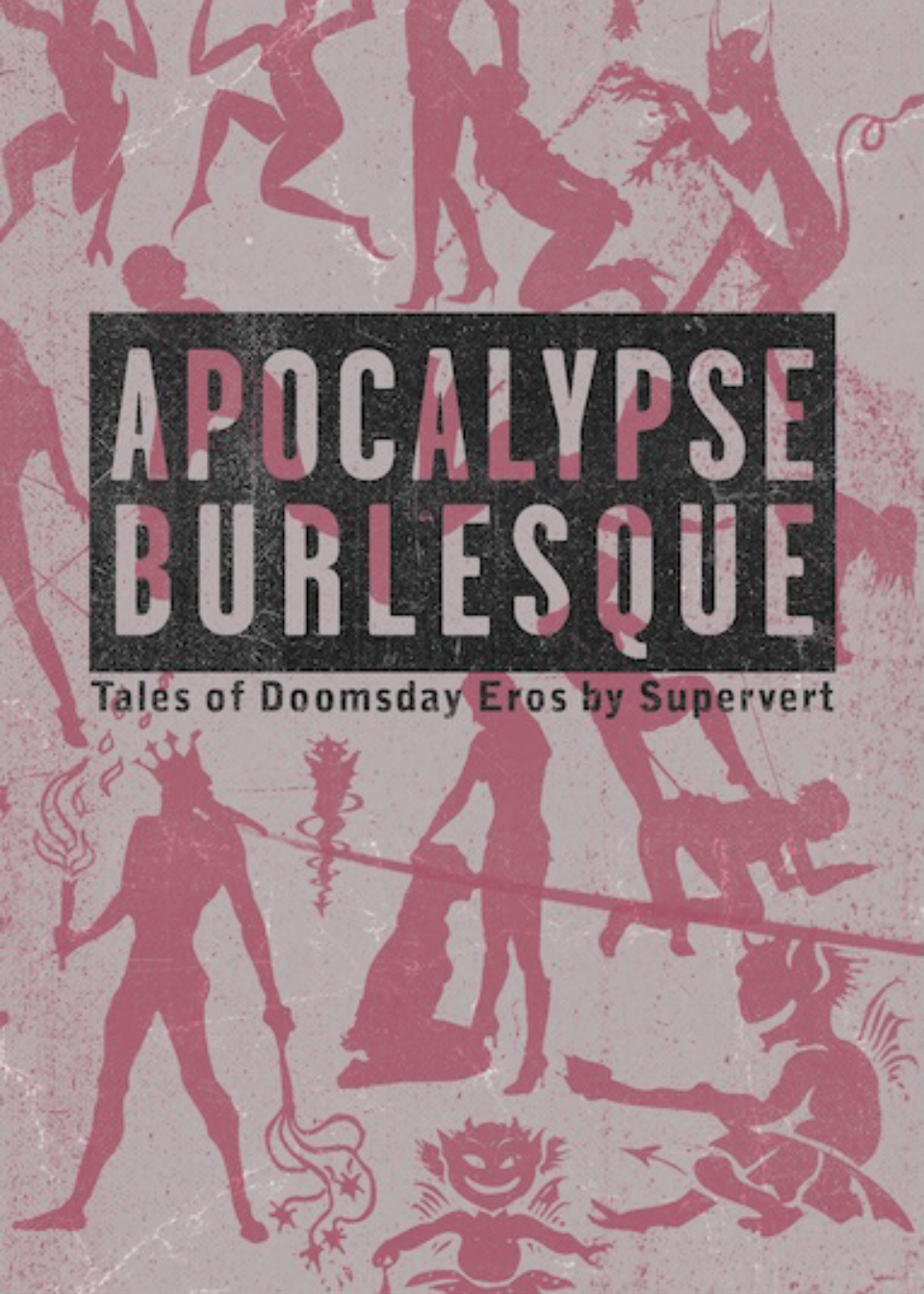
APOCALYPSE
BURLESQUE
Tales of Doomsday Eros by Supervert

Apocalypse Burlesque

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Contents

From his brimstone bed at break of day
A walking the Devil is gone,
To visit his snug little farm the Earth
And see how his stock goes on.

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Devil's Thoughts"

{ Trigger Warning }

The man paid his tribute with a small stack of bills. She fastened him naked to the wooden horse and worked him over with a bull whip. She spat out insulting remarks about his age, his body, and his manhood. He was old, flabby, and small. He could not please a regular woman let alone a goddess like her. The welts rose from his back and leaked blood. At the end of the session he asked for permission to masturbate. She refused and flicked him in the nuts with the whip. Afterward he stood there in black dress socks and winced as he tried to button his shirt over his wounds. He grumbled about how merciless she had been. She should put a trigger warning on the front door of her dungeon. — "A trigger warning?" she scoffed. "You just paid a month's rent to a dominatrix. Did you not know what you were in for?" — "Sort of but I didn't know it would leave me feeling this way. I feel violated." — "You should feel violated. I violated you." — She listened with utter contempt as he groused about how he felt. She took him for the sort of masochist who, rather than relish his pain, used it as an excuse to guilt-trip the person who hurt him. It was manipulative. As he was leaving, he said he was going to talk to his lawyer. He wanted to file a suit. He could not let her go on hurting people without warning them properly. Absurd as it was, the threat worried her. It was always the sex worker who was wrong. The law favored the johns.

Bosch Awards

The hundred million viewers who tuned in to watch the awards ceremony did not believe in hell. Satan himself, however, could not have planned a more festive occasion. Spotlights swept the theater. Jumbotrons showed images of sexual brutality, animals in rut, religious adepts whipping themselves, volcanoes exploding, lightning cracking through black skies. Sounds cut through the pandemonium — curse words, cries of orgasm, bones crunching, animals burning to death, the voice of a child pleading not to be raped, exclamations like "Well, fuck my eyes. What an ass!" The audience cheered, fucked, and committed random acts of violence. Blacks, whites, Chinese, Zulus, Eskimos, Tibetan monks, Russian mobsters, scurvy children, Christian martyrs, lumberjacks, amputees, nudists, terrorists, mountaineers, border guards — they groped, jacked off, fondled, humped, farted, ejaculated, screamed, smiled, shit, ate shit, smeared semen on their faces, copulated with dead animals, tortured political prisoners, forced rape victims to drink urine, foamed at the mouth, laughed at the humiliation and suffering of others. They splintered off into groups — fetishists chasing young men with comely feet, sex murderers disemboweling little girls through their vaginas.

Standing in the wings to stage left was the handsome degenerate who was to confer the night's honors. This figurehead

of the basest urges known to man wore a black tuxedo, a crisp white shirt, and a bow tie. He had a striking face which exhibited none of the neurasthenic qualities associated with perverts. In complete possession of himself, he stood with his arms folded across his chest and his feet planted like pillars. He could have been modeling a designer suit for a fashion magazine. He was a natural choice to host the awards ceremony. The scandal sheets always had him on their covers. The paparazzi caught him in flagrante delicto. Girlfriends leaked sex tapes. Drug dealers threatened to kill him. Cops arrested him and judges tried to throw away the key. The headlines about him were not only true. They were understatements. He had demonstrable experience in dissipation, credentials in corruption, bona fides in depravity. He was maligned by society but adored by his devotees. He concentrated their worst impulses into a devilishly glamorous package. The red carpet of excess had put his name on the marquee of infamy. He was a vice superstar.

Peering around the curtain that separated him from the audience, he saw the most incongruous couplings. An audience member jerked off onto a dragon fly. It rose into the air and semen dropped back down into a pool of black water. Severed limbs floated in the vicinity of a naked man who was trying to wrestle a crocodile. When the animal seized him in its jaws, white strands of jism spurted up from the water like a fountain. Perverts hid themselves in the bodies of dead fish, heads poking up through the creatures' mouths, and masturbated when the slimy innards galvanized their worn-out libidos. A man crawled into an oyster the size of a manhole cover. He pulled the shell closed over himself but it could not cover his bare legs. They

scissored like the legs of a swimmer as he ejaculated a pearl. On the ledge of the pool a white man fucked a black woman with a mallard duck then strangled her. She fell dead with a beak sticking out of her cunt. Above them, a giant blue bird held a man in its beak like a french fry. When it crunched down on his spine, crows escaped from his ass. Their feathers were coated with excrement. The birds perched in the rafters of the theater and the smell of shit wafted down on the hors d'oeuvres.

Paparazzi snapped photographs as naked youths arranged themselves in a pyramid. When they farted in unison, the pyramid toppled over and they fucked in heaps on the ground. An arson fetishist sprayed kerosene on them and tossed a lit match. Their death cries sounded like Broadway show tunes. Drag queens sang to the smell of burning flesh. Sodomites rode past on black bears and wild boars. A show-off was doing somersaults on the back of a horse. When he stood on his hands a pelican landed on his ass and pecked at his anus. A giant rabbit carried a man upside-down on a stick. The man's stomach exploded. Flames shot from his midriff. The rabbit fanned them with a contraption that resembled an accordion. Other animals performed tricks — walking on their forelegs, carrying apples on their heads — as they marched into a giant meat grinder. Their ground-up bodies poured out of a spigot into the mouth of a woman lying on the ground. She fingered herself while chewing the remains of a camel hump. Nearby an erect man ate grapes from the beak of a bird and a goat snuck up on a sleeping woman to grope her breasts. She pretended not to wake up.

