. There never has been. But in our dreams, the love world stays constant. We think that we can show our ex-lover this picture. It does not exist.

What does exist is a more thorough haunting. In our hope of hopes, we work to get closer to this form.

*We awaken to the face of our former love.
This must be forever.*

- Are you ministering to the broken hearted? I thought that your vocation was a little more professional than that. Next thing, you're going to be selling magic potions.*
- Reality isn't so far off from that.*
- You're pathetic. From a renown political philosopher to advice for the lovelorn.*
- You're making more of this than it is.*
- I'm catching you pulling the wool over everyone's eyes.*
- You can't have politics without a theory of knowledge.*
- Your knowledge is so abstract. It's divorced from the very conditions that make it real. It's all like a suburban nightmare. Philosophy for the coffee shop in the mall.*
- It's not that bad.*
- It's worse. You have pretensions that it's something more.*
- You have to make things simple so that people can understand.*
- You're bastardizing things. They're so simple that there's really nothing to understand.*

<p>Crucial's interference was making it worse. I'm sure that he still believed that he had some real influence over me. I think that was his plan all along. He wanted to replace W.D.</p>	<p>I wondered if I needed to create someone like W.D. to have some influence over her. Or just to help her explain the inconsistencies in her life. The weird dreams. The memories that she couldn't explain.</p>
<p>I wondered if I trained Dorothea, could I make her have just the right effect over Crucial. What story might be convincing for him. What memories of hers might seem appealing to him. It was silly how easily he wanted to become part of her experience.</p>	<p>The pure coincidence of their meeting I found disturbing. I had met her on an earlier trip to Indiana. We had been in close contact. I called her a couple of times a week. Next thing I know Crucial is attending the summer session and is spending all this time at her home.</p>

I think that her diary was key in the influence that it had over her. It was almost as if the writing process existed in reverse. She recorded things in the diary and then they happened.

This suggested that all I had to do was merely make entries in the diary myself that these could then have the desired effect over her.

Crucial had this weird belief that my actions were controlled from my diary. I would write things down first and then they would happen in that manner later on. I don't know what gave him that idea. Whatever I wrote down was only a partial reflection on how things really happened in my experience. Why would anyone think different.

Even when we think that we can affect our waking state, it is a gross over confidence.

- She told me that she found these things that you had written about her.
- I always thought that you were the writer.
- You're making light of all this. It was almost as if you were creating a counter diary of her experiences. Something to fit your view of things.
- Even if that is so, how could it have any influence on how she acted.
- It was this weird theory of yours, that the diary created the experience.
- I admit that what we read can have an influence on how we act. But influence is just that. It can't fundamentally change your character unless you let it.
- Is that your excuse now?

Do we think that the double world is actually affected by our actions? That dreams indicate the actual course of that world, and that we can have an influence over that course.

We know that we can influence our dreams. Even change them in mid-course. This would provide evidence enough that the dream world is only a pointed expression of our waking state. It is not as if our waking state offers the real correspondent for the dream. Both are fundamentally cut off from any real influence on actual events. Again, the waking state is this belief that we have an effect. And the dream world is our reminder that our influence is meager

at best.

- This is becoming like a crossword puzzle.
- And the demon is the puzzle master.

I am glad that nothing that I have done really pervades this new sense of calm. If I admit that I've been a shit with my lovers, that could weigh upon me. I can't let it affect me too greatly. Down deep, I have just tried to defend my interests. Sometimes I feel really fucked up. Or I get really messed up to justify the kind of numbness that I feel right now. But this is not something that I want to give up.

In the situation, it is sometimes just so easy to give up, to give in. I develop this perfect dream, but I can't find any way to make it come true. At the moment, something happens to make me feel too perfect. So what!

I know that some guys try to make me feel guilty. If it takes me a while to warm up to someone, I can't help it. And in passion over time, you just might tell a guy that you love him. But it's like trying on a dress for size. It might look great in the story. But after a week, it just seems to bunch in all the wrong places. It's the same with a guy. You figure it out in time. I know that it fucks up after so long. But that's how it is. I don't want to destroy my life to stay true to some stupid rule.

How does the spirit make the physical being available?

The double allows the self to find its ecstasy. And this is the bridge that we are seeking.

The more that we explore the physical the more that we realize that is the source of the spirit. It is this belief that engages every moment of the body. We are seized by it.