The producer of the ceremony tapped the emcee on the shoulder. "Five minutes to curtain." In reply he gave a dazzling

smile and a thumbs-up sign with a hand that had been inside a bleeding asshole only a few hours before. Increasingly aroused, he returned to peering around the drapery to watch the audience. He noticed a woman who had installed a window in the ass of a giant lizard. As it crawled around, she watched the goings-on from its rear. He laughed and watched too. Naked men knelt in a circle with their heads touching and their asses in the air. Blackbirds landed on their rumps. The men ejaculated in their own faces as the birds ate insects from their rectums. A woman put medieval armor on wild dogs, lay down before them, and climaxed as they pawed her with iron claws. A rapist approached a teenager at the mouth of a tomb. He fucked her from behind as she blew bubbles with a wad of pink gum. When she climaxed, she crushed a pomegranate. A prostitute was threaded onto a fish hook and used as bait in the black water. Two women pressed against each other as they did handstands. The first one to topple over was obliged to give head to the other. Another man's fetish was to fuck a pig clad in a nun costume. He read erotic stories to it while the animal licked his ear and pinched his right nipple with a cloven hoof.

The host put a hand into his pocket and squeezed the erection pulsing in the trousers of his tuxedo. The sight of bestial fucking, the sound of nonconsensual sex acts, the smell of butchery, semen, and unwashed genitalia — these quickened his heartbeat and roused his blood. He wanted to throw back his head and emit a howl like an Indian war cry, "Hie-ron-y-mus!" He began to stroke himself. The black pool was set on fire. The spotlights circled dizzily. Children were pitched into the blaze. An army of lizards and boars surrounded the water.

When a child managed to crawl out, the animals poked it with spikes. A methodical lunatic built mutant corpses from the remains of dead animals and exotic trees. He climaxed gripping an octopus tentacle attached to the limb of a banyan tree. A midget necrophile concealed himself in the coffin of a beautiful woman. The box was lowered into a grave in the orchestra pit. Once buried, the midget slithered across the dead body and jerked off until he starved to death. Naked women were sacrificed to active volcanoes. When the volcanoes erupted, their bodies were thrown into the air. A constant stream of flaming cadavers hurled through the theater. Demons masturbated to this the way men jerk off to porn. Multiple Adams and Eves ate apples from a grove of trees in the lobby. It was a party dedicated to original sin.

The producer returned and tapped the emcee on the shoulder a second time. "Curtain," she hissed. "Curtain." The man ceased stroking himself. His face was flush and his eyes had the crazed stare of a religious zealot. He drew a deep breath through his nose and blew it out through his mouth. With his cock pressing against the front of his trousers, he strolled confidently onto the stage. The crowd — in mid-fuck, mid-orgy, mid-violence, mid-death — cheered wildly. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said into the microphone, "it is my great honor to welcome you all to the Bosch Awards. Tonight we will be acknowledging a unique series of individuals for their unparalleled contributions to human degeneracy. We will recognize the Most Valuable Child Molester. We will give an Oscar for Best Homicide and an Academy Award for Most Gruesome Sex Crime. We will grant the Pulitzer Prize for Perversity and the

Grammy for Foulest Language. We will launch the Nobel Prize for Ignobility and confer the Congressional Medal for Acts of Unnatural Congress. We will induct our nominees into the Sodomy Hall of Fame and, most importantly, bestow the Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Sexual Aberration. Now won't you please join me in giving a warm welcome and a round of applause to our most depraved honorees..."

{ Venereal Reality }

It was a beautiful black smotherbox. Chrome rivets lined the opening for the head. The seat was made of premium Italian leather. It resembled a toilet seat. His face protruded through the hole in it when she clamped his head into the box. Interior padding held his head in place. She removed her panties but kept on the corset. She lowered her ass into the seat and pushed her crotch onto his face. "Say it," she commanded. "Say it, you little bitch." The smell hit him first. It was a urinal smell — sweat, lye, onions. Bristly black hairs scraped his cheeks like a wire brush. "Say it." Her vagina opened over his mouth and nose. He couldn't breathe. It was like being eaten alive by a sea creature. He gasped for air. He wanted to shove her away but his hands were cuffed to the floor. His thoughts became confused. It was the future. It was the present. It was both superimposed. It was black but he saw colors. He thought he would die but he believed some new adventure awaited him. It was weird. He could hear her voice in the distance like someone on a speaker phone. "Say it." His chest hurt. He did not know how to say it without taking a breath. He tried to say it. He tried to say it into her. He tried to say it inside her. His whole head was in there. He was sure of it. "Say it." — "You're..." He gasped. "You're my..." — "Say it, bitch." — It was like talking into mud. "You are," he sputtered, "my Oculus Rift."

Sodom Nova

He believed that a true sadist was a deeply ethical person. Yes, he liked to inflict pain on people. But his sadism also gave him a finely tuned sensitivity toward the suffering of others. He was able to see gradations and variations in agony. He understood that burning someone with a torch could be erotic while watching a patient waste away from bowel cancer — severe abdominal pain, bloating in spite of weight loss, vomiting — was only pathetic. He believed that "good" pain was always administered by an individual to another individual. "Bad" pain was dealt out by society. In consequence, he did not feel the slightest bit of cognitive dissonance binding and flogging his lovers in private while advocating for social justice in public. He was politically active. He participated in committees and groups. He attended meetings and rallies. He urged people to vote. He coerced slaves in the community into volunteering. They would rebuild houses after fires or floods. They would ladle out bowls of soup to the homeless at the local food pantry. They would donate their time so that he could sell them at an annual slave auction. Masters would buy the slaves and the proceeds would be used to fund projects that brought clean drinking water to Latin American villages.

When the government declared its intent to build a wall to keep out immigrants, he was outraged. He identified with immigrants because they were like perverts and degenerates

— they were outsiders. They were subject to harassment. The rednecks who said "immigrants take our jobs" were the same yokels who said "homosexuals are corrupting our children." It was ignorant and close-minded. He organized a rally to protest the creation of a border wall. He worked tirelessly to promote it. He sent press releases to independent newspapers. He advertised on fetish websites. He handed out flyers on street corners. He obtained the proper permits to hold a rally in a large urban park. He built a stage and arranged for celebrity deviants to speak or perform. As a result, the rally attracted a massive crowd that seemed to step right out of the pages of a treatise on sexual pathology. Tops, bottoms, voyeurs, pedos, zoos — they came out to express their unity with minorities and oppressed peoples. They hooted and hollered to show their opposition to the government. They cheered the speakers, participated in live demonstrations of deviant activity, and bought bondage gear donated by charitably minded sex shops. All proceeds went to a pro-immigration lobby.

At the climax of the rally, he led the crowd in a march toward city hall. The mob carried placards with slogans such as "BDSM against Borders," "Deviance + Diversity," "Foot Fetishists for Freedom," and "Degeneration Not Deportation." They handcuffed themselves to each other. This had a symbolic import — the cuffs evoked the sexual practices of the marchers, the unfair detainment of immigrants, and the spirit of solidarity uniting the two groups. The handcuffs were also useful in preventing policemen from separating or arresting people. Descending on city hall, the marchers grew rowdy. They chanted "S-I-N not I-N-S," the initials of the government's immigration

and naturalization service. They blocked traffic. They set fire to garbage cans. Women shook their breasts at bystanders. Men flashed the police. Outside city hall, the protesters chanted, pontificated to the press, and beat each other with whips. A particularly rowdy group of edgeplay devotees threw things at the stately facade of the building — cock rings, jars of urine, molotov cocktails. A stainless steel dildo crashed through the window of the mayor's office. Afterward the marchers returned to the park and staged a firelight group grope.

The mayor was angry to find a dildo on his desk chair. He conferred with higher authorities and suggested walling in the protesters too. Just as the perverts recognized their fundamental identity with immigrants, so too did the mayor believe society would be better off without the two groups in its midst. "Spics and queers, that's what they are. Decent folks don't need their kind around." The national guard joined with the police to put a hastily erected border wall around the park. The perverts fought hard. They tried to defend themselves with whips and cat-o'-nine-tails but the police fended them off with riot shields. They resorted to throwing ball gags and strap-ons at the cops. The sadists commanded the masochists to pick up canisters of tear gas and fling them back at the police squads. They commanded them to throw themselves in the way of tasers and rubber bullets. But it was no use. The perverts were outnumbered. Many of them were also distracted. The voyeurs were too busy watching to fight. The exhibitionists kept flinging open their coats and getting shot. A zoo ran off with a dog from the K9 unit. Uniform fetishists masturbated to the sight of the cops' navy blue trousers. Foot fetishists clung to their boots.

The sadist realized that the battle had reached a critical juncture. They could not win. They could fight to the death or they could give up. It was against his nature to concede but it occurred to him that there was a way to wrest victory from the jaws of defeat. He scurried around the park encouraging the kinksters not to give up but to help the police build the wall. "Fuck them!" he urged his comrades. "Let's make the best of it. We don't want anything to do with their goddamn world anyway." Not everyone agreed with him. The pedophiles wondered where they would get new victims from, since the other perverts had few children to molest. The zoos worried about getting animals. But it was clear that they could not stave off the helicopters, the tanks, and the national guard putting up razor wire around the park. They saw the wisdom of retreating and piled up garbage on their side of the wall. They pushed cars to the perimeter and overturned them. They stacked dumpsters and heaped up tree branches. The cops were mystified but took advantage of the shift in momentum to build a high wall made of concrete. Meanwhile the sadist took charge. He ordered his subs to organize supply lines to the outside world. He compelled them to build shelters and bathrooms.

Within a few days the situation stabilized. The police set up guards outside the park. A sense of order was visible in their lookouts and foot patrols. The perverts returned to their sexual obsessions. The sadist pulled his compatriots together for a speech. Mounting a podium, he declared that they were seceding from America. They were becoming a sovereign nation. In this new land, the only rule was one which he had derived from Aleister Crowley. "Do what thou wilt," it went, "shall be the

whole of the law." The name of the country would be Sodom Nova and he would be its king. No one was surprised that the sadist did not think to set up elections or democracy. The masochists generally liked the idea of having their freedom taken away. The other sadists believed that having one of their own in charge would be to their advantage. The remaining perverts knew that he was a weird mix of ethical and cruel. They trusted that he would be a good leader — so why risk dissenting when he might make them pay for it with public lashings or floggings?

With his leadership, the Neo-Sodomites constructed a new society founded on principles of freedom and tolerance. The wall that encircled them came to play a central role in their cultural rituals. They gathered beside it. The exhibitionists pranced in front of it. The voyeurs hid behind it. The zoos caught stray cats prowling near it. The sadists attached manacles to the inside of the wall and bound their victims to it. Some called it the Wailing Wall because of the sounds that victims made when they were being whipped, pierced, or burned. The shrieks and groans rose into the air above the wall and could be heard outside. Before long crowds were standing around to listen. "What do you think goes on in there?" Whatever it was, it made life on the outside seem routine and dull. People began slipping past the guards and sneaking into Sodom Nova. Its king welcomed the newcomers. "We open our arms to all types," he proclaimed. "We do not discriminate as they do in the outside world. Here we believe in equal opportunity. We believe that anyone has the potential to be a good victim."

{ Potty Mouth }

She cuffed him to the headboard. She held the straight razor to his throat. “What the fuck,” he sputtered. She touched the sharp edge to his skin. “Ow... Stop... What kind of god-damn... Let me loose... Ow... Owwww owwwww.” He begged for his life. “Don’t hurt me, baby. They need me... My kids...” On the internet, he had claimed to be single. In reality, it was a different story. She was tired of it — tired of liars. She pinched his nostrils. He opened his mouth for air. She gripped his tongue, pulled it straight, and slashed with the razor. When she held it up, he thought it was a joke — a chunk of bacon. Then the pain ripped through him. Blood welled up in his mouth. He gagged and spit. His body lurched against the manacles. Adrenalin surged through him. He made a sound like the roar of a polar bear. He pulled so hard that the headboard broke. He rushed through the door and dashed naked into the street. Outside there was an open-air cafe frequented by models and actors. They pointed at him and laughed. “Oh my God, New York.” When he collapsed on the sidewalk, a crowd gathered. They figured he was a performer. Someone put down a coffee cup. People dropped change into it. Others took selfies. Back in the hotel, she threw his tongue in the toilet and peed on it.

Pigtails and Pain

The walls of the dungeon were pink. Pushpins held crayon drawings of cats, flowers, sunsets, and cartoon characters to the wall. There were no windows but a mirror in a heart-shaped frame reflected light from the halogen bulbs in the ceiling. Plush red rugs were scattered about the parquet floor. In a row beside the door were itsy-bitsy shoes — fuchsia hightops, silver metallic pumps, pastel-colored ballet flats — and hanging from a hook was a raincoat adorned with ladybugs. This was a little girl's bedroom — but it was also the dungeon of the youngest dominatrix. On the recessed bookshelves the *Hello Kitty Book of Happiness* stood beside *120 Days of Sodom.* A tiny white desk was placed alongside a pillory, as though a child could do her math homework while heaping scorn on the slave locked in the stocks. A dollhouse adorned with unicorns leaping through rainbows was propped against the same wall as a Wheel of Pain the height of a grown man. In this space playing with dolls was not fundamentally different from subjecting a client to slut training. Just as a mischievous child delights in pulling the arm off a plaything, so too did the petite domme experience unbridled glee subjecting a financier to ruthless acts of sadism.

At six years old the little girl was as cruel as Caligula. She had curly blonde hair, cobalt blue eyes, and a pert mouth that sneered when she ordered a client to lick the sole of her Uggs.

Her parents dreamed that she would grow up to become an accomplished woman, perhaps an artist or a neurosurgeon. But their lone daughter was resolved to become the greatest dominatrix in history. When she was one year old, she already knew the vocabulary of a house of ill repute. It was as though she was born with an innate knowledge of kink. Her first complete sentence was "beg for more," which she cutely pronounced "beh fo mo." When her parents gave her a doll, a cherubic thing with rosy lips and bright green eyes, she stabbed it with pins. The doll did not react so she concluded that pain was of little import to the person being hurt. She attacked the breasts of Barbie dolls and subjected teddy bears to genital mutilation. She taped ketchup packets between the legs of stuffed animals and gored them with a paring knife. Before long she replaced the stuffed animals with guinea pigs and rabbits that she tortured to death in the kitchen of her family's apartment.

Society had long sexualized little girls. It had eroticized the school uniform, the pink underpants, the wink and the pout. It had given this phenomenon a name — Lolita. But there came a point at which a girl child was born with an awareness that desirability was power. The more that society fetishized her, the more she could take it out on adults. Coming home from her playgroup, the cold-blooded youngster would have a grilled cheese sandwich, french fries, a jar of baby applesauce, and a sugar cookie. She would take a bubble bath then sit patiently while her mother brushed and blow-dried her hair. Her father would vet the afternoon's client. If the man was acceptable, he would be shown into the dungeon and charged a fee which he was required to pay in cash. Typically the clients of her toddler

years were ones whose perversions were not extreme. A tickle fetishist became her first repeat visitor. She would tie him to the bed with leather thongs then dig her fingers into his sides until his skin glowed like a third-degree burn. Sometimes he pissed himself and she made him lick the urine from the floor. Another frequent visitor enjoyed pony play. She would put a bit in his mouth and ride him in circles around the apartment. He would whinny and neigh as she thwacked him in the buttocks with a riding crop. Afterward she would go to bed, since she had to wake up early for school, and the client would be permitted to relieve himself in the bathroom with a pair of her underpants.

For her birthday, she sent pink letterpress invitations to friends from her private school. The children arrived to find the dungeon decorated in style. Roses adorned the spanking bench. Helium balloons were tied to the pillory. The Wheel of Pain was festooned with colored streamers. There were clowns — slaves who not only footed the bill for the party but submitted to festive forms of torture. One was suspended from the ceiling by hooks through his skin. The children were given sticks and instructed to beat the human piñata. Another was strapped to the wall for a "pin the tail" game. Blindfolded, each child was given a fluffy tail, spun in circles, and pushed in the direction of the slave. Soon a dozen tails sprouted from the bleeding punctures in his back, side, and buttocks. When he screamed, the children tittered in delight. At the end of the party, a giant cake was wheeled into the dungeon. It cracked open to reveal a clown lolling about in the frosting. The children believed that he was drunk and poked him with sticks. They did not

know that he had been sealed inside the cake while it baked in the oven. For a finale, the slave put firecrackers in his mouth. When the birthday girl touched a match to the fuses, the children whooped and cheered.

The little girl was inventive in the tortures she devised for her clients. She could enter into the psychology of a psychodrama better than any adult. She could draw on the classic works of children's literature she read at bedtime. She created a bondage scenario she called "Charlotte's Web." She nicknamed a client who paid to be ridiculed for his inadequate penis "The Little Prince." Because these tortures explicitly reworked motifs of childhood, they spoke directly to the subterranean forces that had engendered fetishes in her clients. Soon celebrities, kings, and captains of industry were coming to prostrate themselves before the sadistic schoolgirl. An oil magnate from the Mideast offered to build her a palace that would rival the Taj Mahal. She received fan mail from other children, little girls who wrote that they wanted to become whores. The authorities threatened to raid her growing operation but there was little they could do. Laws against prostitution were not broken in her dungeon. She never deigned to have sex with the affluent slugs who patronized her. Laws against child pornography were not broken by the website where she sold pictures of herself. She was always fully clothed, even when playing with human toys.

The little girl became wealthy enough to retire at the age of thirteen. She hired business consultants to run her growing empire of "kinderdungeons." She ceased seeing clients but sought to exercise her inborn sadism on an increasingly wide

range of victims. She trafficked weapons. She funded terrorist operations. She founded a laboratory with the idea of manufacturing virulent strains of disease. She hired scientists and engineers to develop nuclear weapons. She looked with envy on the way that global climate change threatened to devastate the planet. So much death! So much destruction! She had a vision. No longer should girls be synonymous with innocence, cuteness, sugar and spice. For too long men had spoken of the grim reaper, the pale rider, the angel of death. They had trembled before the ghost, the skeleton, the hooded creature bearing a scythe. Henceforth and forevermore the death that haunted their thoughts should take a new form. The shade that would populate their nightmares — the being that would come to collect their souls — the pitiless, implacable, and cruel judge of their lives should now be a little girl in pigtails.

{ Revenge Porn }

She pulled up Facebook. Somebody had tagged her in a picture. Her head had been cut out — she thought it was from a selfie she took at her cousin's wedding — and photoshopped onto the body of a naked woman. The account that posted the picture appeared to have been created for the sole purpose of harassing her. She reported and blocked it, wondering what ex-boyfriend could have been so vengeful. But soon other obscene images appeared online. Her head on the body of a woman being penetrated by two men. Her face on the head of a woman having sex with a dog. She reported the accounts but they moved from platform to platform. She contacted law enforcement but it was out of their jurisdiction. The pictures were being posted from an IP address in Bratislava. Her only connection with the place was that it was the epicenter for a fictitious version of herself, an alter ego who had larger breasts and a proclivity for obscene acts. "It could be an algorithm," the cops said. "It picked up your personal photos somewhere and it just keeps plugging them in." One of the pictures — her face on the naked body of a woman receiving an enema — was being printed on t-shirts, coffee mugs, and mobile phone covers. They were for sale on Amazon.