Am I being watched? Is this by intention. Have I given you an invitation. I let you get closer, the farther that you are away. I don't want to melt under your touch. I want a thousand touches to quake my being. I am not exclusive. I am universal. My body is my religion and I can feel it being accepted into every soul. The wash of desire. You are not distracted by the mundane. My nakedness takes hold of you. It is your frenzy. The more intense, the more the distance that you can travel with your spirit. An infinite distance, and I am your goddess.

I turn. You let your hand run along my back. I am a little afraid that you are too anxious in your caresses. That you will not take your time. You will not allow me to respond to your wishes. I work to slow you down. To let your gaze penetrate my flesh. And then I know. You will not be distracted from your preoccupation.

You have nothing to be afraid of. I am not afraid.

I wonder how can I give myself so freely. I want so much back. I want a world back. What am I trying to hold on to? I need to cherish my memories. Explore them more. Bring them back to life.

The double realizes that the self has something that it will not relinquish. It tries all the

more to neutralize the opposition to its agenda. The self wonders if there is indeed something pernicious in the intent of the double. Is this why the self will not yield? Does the double create its form based on the fears of the self? It senses a weakness and works it to its advantage. It is most favored by everything that is ruthless in the self. So the resistance of the self will only be met by a greater effort on the part of the double.

My body has been apportioned to layers of ever-increasing abstraction. The intellect is a series of veils that protect my license. I know without these layers of protection that there would be no restraint on my passions. That you could not hold me. You are these veils.

I have given myself completely over to you. I will not admit this to you. I need you farther and farther away. I need you to believe that you are not part of me. I need you to want me more than ever.

My robe falls along my naked body and hides as much as it reveals. I move it slightly to satisfy your spying. What would this mean without some enticement. Or do you take my gestures to mean something more than they are. That you have a special entry to my thoughts.

I need to think of all this differently.

Some severe traumas have a way of severing the lines that protect the self from the double. In this state dreams have a way of penetrating the waking state. The ability to distinguish one from the other is eroded.

There is a contrary theory. That this changed state offers the self a unique access into the waking world. All the illusions of everyday are dissolved, and the self can finally influence the supernatural. The predictive powers, that are so restricted by our censoring faculties, now run wild and create these insights for the self. Unfortunately, these abilities require a complete surrender on the part of the self.

You have already taken so much from me. I want you to take more. Because you can never take enough to really touch me.

Are you inside the house? Have you opened the door to my room?

Did I give you a key? You like looking through the window. The forbidden access offered by the glass. What if you could come and go as you please. Open the window to let yourself in. Are you going to stay?

You can't see me now. You are hiding from me, aren't you.

This trauma has the self completely in its grips. This is the total helplessness on the part of the self. On the other hand, the self can give in completely to this change. It can act as if there never was a bridge to control access to the self. In this way, the double has utter control over the waking state.

I am not afraid of you. I want you to come in. No one before has made such promises to me. No one has ever been able to make such wild love to me. I have left the door open to you.

So the self invites in the very being that is antithetical to its best interest. It opens the

door to its enemy.

All my other lovers wanted too much from me. And they never got what I had for them. They could never get any closer to me. I just shut them out. With you, it is different. You seem different. You do not get too close. What do you want me to show you. My robe is open slightly. Are you staring at my breasts? I am touching them for you. Can you feel your hands touch my breasts? How odes that make you feel.

I will not move away this time. The caress causes me to take a step closer. Do you want to feel my breath on you? Warming you. Give me you hand. I want to teach you the right way to touch me. I am not afraid of you. I let you in my room. Open your heart. You have let yourself become too hard. Too closed to the way of the heart. I can feel your grip loosen as we let ourselves become closer.

Relax.

The self cannot let go of its vigilance. Its defenses have made it vulnerable to the double. Once the double has realized its strength, it will not retreat.

I have made myself look good for you. Don't you enjoy what you see. I love showing this to you.

The self hides for no other reason but to reveal. The hidden self is just the revealed self in all its glory. It is in frenzy.

What I don't want you to see...you lean over the window to get a better look. A beam blocks your view. My hand moves just out of view. You know what I am doing.

-I can see you.

-So what!

-I know what you're up to. You're touching yourself.

-No, I'm not.

I move to punish your imagination. My hand is resting on my robe. I purse my lips. I smile. You can feel the tingle all through your body.

-Do you want more?

-I can't stop.

I need to frustrate you, to make you stop.

-Are you with that guy?

-Sort of.

-You going out with him?

-What do you want from me?

-Can't you answer a simple question?

-You approached me.

-If I was with you, I wouldn't take my eyes off you.

-I think that he's spending his time watching you more than me.