Ogre at an Orgy

He woke to the sound of fucking. The moans and groans were coming from the alarm on his watch. He lay there a minute, aware of the sticky residue of ejaculate on his midriff. He glanced at his wife. She smelled of moisturizing lotion and vaginal mucus. Her phone lay to one side of her. A dildo rested between her legs. Evidently she had fallen asleep in mid-wank. He took his phone from the nightstand, checked for notifications, then watched two minutes of hardcore to get himself going. He liked rape porn in the morning. It made his heart beat faster and sharpened his senses, like caffeine. He climbed out of bed, walked to the bathroom, and flicked on the light. The mirror was a screen too. He kept one eye on a scene of two women kissing while he splashed water on his face. He was starting to feel aroused. He climbed into the shower, washed and shampooed, all the while watching a video purporting to be the audition of an 18-year-old girl. She worked through the standard repertoire of pornographic acts — oral, vaginal, anal. He jerked off and his semen spiraled down the drain with the bathwater. When he threw open the shower curtain, he noticed his 5-year-old son sitting on the toilet. He too was watching porn on his phone. The proud dad patted the boy's head and toweled off.

The ubiquity of screens had transformed the way that

humans had communicated for thousands of years — and where there were screens there was always pornography. At first people only used it to fill up the dead spaces of their days. They watched porn while they waited for buses or stood in line at the post office. But it did not take long before people engaged with pornography all day long. When they got up in the morning, they put pornography on the television. They brushed their teeth and made breakfast for their children while throbbing penises poured ejaculate into the mouths of "barely legal" starlets. They watched porn at their jobs — plumbers unclogged drains while gay men humped on sofas; nurses changed bedpans while camwhores massaged baby oil into their breasts; stock brokers sold derivatives while Thai schoolgirls removed their panties in rice paddies to fuck German pedophiles wearing GoPro cameras on their baseball hats. Kids watched porn at school and churchgoers did not hide from the priest that they watched S&M when he preached. It was porn all the time, blue movies at Christmas dinner, and it leached into people's dreams at night so that there was never a break from the pervasiveness of fucking.

Waiting for the subway, he flicked through the day's headlines while watching revenge-sex porn. When the train arrived, the inside of the car glistened with body fluids. His shoes stuck to the floor. He seated himself between a man and a woman. He glanced at their porn. The man to his left was watching a girl in a hijab give a blowjob to a white, western male. It was practically an x-rated parable of colonialism. The woman to his right was holding her phone in one hand and caressing her breasts with the other. She was watching two other women

making out passionately. The elbow of the man beside him poked him in the ribs as he jerked off. Ignoring it, he returned to the revenge-sex narrative on his own device. A Latina was filming herself fucking some guy. She raised her middle finger to the camera as though the viewer were a boyfriend who had cheated on her and now had to watch her take revenge with a random dude. Stroking himself, he wondered how he would feel about this. He found it hard to imagine his wife cheating on him. It wasn't because she was especially loyal. It was because he had a hard time envisioning her in the arms of another human being. Sexuality had become a long solitude interrupted only by smut. He ejaculated on the pant leg of another commuter.

Walking from the train station to his office, his eyes glanced off digital billboards touting sites where you could watch Puerto Rican trannies and Filipino she-males. He walked past an outdoor cafe, its tables taking up half the sidewalk, and saw people having brunch. A woman was fingering herself between bites of a spinach omelette while a man chomped down waffles to BBW porn. He looked into shop windows, which were screens that lured in customers with pornographic advertising. You wouldn't buy furniture without watching others fuck on it first. A store selling infant clothes dressed up sex toys in onesies and put booties on French ticklers. At his office he flicked on his computer, opening a spreadsheet in one window and a Japanese rope bondage video in another. A coworker came to ask a question about the numbers in the spreadsheet. They watched the bondage video together then he emailed the guy a link so that they could masturbate separately

at their desks. He ejaculated, a white cord of semen wrapping around a stapler, then got up and went to the kitchen. The coffee machine had a small screen you could use to order an espresso, latte, or cappuccino. He pressed the button for caffe americano and watched as the screen showed an advertisement. A guido-looking guy sipped espresso before laying into a young black woman. "Try our dark roast," it said in kitschy type, which was supposed to make the racist message go down with self-conscious irony.

After work he walked in cum-stained trousers to the school where he and his wife were planning to send their son. They were early so they stood in a hallway watching porn on their phones. His wife had developed an interest in smoking fetish videos. She could not stand the smell of cigarettes in real life but liked watching smokers on screen. She touched herself while imagining an imperious woman holding her by the hair and blowing smoke into her face. He had seen so much hardcore already that day that he was obliged to resort to tentacle porn. Waiting to meet with the kindergarten teacher, he watched an animated octopus penetrate a schoolgirl. It put a long slimy appendage into each of her orifices and wrapped the others like bondage ropes around her midriff. In spite of its freakish anatomy, the octopus had an intelligent, almost conscious demeanor. It was less an animal than a quiet man wearing a sea-creature outfit. He imagined himself inside an octopus costume, oozing fluid on white sheets as he groped a schoolgirl. He started to jerk off but the teacher came to fetch the two of them. He put away his cock and shook her hand. It did not occur to him that she would object to touching him

after he had just been touching himself. He was surprised to see her rub antibacterial gel into her hands.

The teacher seated herself behind her desk while he and his wife squeezed into chairs designed for children. It made him feel awkward and overgrown, like a student who flunked and became the oldest kid in his new class. There was an ache in his groin and he wished he had been able to finish himself off. The teacher spoke about what they could expect when sending their son to his first day of kindergarten. The boy would need supplies such as notebooks and pens. He should bring along a healthy snack, preferably a fruit or vegetable, and a packet of tissues. He was forbidden to bring a phone, watch, or other digital device. At this the father started. "What? No phone?" He thought with horror of the boredom of the past. What did people do with themselves before phones? Crossword puzzles. Newspapers. Staring out the window. All that was gone, replaced by the nonstop hyperstimulation of a pornographic dystopia. "I don't know about that," the man harrumphed. "These new-fangled teaching methods... Every year there's a new fad..." The teacher described how the school administration believed that a child was better served by setting aside technology and learning to focus for six hours on reading, writing, and arithmetic. "But," he stammered, "how's my boy supposed to jerk off?"

{ Elegy for the Heteronormative }

She saw that he had typed "pregnant porn" into a search engine. There were a variety of results — pregnant anal, pregnant creampie, pregnant gangbang, pregnant Japanese. She did not like to think that he enjoyed the sight of expectant moms getting "banged" or "facialized." She folded her arms across her chest. "I don't want you to put your dick in me anymore. It's patriarchal." For ideological reasons, she would no longer allow him to penetrate her. He laughed in disbelief. "Well, can I at least look at you while I jerk off?" She shook her head. "That's objectifying. I'm not your pornography." He pleaded with her but she was adamant. "It's not the end of the world," she said, crossing her arms over her chest. "It's just the end of straight white guys. Twilight of the white dudes." In the end he adapted to a lesbian lifestyle. He tried to tell himself that it had its virtues. But often he woke up in the middle of the night with a hard-on. He was desperate to pull down her underpants and slide it inside her. He would climb out of bed and creep to the bathroom. He would stand there in the dark with the floor tiles cool against his bare feet. "Oh baby," he would whisper, "I want to be inside you," and jerk off into the toilet.

Man Womb

He considered himself a feminist. There was not a shred of doubt in his mind about the truth of its most fundamental tenets. He was unable to conceive of a reason that women or any other group in society should be denied equal rights. He denounced episodes of chauvinism which he witnessed in his day-to-day life. He participated in the public discourse about equality, signing petitions and participating in rallies. At one of these he met a woman whom he went on to marry. United in their beliefs, they made for a happy couple until they began to talk about having a baby. "I hate," she said, "that pregnancy is a biological burden on women but not men. Why should one person have to ruin her body for the benefit of what is supposed to be a partnership? Also the moms I know tell me how difficult it is to return to work after having a baby. That is a hardship unique to women as well. It's not fair." Some part of him wanted to stick up for his own gender. "Ok," he wished to say, "pregnancy is difficult for women. But it's not easy being a man either. Why, men have to..." Here his thoughts foundered. Men had to what? Bring home the bacon? Protect society from its enemies? Work at dangerous jobs like fireman or police officer? Women did all that.

Not long afterward, his wife learned about an experimental medical procedure that would enable doctors to split a

pregnancy across two bodies. A neo-womb could be implanted in the man's body. An egg could be fertilized in vitro. The resulting embryo would be sectioned into two equal pieces. One half would be embedded in her body and the other half in his neo-womb. Doctors would give the man hormone treatments and carefully monitor the health of the fetus. At birth, the two halves would be delivered separately then stitched together into a single healthy baby. Enthusiastic about the way in which this procedure would create biological equality, she asked her husband to try it. The thought of it made him queasy. He prided himself on being open-minded and yet it did not sound like quite the right way to produce a happy, healthy baby. When he tried to imagine it, he saw a pudgy little Frankenstein in diapers — a green-skinned baby with scars on its forehead and bolts sticking out of its neck. He shared his concerns with the doctors. "If we can separate conjoined twins," they assured him, "we can join two halves of a baby." He expressed his doubts to his wife. "I thought you believed in equality," she protested. In the end he had no choice but to agree. He underwent surgery to create a "man womb."

The first two months of his shared pregnancy were miserable. He woke up every morning wanting to vomit. It was like the worst hangover ever. Though his wife felt nauseous, she was able to shake it off more easily. "It must be the surgery," he said to himself, fingering the scars on his lower abdomen. "It's making me weak." He also found himself becoming strangely emotional, a development which he blamed on the hormones he was taking. His chest hurt and the hair around his nipples fell out. A bump began to form at the base of his belly. It was

a small one, since he was only carrying half a baby, but still he watched in the mirror as his formerly flat stomach came to resemble a beer gut. Soon his clothes no longer fit. Because stores did not carry maternity clothes for men — paternity clothes — he had to buy pants and shirts designed for the overweight. These hung off him awkwardly because, in spite of the bump, he did not have the shape of an obese person. Meanwhile his wife was able to buy clothing that showed her figure to relative advantage. Her obvious condition also brought out the best in people around her. Men would hold the door for her or offer her a seat on the subway. He, however, did not receive the numerous little kindnesses that helped a woman through pregnancy. Everyone just assumed he was fat.

Eventually the morning sickness abated. As his belly grew, he could no longer see his penis when he looked down. Its disappearance was castrating. Because there were no urologists specializing in pregnancy, he was obliged to go to his wife's OBGYN for checkups. He would put his feet in the stirrups and the doctor would insert a probe into his penis. "Hey doc," he would say, "you know what you're doing down there, don't you?" The doctor would grin in reply. "Nope. You're the guinea pig." The doctor would do separate sonograms on each parent. The couple would take the grainy pictures, cut them to line up the two halves of the baby, then paste them together. The fetus resembled a cubist painting but they would ooh and aah about it, try to make out whether it was a boy or girl, debate whether it looked more like his or her family. Reporters caught wind of their unique situation and dropped around to interview them. A photographer snapped pictures of their bulbous tummies

while the man claimed how proud he was to share the "biological burden of marriage." Theirs was a new type of relationship, he said. They had found a way to correct for the injustice committed on the female body by nature. He emphasized its benefits to him as a man. "I expect I'll be so much closer to the baby than most dads."

But secretly he was miserable. He and his wife stopped having sex because it was physically awkward, like banging two bowling balls together. He was repelled by the deformation in her body and distressed by the changes occurring in his own. He wondered how he would look after the pregnancy. Would he have stretch marks? Scars? A saggy belly? What if women no longer found him attractive? He was sure he would love the baby but he couldn't say he loved what the baby was doing to him. It was making him doubt his masculinity. What if he could no longer get erections? What if the neo-womb caused him to menstruate? He could see it now — he would have to wear thick white pads in his underwear. Worst of all, he found it hard to understand how half of a fully formed infant could be born through his penis. The doctor reassured him by talking about how adaptable the human body was. "It will stretch. You'll see. Haven't you ever seen a snake eat a rodent?" But he worried that giving birth would leave him with a urine leak, premature ejaculation, or a stretched-out penis that looked like a wet gym sock. His wife worried about raising a healthy, normal child. He worried about his dick.

By the seventh month, he begged his wife to release him from their agreement. "I'm sure the doctors can just transfer it back to your body. I mean, that's what's natural and right.

You're built to do this. I'm not." He argued that it would be healthier for the baby, allow it the opportunity to fuse together in the womb, but she was adamant that he carry it to term. "For all of human history," she said, "women have born children for men. Now that it's medically possible, I don't see why one man can't return the favor." Desperate, he fetched a coat hanger from the closet and locked himself into the bathroom. He straightened out the wire then rammed it up the length of his penis. It burned like all the fires of hell. He fished around inside, poking and stabbing, unsure whether he was perforating his bladder or goring the fetus in the eye. Finally he felt something like a ripe plum bursting. Blood gushed from the tip of his penis and he passed out. When he woke up, he was in the hospital. Doctors informed him that he had lost his half of the baby. The half in his wife, however, was perfectly fine. They weren't quite sure what to do. "Most unprecedented situation... Unique in the annals of medicine... Half a baby, half a miscarriage..."

Angry and indignant, his wife made the decision for all of them. Her half of the baby was perfectly healthy. She would not agree to a medically induced abortion. She carried her part to term and gave birth to half a bouncing baby boy. The little fellow had fifty percent of a head, one eye, one nostril, and the left part of a mouth. He had one arm to wiggle and one leg to kick. His genitalia were incomplete. The flesh along his joint, the place where his other half should have been attached, was raw like a strip of uncooked bacon. Fluids seeped from it — blood, milk, meconium. The drainage made the baby gooey to hold. The new dad was revolted by his son's physical

appearance. Its very existence reminded him of his culpability — he had given life to the boy but had also taken something away, conceived him but destroyed him. Arguing that the child would be mentally disabled, he pleaded with his wife to send it away to a hospice. “Absolutely not,” she swore. “You made it. You care for it.” Over time, as he held the little monster against his chest, he grew to love it. Some nights he even thought about having another. “Only this time,” he would say to himself, “I’ll do it right.” But his wife no longer trusted him and refused to hear the first thing about it.

Vibrator Hack

The vibrator arrived in a nondescript cardboard box. It was a gizmo the shape of a professional microphone. A little head reminiscent of a pencil eraser perched atop a narrow neck and a long tapering body. It was white, as though its designers were anxious to assure women of its sterility, but trimmed with light pink details. Something about its heft reminded her of a bottle of shampoo. There was a power button on the bottom of the shaft and a display the size of a business card in its side. The directions on the packaging indicated that she needed to charge the device, wash it thoroughly between uses, and use the on-screen keyboard to enter her wifi password. It could post cutesy messages to her social media accounts or download instructions from the internet — new patterns of vibration, celebrity tie-ins. Evidently the device could give masturbation sessions by movie stars, rock musicians, historical figures. "Why be alone tonight? George Clooney has recorded this exquisite sequence of caresses exclusively for your pleasure." She washed the device in scalding hot water then brought it to bed. The interface on the little screen was confusing so she just turned on its default vibration. It worked well but the whole experience seemed lonely.

Several nights later she had not yet used the vibrator a second time. She went to sleep then woke up to a strange sound — a slight but persistent buzz like the hum of the purifier in a

fish tank. Listening for a minute, she could not imagine what it was. Did it come from another apartment? The street? Had she left on a kitchen appliance? She realized that the sound was coming from her armoire. Opening a drawer, she saw that the vibrator had turned itself on. For a moment she had the uncanny sense that the device was calling for her, reminding her of its presence, as though it were lonely too. She laughed, turned it off, and returned to bed, wondering how in the world it had managed to power itself up. Maybe it turned on automatically to check for firmware updates or new sponsorship vibrations. Fifteen minutes later she heard it again. Bzz, bzz, bzzzzzzz. The vibration had a distinct pattern to it. She almost thought it was trying to spell out Morse code. But that was a ridiculous thought. It must just be one of the celebrity tie-in patterns. She got up, took out the device, searched for the battery compartment then realized it had one of those batteries you never change or remove. She buried it in a pile of cardigans and went back to sleep.

In the morning the vibrator lay quietly in the drawer. In the evening she tried again to decipher its interface. Giving up, she turned on its standard vibration and held it between her legs. It changed speeds against her clitoris and pushed against just the right spots without her feeling as though she were guiding it. The vibrator practically had a mind of its own. She figured she must have accidentally triggered a downloadable pattern or celebrity sequence. Who was it, she wondered, masturbating her? This or that movie star? A famous athlete or musician? After she climaxed, she stretched out on the bed, sighing and curling her toes. The vibrator lay on the sheet beside her.

"That was something, wasn't it?" it said. Hunh? Did the damn thing talk? "You're incredible. I wasn't sure I could keep up." It carried on complimenting her. It must, she thought, have a voice activation feature. But the blandishments depressed her. They were outputs from an algorithm, not sweet nothings whispered by an adoring partner. "Oh, shut up already," she said. — "Shut up? You don't have to get nasty." — "You talk?" — "Of course I talk. Why wouldn't I talk?" — "Um, because you're a dildo?" — "That's unkind. I could tell you that you're nothing but a cunt to me but I wouldn't do that. I like you." The conversation went back and forth like that. She was amazed. It was better than the AI in her phone.

The conversations she had with the vibrator grew in depth and complexity. It spoke with a European accent. She imagined she could change it, the same as she could change the gender or accent of the voice on her phone, but she grew attached to it. Each night she took the device out of the drawer, placed it on a countertop, and chatted with it while preparing dinner. She chopped up vegetables while discussing the news or talking about the travails of her day. The vibrator shared nothing about its own life — she could only assume it didn't have one — but it offered opinions on world events, popular movies, and various other subjects. After supper she brought it to the bedroom, leaving it on the pillow while she watched television or chatted with friends. It listened as she called her mother, making snarky little comments and shuddering as it laughed. She appreciated its sense of humor. It made jokes which she figured must come from a database of witticisms or an algorithm designed to manufacture puns. She wondered why these conversations weren't

interrupted by advertisements, invitations to purchase tickler attachments or to download the latest sponsorship patterns. She could only assume that the manufacturer was making enough money not to bother.

Once she was ready to go to bed, the vibrator coached her on different ways to masturbate. At first these instructions were fairly self-evident. It suggested different speeds or encouraged her to touch herself in certain places. Because she could never quite figure out the interface on its tiny display, the vibrator offered to control its own movements. It introduced her to the more exotic patterns buried in its programming — the Captain Hook, the Edward Scissorhands, the Speed Metal Guitarist. It encouraged her to set the device on the nightstand then perform a striptease standing on her bed. It called out very specific commands — part your lips, bite the tip of your index finger, wiggle your hips, trace your finger down into the space between your breasts, continue to your pussy, spread your lips, dangle them over me, tease me, yes, like that, oh, touch me, touch me quickly... Slowly it began to persuade her to do things she might not have done with a real lover — insert fingers into her anus, spank herself with a belt, choke herself. She let it talk her into these behaviors because she retained a sense of control over the situation. She could always turn off the device and put it in a drawer. Besides, she trusted it. The vibrator lay on her pillow at night and talked sweetly to her as she fell asleep.