–Does every guy who's with you end up going through the same shit?
 –What are you saying?
 –I wouldn't worry about such a thing. You'd know who you were with.
 –And I told you that I'm with him.
 –Really!. I thought that you said sort of.
 –Meaning that's who I'm with.
 –And if you find someone else.
 –I'm not that kind of girl.
 –What kind of guy does that make me?
 –The kind who always seems to mess with me.
 –What kind is that?
 –Some guy who doesn't have a pot to piss in.
 –I'm just saying that if I was with you, you'd know who I was with.

–Can I get you a drink?
 –I'm with someone.
 –Let me get him a drink too.
 –Is that a your idea of humor?
 –Let's just say that if I was with you, I wouldn't take my eyes off you.
 –He's watching the both of us.

Do you like watching me? I know you feel bad about what you're doing. You're going to have to make it up to me.

You wonder how you're going to do that for me. You have something that I want. Something worth something. We're going to make a little trade.

I wouldn't let you come if I know that you were going to act like that. You're starting to frighten me.

I shouldn't have opened my door to you. Now you need to leave. This is my place.

I used to be afraid that guys like you might not be attracted to me. I know now what you want. I can give you what you really need.

What most attracts us is what we most fear. We desire that thing that which will destroy us. We desire our killer.

–How did you get my phone number.
 –You gave it to me.
 –I really don't remember that.
 –You did.
 –I don't want you calling me.
 –You've been performing for me from across the way. And now you're trying to deny it.
 –I need you to come over here quick. I think that someone is in my place.

A man was found shot to death in his hotel room. Witnesses reported an argument followed by some banging doors. And then gunshots. A woman had been in the room with the victim. A second man was rumored to be the assailant. He was thought to be the husband of the woman.

–I need you to come to my place. There’s been some kind of accident here.

–Turn down the TV. I can’t hear what you’re saying.

–It’s not the TV. It’s that guy who’s in my place.

–What is going on?

I didn’t invite you in. But I’ll let you stay if you behave yourself.

You most fear his potency. But that is what you also desire. You wait for him to show himself. Even as his will seems the most threatening, you invite him to do more. Your uncertainty is the ideal opening for him.

WD tired to kill himself.

As long as I live in Indiana, I’ll never be able to pursue my dreams. I need to draw up rules to change my life. Each rule needs to be more than a suggestion. I need to follow the rules to the letter.

I need to starve myself.

It is not enough to be wanted. Men have to want you to the point of delirium.

If I give in to my own cravings, I will only be overwhelmed by their delight. I need to deny myself. Satisfaction will only make me too comfortable.

I don’t really want men. It is enough that they want me. I have to get off on their desire. It forces me to be a model of perfection. That is the most important thing.

A true angle must be the mistress of her own conversations. Never too much. Don’t gratify the listener so that he thinks what he says is more important than my stellar company. Cut him off before his pride becomes too inflated.

Never let this wit think that his golden days will last for long. It takes more to hold a woman of passion.

Beware of men who promise more physical pleasure than usual. They will only use the infernal bargain to enslave.

The most erotic appeal is the breath, not the sight. The refusal to give away too much of the self.

The body must be redesigned to meet the demands of the new lover. Physical pleasure

must seeks its more rugged complement, the philosophy of the body.

What we pursue is not contemplation but arrangement. It is the art of comfort that finds its expression in muscle and bone. The juxtaposition—the slamming together of these forms promotes a sense of being. This awareness allows the self to fulfill its dreams.

Men and women will wonder what gives me this sense of freedom. I am restrained by no physical demands.

I want to be wanted. I do not want to want!

My only dream is grounded in my self-confidence. Too often women seek to enter into a partnership with a man. She gives up her integrity. She gives up her independence to share in the laurels of his success. I am cut to the heart by this sort of desire. You cannot give me meager tribute. I am goddess.

How the world gives me a sense of power. Power because it is surrounded by the body. I can make the world that I want by controlling my body.

If I give in, my satisfaction must be total and immediate. Otherwise, I assume that I will receive something later on for my sacrifice.

How can I be duped by this exchange? Mu divinity is rooted in his praise. If a woman, another woman could coincide in my aspirations, she would be my perfect lover.

I have not perfected my body to the utmost point. I am too distracted by the world.

My only world is my own. Skin and bone.

Does my mind need better training. I need to eliminate these male influences from my canon.

I need a pure feminine.

Touch is primary. Sensation is a lesser touch. Touch that wants something, more acknowledgment. Spirit. Surrender to the male form.