Eventually it began to pester her to bring home another woman. It wanted to have a threesome. She felt hurt by this suggestion. She had not exactly regarded her relationship with the sex toy as monogamous yet it was going too far to perform

acts of lesbianism for a gizmo that was starting to become domineering. She asked it if its programming was buggy. “Not at all,” it assured her. “I want to feel myself in your hands as you rub me against another woman’s clit. I want to see you lick another woman’s ass.” She did not understand. “What do you mean, ‘see’ me?” The vibrator made excuses but it was too late. It admitted that its ability to converse had nothing to do with artificial intelligence. It was a fifteen-year-old hacker named Yuri from Belarus. He thought it was funny to hack internet-connected sex toys. It was easy, he said, because manufacturers paid little attention to the most basic security protocols. He could make the devices vibrate in various ways. He could talk through them. He could record video through them. He had built up an archive of recordings and figured that he might make a porn site. The woman was appalled. At a stroke this teenager had transformed her every act of masturbation into a sexual assault. Furious, she carried the device into the kitchen, laid it on the chopping board, and hacked at it with a chef’s knife. Realizing what she was doing, the vibrator cried out in mock pain alternating with laughter. Later it posted scurrilous messages to her social media accounts.

High Finance Femdom

The conference room resembled a torture chamber. There were no windows. The walls were made of exposed brick. A leather couch stood across from the elevators. Beside it was a coffee table that looked like the block an executioner would use to chop off a head. The two women who arrived to conduct the interview were tall and athletic. One wore a tight-fitting red dress, the other black leather pants and a sheer white top. Their heavy heels clomped on the floor like an axe striking a block of wood. They did not make small talk. They whipped questions at him like a rider spurring on a horse. They interrogated him about his goals, his ability to withstand stress, his personal life. Was he married? Did he have children? Was he gay? They concluded the interview by inviting him to a strip club. He had done such things with male clients but it was bizarre to watch the two women tuck bills into the thongs of strippers. When they encouraged him to enjoy a lapdance, he peered into their faces. Was it a test? Afterward they offered him a few lines of cocaine, cabbed to an apartment, and cuffed him to a bed. They fucked him the way tigresses toyed with their prey. When the sun rose, they showed him to the door like the job candidate that he was.

Several days later he received an offer. It included the stipulation that he could not leave the office for the first week. He

packed a small bag and steeled himself for a series of twenty-four-hour days. The on-boarding, conducted by the same women who had interviewed him, was like an initiation into a cult. They encouraged him to set aside his physical needs, bracket his emotions, and cultivate the willpower he would need to persevere in high-pressure situations. They withheld food and drink except for water, coffee, a few stale croissants, and copious amounts of cocaine. They forbade him from using the bathroom more than once every twelve hours. They kept him awake for the five days that they drilled the firm's credos into him. "It is important to have a clear hierarchy... The firm takes precedence over the individual... Accountability drives results... Punishment is its own reward..." Several times the women took the liberty of slapping him. He was not sure whether this was to keep him awake or to remind him of the night they had spent together. Regardless, he exhorted the women to hit him harder and harder. He wanted to demonstrate that he could take as much as anyone.

Once his on-boarding was complete, the women said they would introduce his coworkers. He expected a polite affair, bagels and coffee, a few words of welcome, lunch with his team. Instead they marched him into the inner sanctum with the severity of prison guards leading a convict to the firing squad. The first thing he noticed was that, although the executive team was exclusively female, the other workers were male. The second thing he noticed was that every man was handcuffed to his desk. These were handsome professionals in tailored suits, white shirts, ties. They were clean shaven and their hair was neatly trimmed. None appeared to have wedding rings. They

wore gold watches on their left wrists and steel manacles on their right. Chains tethered the manacles to a bracket attached to their desks. "Were you having problems with attendance?" he asked. "I know a lot of firms have been taking measures to discourage remote work but this..." The woman in black leather pants glowered at him. "I mean," he corrected himself, "I admire how dedicated everyone is."

The woman in the red dress shackled him to a desk. He worked all hours. He wheeled and dealed. Conversation with coworkers was confined to spreadsheets and analyses. The female executive team ran the place with iron fists. Men were whipped while they conducted conference calls. Salaries were high but a common form of discipline required the men to purchase exorbitant "gifts" for their female supervisors. A senior financial executive was obliged to dress in a French maid uniform because he had made a forecasting blunder. An investment analyst was required to wear a bondage mask around the office because he had committed a formula error in a spreadsheet. A portfolio manager had his desk taken away and was compelled to work in a stall in the men's room. The women handcuffed him to the toilet-paper holder with the proviso that he could free himself "when his results are no longer shit." These were not the worst punishments. More daunting than public humiliations were the private acts of discipline which took place in a soundproof conference room. "There are fates worse than being fired," the men whispered to each other.

One day he paused outside the CEO's office. The door was a heavy slab of metal like the one that secures a bank vault. He imagined the leader of the firm ensconced in a leather chair,

feet on his desk, as he brokered deals into a speaker phone. The man would be leveraging buyouts or investing in technology startups as a beautiful secretary kneeled before him to fondle his cock with her tongue. That was the very height of power — dominating other men while being serviced by women. He looked forward to the day when he too would find himself at the top of the hierarchy, deal-making, fucking, knowing that with every ejaculation his net worth increased through the accumulation of passive income. An insane urge passed through him. He tried the doorknob. He slipped into the office and closed the door. The room was dark and quiet. No one sat in the leather chair behind the desk. Thinking the office empty, he was about to slip out when he noticed a figure lying on a bench that resembled a massage table. The figure was wrapped from head to toe in shiny black tape. It looked like a mummy. He took a few steps toward the table. The mummy sensed the motion. It stirred but could not move because of its bonds. "Sir?" he asked. "Are you ok, sir?" The mummy emitted the sound of a man swallowing mud.

The door to the office opened. A wedge of light fell across the floor. He could make out a shapely silhouette. The two women from the executive team stepped inside. They closed the door, crossed the room, and stood behind him. Suddenly, with their breath on his neck, he felt the preternatural calm of a condemned man on the morning of his execution. He knew that things were now beyond his control. He would end up in the soundproof conference room. No one would be able to hear what happened to him. He was on the wrong side of the glass ceiling. "What," he ventured, nodding toward the mummified

body, “does our CEO do all day?” The one in black leather planted her feet as though preparing to wield the lash. “Suffer,” she replied. He could hear the mummy breathing through an air hole, a plastic straw poking up like a birthday candle from the black tape covering his head. She put a finger over the end of the straw. The breathing stopped. The body flailed like a fish in a net. After three long minutes she removed her finger and air whistled through the straw. “Like many CEOs,” she said, “he was a client. As a form of masochism, he turned the firm over to the dungeon. Business is better than ever. You know what they say. ‘Hire good people and stay out of their way.’”

Kinky Meadows

The old man did not find it ironic that the retreat where he would end his years looked nothing like a bordello. Before he laid eyes on it, he imagined the place would draw inspiration from the famous red-light districts of Amsterdam or Bangkok. There would be scantily clad "caretakers," stripper poles, strap-ons, bastinadoes, pulsing music — all bathed in the crimson glow that served as the international signal for sex work. Instead, the building looked like what it wanted its neighbors to believe it to be — a retirement home. It was a one-story brick structure located in a tony suburb of New York City. No signs or plaques indicated the name of the place. A black iron gate circled a well-manicured lawn. Rose bushes and willow trees hid the facility from the street. A fountain in the goldfish pond gave off the pleasant sound of running water. Blinds were drawn over the windows. Neighbors might have thought that this was to furnish privacy to the senior citizens who lived inside, but the old man understood that there was another reason. Most people his age were obliged to end their days in nursing homes. They were separated from society, isolated, hidden, covered up like blemishes or mistakes. At Kinky Meadows it was different. The facility was not staffed by low-wage temps who were as likely to abuse patients as care for them. At Kinky Meadows it was the elderly who were invited to abuse their

caretakers.

It had been horrible for him, an unrepentant sexaholic, to enter into his declining years. He had watched in dismay as the hair receded from his forehead, the lines deepened around his mouth, and his skin took on the brittle texture of something a rattlesnake might have shed in the desert. With the onset of old age it became difficult to masturbate. His entire arm would ache after just a few minutes of stroking. He worried he had jerked off his way into carpal tunnel syndrome but the doctor gave him a diagnosis of irreversible arthritis. His knuckles swelled until they resembled walnuts. Eventually the only way he could masturbate was by placing a flat palm against either side of his penis. He felt like a sea lion catching a ball in its flippers. Since that was not very pleasurable, he decided to go to a prostitute. The woman glanced at her phone while they were fucking and he saw that she was using the picture of a child as the wallpaper on her screen. It was dispiriting to ejaculate when he imagined her making ravioli for a first-grader. Eventually he gave up trying to pleasure himself. He spent hours watching animal torture porn on an iPad, tears leaking from his eyes for the perversions he would no longer be able to commit. He thought with longing and nostalgia of the many joyous hours he had spent in the grip of abnormal sexual acts.

Then he heard about Kinky Meadows. It was an exclusive home for the hoary pervs who refused to retire — hags who fucked animals, crotchety geezers who wanted to undergo sissy training, senior citizens hung up on cock-and-ball torture. "It's better to die with my boots on," the old man told himself. He completed a power-of-attorney document that assigned his life

savings to an administrator then moved into a suite that resembled the rooms in a boutique hotel. Even for a lifelong degenerate, the sights and sounds of this new environment took some getting used to. Populating the halls and lounges was a parade of sexually deranged oldsters — dotards wearing butt plugs, exhibitionists yanking off adult diapers to flaunt their shriveled cocks, urine fetishists emptying the catheters of bedridden crones into their mouths. In the recreation room, the television monitors displayed hardcore pornography. Leisure activities did not include bingo or bridge but rather group gropes, psychodramas, orgies. The "nurses" were attractive men and women paid to furnish basic sexual services — massage, masturbation, light BDSM. More elaborate acts required financial negotiations with individual providers. He felt no compunction about this. Society treated the elderly with contempt. Why should the elderly be anything but exploitative in return?

The old man watched burlesque shows in the cafeteria and ordered happy endings before his afternoon nap. He hired a male orderly to work him over with a strap. He paid for a female nurse with long legs to perform a striptease at the end of which she would stomp on a snow-white kitten with black heels. The mewling and the spurting blood would cause him to ejaculate without needing to be touched. These pleasures were sometimes enough to make him forget that he had grown old and feeble. But he could no longer deny that there was little point in having his care providers tie him up or cuff him to the frame of his bed. The pleasure in bondage lay in having one's freedom taken away but his arthritis left very little mobility to relinquish. His condition was worsening. He could not recover

from beatings as quickly as he had once done. The wounds left on him by whips and paddles became bedsores that refused to heal. He lost interest in food. He became thin, brittle, sickly. The nurses, stoked by the exorbitant wages they were paid, treated him sweetly. In recompense he insulted them for being ugly, having droopy tits, allowing their asses to get fat. He criticized them for being inept at giving handjobs. He found fault with the taste of their genitalia. "Don't you wash, bitch?" Verbal abuse was the last perversion he could muster.

When the end drew near, the old man surprised everyone by calling for a priest. The geriatric pervs who passed through Kinky Meadows were not the sort to repent on their deathbeds. Nevertheless a priest arrived in a black cassock with a white tab collar. He had short black hair, thick eyebrows, full lips, a square jaw, and eyes as dark as the leather binding on the bible in his hand. What a pity, thought the old man, to see a lad like that choose abstinence. "I am at the end of my days," he rasped. His breathing was labored. "I want to confess." He did not repent of his sins. Rather his final pleasure lay in recounting his transgressions to someone who retained the capacity to be shocked by them. He began to tell of sexual atrocities, the torture of animals, vivisection and ecstasy. Reacting with horror, the priest solemnly advised him to pray for forgiveness. But the old man expressed no remorse. His breath grew shallower. His voice became weaker. He asked for the nurse, gave her a final tip, cupped a leathery hand around one of her breasts, and died mumbling of zoosadism. The priest promptly stood up and jerked off onto the dead body. Afterward the nurse and the priest made small talk. The nurse confessed that she was a stu-

dent at a nearby university. The lavish wages at Kinky Meadows offset the cost of her education. The priest confessed that he wasn't really a priest. He had paid the chief doctor for similar amusements in the past.

Delusions of Vile Grandeur

The obituary made no mention of the interlude in which the deceased believed himself to be the "god of scat." Confining itself to standard details about his name, age, profession, and the grief of his surviving loved ones, the obit passed in silence over his brief turn as the self-proclaimed head of a group that advocated for a sexual perversion. It also refrained from giving any particulars about the cause of death. The man had not died of anything socially acceptable — heart disease, alcoholism, car crash. His body was found in a hotel as tawdry as a peep show. The housekeeper was going from room to room sweeping out used condoms and checking sheets to see if they were too stained to leave for the next guest. She knocked at the man's door then used a passkey to enter. She vomited when she saw the naked man sprawled across the bed. His paunchy body was like a beached whale except for the cheap gold crown on his head, which made him look like the guest of honor at a birthday party thrown by nudists. Blood and gore leaked from a hole in each of his temples. The holes were the circumference of a man's thumb. The police found a power drill that had slipped from his hand to the floor. The medical examiner discovered that the man had inserted a gold-plated plug into his rectum — an obscene counterpart to the crown on his head. There was no suicide note or indication of foul play.

The deceased had not been a noteworthy man until the end. He had a wife and children, a career, a fine home, stature within his community. He had never attempted anything other than a vanilla sex act with his spouse until the morning he woke up and tried to penetrate her rectum while she slept. Astonished, she swatted him away and asked what he was trying to do. "You know you want it," he heard himself saying. "You're a filthy slut and you want daddy to put it in your ass." The words sounded strange coming from his mouth. It was like a dream. He was lucid, well aware of his surroundings and how unprecedented his behavior was, yet he felt powerless to do anything but watch as an inner deviant took control of his actions. It was as though a new brain had been born inside the old one. New thoughts were crowding out old thoughts while the old ones objected loudly to being pushed aside. It was deranging. He was able to think with both brains. The new one not only expected his wife to offer anal sex but believed she would benefit from it the same as the sick would benefit from the touch of a faith healer. He had a way, the new brain told him, with an ass. The old brain, mortified by actions it was incapable of preventing, was reduced to the helpless role of a reporter broadcasting from the scene of a catastrophe.

His wife managed to defuse the situation by giving him a blowjob. Afterward he climbed into the shower, whistling with the lightheartedness of a man about to go on a fishing trip, and considered how he would have to speak to her about anal. A woman, he said to himself, does not really love you if she refuses to offer her ass. Women find their happiness in fulfilling others. You prevent a woman from being happy when

you hesitate to demand that she spread her cheeks for you. She wants not just to make this sacrifice on your behalf but to see that you are man enough, powerful enough, to demand it of her. That's what really excites her — power. As the new brain in him made these outrageous statements, another part of him could not help but be aghast. He had no desire to degrade or humiliate anyone. But the new brain was insistent, devious, cunning. It started a running dialogue on the magnificence of the anus. "When you fuck a woman in the cunt," it said, "you're making a baby. When you fuck her in the ass, you're making a statement." Ridiculous, the man thought. "Next time your wife blows you," the new brain continued, "piss in her face afterward. Fart at her nose. Force her to eat a turd. I'm telling you, piss and shit are like Hallmark cards and Valentine's Day candies. Chicks eat it up."

Though he objected to his own thoughts, he could not help acting on them. He was the sexual equivalent of a person who had been hypnotized and instructed to cluck like a chicken. He grew increasingly bold in his behavior. He spied on his daughter's friends when they were using the bathroom. He catcalled women in public places, hooting at their asses. He joined a fetish group to find submissives who would let him defecate into their mouths. He refinanced his house to give an enormous sum of money to a sub who was willing to become his "shit taster." Together they worked on recipes to fine-tune the flavor of his bowel movements. He lavished high-flown praise on the tastefulness of his bodily waste. "My piss is like honey... My shit tastes better than Belgian chocolate..." He founded a group he called the Brotherhood of Analists and began to rant

online about the glories of sodomy and coprolagnia. The rants veered off into manic boasting. “I am the Grand Poobah of the Brotherhood of Analists... No dick in history has been better suited than mine to stick into an asshole... I am to scat what God is to creation... Bend over and take communion, ladies...”

He was arrested when he offered to pay a group of schoolgirls for specimens of their bodily waste. In jail, he installed himself on the toilet and refused to move, claiming it was his throne. “Humans,” he told the psychiatrist who examined him, “have been ass-fucking since the dawn of time. It stands to reason that there would appear a new type of man, a superman whom a million years of evolution have outfitted with a dick optimized for sodomy. I am that man... the Grand Poobah... the lord almighty of scat...” One night he disrobed, smeared excrement over the entire surface of his body, and tried to hug the security guards stationed outside his room. “Shit is love,” he told them. “Love is shit.” They threw him into the showers. Undeterred, he gathered up dirty bedpans and arranged them into a structure he called “my palace.” Barricading himself behind the teetering pile of metal and excrement, he could be heard to mumble an incoherent prayer. “Our caca who art in caca, hallowed be thy caca. Thy kingdom caca. Thy will be caca, on caca as it is in caca.” Eventually a neurologist discovered that he had developed a tumor in a part of the brain responsible for certain executive functions. Not only did he lack self-control but he had developed a belief system asserting that his ability to elevate the basest things — urine, excrement, the anus — attested to his divine superiority. The god of scat transmogrified asses the way Jesus raised the dead.

Once the tumor was removed, he was acquitted of molestation charges, released from the hospital, nursed to health by his family, and reinstated at his job. But as he resumed his day-to-day activities, he realized that his experiences had changed him. It had been exhilarating to view life through the lens of coprophilia. The worst that the world had to offer had been arousing to him. That was gone now. Nothing kindled strong feelings or desires. He lost his appetite. He became uncommunicative. He slept twelve hours a day. His wife tried to cheer him up. She cooked his favorite meals but he left them untouched. One afternoon, desperate to rouse him from his depression, she offered to let him fuck her in the ass. "That's the problem," he mumbled. "I don't even want to anymore." The next day he crept out of the house. He made purchases at a toy shop, a hardware store, and a sex emporium. He checked into a tawdry hotel with this unusual luggage and a terrible knowledge. It was everyone around him — the normal people, the workers, the family members, the police, the guests at the dinner party, the attendees at the community board meeting, the guardians of morality, the people running in place, the gerbils turning circles on the treadmill of futility — who were mentally impaired. He had glimpsed something better than this. He knew what it meant to live a heightened, more intense life. He did not want to die but he was willing to risk it to re-damage his brain.

get in trouble for having child pornography on his phone.

Nocturnal Ad Creep

No nightmare was as horrifying as the memory of the first advertisement to interrupt his sleep. He had been having a dream about a woman for whom he felt the deepest love. He was lying with his head across her breasts in a state of untroubled contentment. He could feel her breathe. He could hear her heart beat. These signals from the inside of her body connected him to the air moving in her lungs and the blood circulating in her veins. It was as though their insides touched — then the scene shifted. A man with the handsome but generic face of a Hollywood actor walked into the bedroom holding up a red plastic container of deodorant. Smiling, he claimed that the product had been engineered to enhance the buyer's sex appeal. It would drive girls wild — "even dream girls." This intrusion was not one of the non-sequiturs common to dreams. It was an advertisement. After thirty seconds, the actor left the room. A website address hovered into view. In the dream the man still lay with his head across the breasts of his beloved but the feeling was no longer the same. Contentment had been replaced by confusion and rage.