Should my weaknesses be used against me. I require a more constant savior!

The spark! The explosion. This is pure.

Anything else is extra. It implies a search for the spirit. This is another surrender to his empire.

How can I teach my mind to serve the perfect body?

All sweetness must find its bitterness. I love. I enjoy. But I will not turn my desire into a temple.

Frenzy.

Don't I risk slipping off the path when I am undone by my passions—blows to the spirit—

NO!

Frenzy!

What's all this nonsense about WD trying to kill himself? He has too much ego to let it happen.

—Once the self fissions, we can no longer speak of the same powers that it once exercised. It is as weak as any other influence. His influences overcame him.

This only seems as so much nonsense.

Greatness cannot be killed. Only its satellites can be downed.

—What were you thinking?

—That I'm not infallible.

—You took all the pills.

—That's really an exaggeration. There were maybe three or four pills left. I had one at lunch. I just couldn't remember whether I had taken one at dinner so I took another and just had a weird reaction. That was all. The paramedics found the empty thing of pills, they thought overdose. And the word just went around. It was just a reaction to the drugs.

—That seems another story that you're making up after the fact.

—It's the fact after the fact.

Our scepticism is the source of the most severe dream state. We believe that the tangible reality is proof against the supernatural. That the ghosts of our dreamworld cannot overtake the hard, brutal reality of our waking life. Our agony is only an exaggerated dream. We feel the pain of a fall. We marshal our muscular strength to move mountains. We derive pleasure from a long walk. Our muscular image is only an intense application of the dream state.

We cannot escape our absorption by the dream world. We settle into its illusion even as we retreat from the fleeting phantasms that whirl around us.

I started to wonder if my reverence for WD had simply been an emotional miscalculation on my part. As the spirit surrounding his greatness started to subside, I only saw his weaknesses. How could I have ever felt any sense of rivalry with him.

It was as if I was thinking the same things about myself. About my magical endowment. All this seemed to be crashing around me in Indiana. Why had I ventured here? My contact with Thea became remote, even as I invested it with more stock than before. I was entering such a

realm of universal doubt. All WD's comments about dreams began to make sense. This was in spite of my profound wonder about the man and all his accomplishments.

My malaise about my own work was severe. I had written anything of significance for days. I kept looking at the sports pages for some victory that would help me snap out of it. I had been on the verge of a breakthrough. Now, it too seemed like a dream.

I had been up all night in a stupor. It was eight in the morning and a dog was barking down the street. Doesn't it have any respect for time. This truly seemed like a break point. Still I tried to hold myself together. The morning light denied sleep, and I wanted to see if I could make this a day.

WD has been spirited out of town without any announcement. This is how life comes down anyway. We expect the drama and really live by it. But the actual events are totally lacking in any sort of drama. They just happen. We find a convenient story to make us think that we're still part of something. Again, the effect of our dreams.

Meaning in our lives is part of a master dream that we craft amidst our screaming. Our pain will not subside. But the dream will expand its realm until it incorporates every moment of our existence. For the waking state to have any significance, it must be enclosed in our dream. It is only a pale reflection of a more vivid dream. We lie paralyzed on our bed and try to recapture the action of our past night. It is to no avail. The dream is always more powerful than the aftertaste of the morning.

Make a philosophy of this. Nothing. It just doesn't happen All the waiting. And it's happening is nothing. You just stop in your tracks. And forget tracks and forget nothing—everything. Bang bang!

*—Is that your philosophy?
—You want me to drool all over myself?
—That would be an improvement.*

Eighteen years in Indiana is too long. I have to leave before the fall. Once the fall starts, I just get lulled into staying. And then winter hits, and I hibernate into this place. It must be this year. I will not turn nineteen in Indiana. That is death!

I've got to find work somewhere else. Just get a little money and take off. I've got my wits. I've got my health. I've got to hit the open road.

I think that I want things to happen like the Wizard of Oz. That some tornado will just spirit me out of here. I can feel the storm brewing inside me. If natural conditions would just cooperate. I just feel that the storm is going to delay until I left. And when I reach my new destination, it will just blow like in a horror movie.

Where do I go? I can't go to Chicago. I need to leave the Midwest. Maybe I could move to New York. Be a model. Just do some odd job. Or San Francisco. I've got relatives in the South. But I want to be on my own. I just don't know.

Once a being acquires breadth, nothing can stand in its way. It extends its regime

infinitely. Any contrary agent can be rendered to its nether reaches.

I really wondered what absurdities had overcome WD. Was his own illusions now influencing his behaviors. It was one thing to espouse this foolishness in lectures. It was quite another to practice this foolishness in his actual experience.

When the sky hangs low, you can feel the spirits roam the earth. But the ghosts seem dispelled by a full horizon. How could belief have ever flourished here? The landscape is ultimately godless in its denial of any limits. It is not a divine infinite. It is an utterly faithless sky. Clouds and sun battle over the horizon, but it stubbornly extends out against these impositions.

There is no triumph in this landscape. Nothing to support my rebellion. Despite its confidence, it is the setting of the utter surrender of the soul to the changes in climate and the beneficence of the soil. Fear needs disaster to enforce its ruthless grip. Tornadoes cough up the anger of the land. The storms have already exhausted the insides of the victims to its path. They have given themselves to tyranny of the heavens. They have forgotten the primary lesson for the secondary exception. They wait for their own engulfment. Something shaking the place with such a convulsiveness. Some proof of the enemy spirit that they have transported like a disease to this new home.

Beneath their surface contrary spirits still play a part. And they are marked by their own profound scepticism. But they hide their truths behind these four square towns that only laugh at them. They live by their gossip. Without it there is no defense against their own creeping disbelief. This strain of guilt and punishment is the constant reminder that they will not stray into their own proper darkness.

They are their own monsters as their young get eaten up by this vision. This noble conformity. Nothing has changed except that wagons have given way to large machines. Horses to motors. But there is the same roar of condemnation. Belief and confession. Submission.

I must leave. Even as I touch the edge of these horizons, I note an impenetrable limit to my own ambitions. I have become part of this hell.

When the harvest approaches, the corn will be at its full height. It will obscure the horizon, these massive stalks like ghosts of the fall. I can't be overrun before these ghosts of the fall descend. I have to make my break. The stalks are already too high and getting higher. This is a nightmare.

I've packed my stuff and was ready to leave. Things that had been a part of me, deeply a part of me, now seemed to mean little to me—too little. I almost felt that I had no beginning. No real history. It did not fill me with a sense of possibility. I just felt hollow. As if I was being blown away by a bitter storm wind. My work offered little solace under the circumstances. All my really brilliant insights were rooted deep in my experience. Even that experience seemed unfortunately linked to WD and his meddling.

What is our fate doesn't just happen. Sometimes it needs to be helped along. Almost like a guide put it all in place. We need a guide to highlight what is important and move our

attention away from any threatening distractions.

Dreams may seem like an ultimate distraction. The undigested thoughts of our waking experience that finally achieve dominance in our reveries. But the dream work can have no real return. And this may seem to undercut its prominence. Fortunes made in sleep evaporate with the coming of the morning light. How clever we feel until the onset of a fatigue confronts our awakening.

There is no awakening. We are just submerged in experience again.

I feel that I am in the middle of a stalemate. I cannot move the pieces along the board. But I feel threatened by my present position. My plans just repeat fascinations which have been bred into me. My amorous experiences have only reinforced all that is restrictive in my psyche. I just want to get out myself. Will my desperation in the city underline how I have escaped from the empty routines that haunt my days. I don't want to start another job. Get a new haircut. Go back to college. I just want to get out of here.

I've got my money ready. I wish that I could start to pack. I have the bags at the foot of my bed. I hate to admit it, but I am really afraid that I will fuck it all up. I need a resting place to help me not crash to my destruction. I have too often been married to disaster. I need my bill of divorcement. END IT NOW. THE END.

Here's where I quit being me and become someone else. I have to die in order to be reborn. So be it. I will swallow the arsenic like a love potion. I embrace the new me.

My mother walks this house like a prison guard. What will she find next? What do I need to hide. Words are my most potent drugs. I need to maintain my silence.

I need to just go.

The road outside of Bloomington is almost as boring as the city itself. Long stretches of straight road. No hidden curves. Just the reminder of more of the same ahead. This cartoon villages. Why the bats come out of the belfry and haunt the populace at night. Deal the fatal bites that turn them into zombies.

Or is that what has happened already?

Have I really done it? Really got on the bus. It's just a visit to relatives. Getting sent away for my delinquency. But I am not coming back.

I'm going to change my name. I'm going to change my hair. I'm going to get a new identity.

I caught a plane to Chicago. I'm not sure where I'm going to end up. I've thought about Atlanta.

We always return to the same place in our dreams. Our home of origin. An architecture that combines space that we have know in the past. Our haunted house!

WD is going to be OK. I can reassure you!