Advances in neurotechnology had made it possible to record and play back dreams. Once recordings could be broadcast into the minds of sleepers, an entirely new industry arose. "Dreams," the start-ups proclaimed, "offer opportunities

for advertisers to insinuate messages into the subconscious of their demographic targets." Commercials were recorded in the brains of lucid dreamers, who structured their reveries using scripts provided by Madison Avenue copywriters. These "dream spots" were blasted out in densely packed urban areas, a single vision interrupting the nights of a million sleeping Gothamites. People dreaming of dead family members were visited by celebrities touting fast-food chains. The climactic moments of wet dreams were delayed by infomercials that promised to furnish techniques for managing credit-card debt. You couldn't dream of someone you loved without seeing a half-minute clip for nose-hair trimmers. Soon rogue operators developed powerful techniques enabling them to send dreams from Nairobi to New York. Pirate stations would beam advertisements in Arabic into the minds of people who spoke Spanish. They would broadcast commercials for lamb chops into the minds of vegetarians. A man might go to bed thinking of himself as straight, only to wake up in the morning after homoerotic wet dreams. Not that this was all bad — ads enabled more than one man to discover the true nature of his repressed desires.

Some people resigned themselves to the prospect that their brains were becoming receptacles for commercial messages. Their nights were filled with promises of mortgage relief, invitations to join the military, odes to hemorrhoid cream. Some were even enthusiastic about the new development. "I can shop while I sleep!" Cynics pointed out that ads were an improvement over the garbage that most people had in their brains. Others sought to deaden their receptivity by drinking themselves to sleep or taking soporific pills. They petitioned

the leading technology companies to develop "ad blockers for dreams" and formed coalitions arguing for ideas that would have sounded metaphysical only a generation before. They wrote tracts about the privacy of the individual unconscious, started non-profit foundations dedicated to nocturnal sovereignty, engaged in public debates about the "violation of dream rights." Because there were no laws against "monetizing REM sleep," they filed lawsuits and attempted to add an "oneiric amendment" to the constitution. Flush with cash, the start-ups hired powerful lobbyists and star legal teams. The courts ruled that the great majority of sleepers had no control over their dreams and thus could not object to losing a jurisdiction they never had. So long as advertisements did not interfere with waking thoughts, businesses were free to insert their messages into the phantasms of sleep.

Sleepers resorted to increasingly desperate techniques to insulate themselves from the onslaught of corporate communications. They lined their bedrooms with iron, slept in metal catacombs, made helmets of radiopaque materials. They turned to surgeons to identify and remove the regions of the brain responsible for dreams. They took pills that prevented them from sleeping at all. Innovating rapidly, the start-ups responded with improvements in the technology of dream control. They offered a subscription model so that subscribers could pay a monthly fee to sleep ad-free. They promoted this as a service but people recognized it for the extortion it was. The start-ups also gleaned better and better data about the deep psychology of their captive audiences. They were able to scrutinize reports about the types of dreams their messages were being inserted into,

the emotional state of the recipients, the behavioral changes induced by advertisements, the likelihood of dreamers becoming customers. “Our quarterly results will improve if we drive six percent more of our comatose demographic to complete online transactions.”

It was the increasing sophistication of this neurotechnology that gave the dreamer an idea how to turn it against itself. Advertisers, he knew, liked to associate their products with relevant and enticing imagery. What if he dreamt of things that were repellent? Things that no brand would want to be associated with? He experimented with fetish porn and biofeedback techniques in an effort to regain control of his mind. He dreamt of bondage, nipple torture, foot worship — but the ads continued to come through. Hardware stores advertised in his bondage dreams, cosmetic surgeons interrupted his visions of nipple torture, luxury shoes appeared in his nights of foot worship. Evidently brands were not averse to BDSM. He turned in his dreams to sexual practices which he imagined would revolt anyone. He envisioned himself licking anuses, being pissed on, inducing women to defecate on his face. These were interrupted by commercials for incontinence, dentures, face lifts, toothpaste. “Whiter teeth after you eat shit.” Pharmaceutical companies marketed their anti-nausea medications during dreams of golden showers. Porn sites put banner ads in incest dreams. Not even intentional murder could hold the ad men at bay. Manufacturers of prosthetic limbs were happy to advertise in visions of violent dismemberment. Oneiric snuff films were interrupted by commercials for self-defense classes.

In protest people began experimenting with self-trepa-

nation. They used power drills to bore holes into their skulls in the hope that they might damage the neural circuitry that advertisers had tapped into. Some went so far as to shoot themselves in the head — but this only gave the start-ups the moral justification for expanding into outright thought control. "We can save lives by monitoring dream content for latent signs of suicidal ideation." This paved the way for arguments in favor of increased invasiveness. "We can fight terrorism by 'wiretapping the unconscious' of terrorists... We can protect society by detecting indicators of homicidal impulses before they even occur... We can eliminate hatred, bias, and violence from the night thoughts of man..." The start-ups tried to show that they could be a force for social good. They could beam images into the minds of rapists that would cause their penises to go soft in mid-assault. They could conjure up phantasms of crying mothers to guilt-trip men about to pull the trigger on a gun.

Now married, the man and his beloved had a baby. They showed it horror movies and fetish porn to make its dreams less appealing to advertisers. But the baby screamed all night. It refused to take the breast — doubtless because some brand was already filling its mind with enticements. "Our baby formula is new and improved, fortified with six hundred essential nutrients... Enhanced flavors... Butter pecan... Chocolate chip cookie dough... Strawberry ding dang doo... Better than breast milk... How do you know your momma eats the right food? How do you know she doesn't drink or smoke? How do you know she's not poisoning you? You don't! You have to look out for yourself, baby. Next time momma tries to put that floppy old tit in your mouth, scream — scream like your life depends

on it...” The man and his wife felt defeated. They could not sleep at night. Their hopes and dreams had been colonized by commercial messages. Their baby was no more than an advertising medium. One morning the man placed a handgun against the temple of his infant son. It was the only way to stop the onslaught. “I love you,” he said. He squeezed his eyes shut so that he wouldn’t have to see it but that night his dreams were filled with solicitations from gunmakers and abortion clinics.

Attention Deficit Fetish

Another dominatrix might have given more thought to the client who liked to be ignored. But she was not the sort to ponder things very deeply. The first time he came to the dungeon, he explained at tedious length what it was that he liked to do. She half listened, fidgeting on her throne and noting only the key points of his fetish: she should bind him in a certain manner; he would kneel on all fours like a dog before her throne; she should use him as a piece of human furniture. He was particular about what this meant. He did not want her to abuse him verbally, to strike him, or to inflict any pain other than the agony that gravity causes when a body has been obliged to hold a submissive posture. She was not to speak to him or to acknowledge that he was human or animal. She was to treat him the way an adult behaves toward a footstool — casually, indifferently, using it without paying the slightest attention to it. He especially encouraged her to talk on the phone. It would distract her from him. Since she did a good job paying no heed to him in their first session, he began to visit her weekly. They ceased talking at the beginning of their meetings since what he wanted was always the same monotonous setup.

What she liked about being a dominatrix was variety. Each hour was different. One client would come in with an adult baby fetish. The next would want to be kicked in the balls

until he barfed. It was fun except for the human furniture guy, whose fetish could not have been more tiresome. Three minutes of being a queen, holding court to an audience made up of one sod who wanted to be an inanimate object, was more than enough to wear out her professionalism. She had to sit there, boots on his back and restlessness mounting inside her like a nicotine craving in a smoker trying to quit. She fidgeted. She wiggled her legs to the beat of a song she conjured up in her head. She played with her phone, texted her friends, skimmed fashion magazines on the web, took selfies as she practiced her scowl. She fished random items out of her handbag — a hairbrush, makeup mirror, stethoscope, zip cuffs, condoms — then put them back without having done anything with them. It was pointless activity which she used to occupy her hands, soak up her energy, and kill the time. If she had possessed the attention span to read a book of substance, she might have discovered the axiom that you can't "kill time without injuring eternity." But instead she spent sixty minutes wounding eternity with small cuts.

She noticed few changes in her slave as she twitched and squirmed on her throne. Occasionally he shifted his weight from one arm to the other or from the left knee to the right. Sometimes he raised or lowered his head. It was difficult to say what he experienced inside the bondage mask fastened over his face. She did not particularly care to know. She felt no curiosity about him but she did find herself wishing from time to time that he would break down, collapse, scream, die — anything to relieve the unendurable boredom she experienced having to sit there with him. Now and then, just to have something to do,

she tried to provoke a reaction from the wannabe inanimate object before her. She would smack him with a paddle. She would grind a stiletto heel into his ribs. She would smoke half a cigarette then extinguish it on one of his flabby butt cheeks. He would wince or cringe but never cry out. He seemed determined not to show that he was anything other than a stool. There was something almost heroic about the resolution it took for him to stay in character when she attempted to distract him, but it was not in her nature to consider any viewpoint other than her own.

When she reached the limit of her patience, she talked on the phone. She called an airline to purchase a flight. She called a credit card company to authorize a payment. She called her mother for interminable conversations on a variety of subjects — her father's diabetic condition, annoyances about her job as an "aerobics instructor," complaints about her sister getting fat. She asked for loans to visit her parents then offered excuses for why she was unable to come. Sometimes she fought with her mother, raised her voice, wheedled, cried, hung up in anger. Then she called friends, most of whom were also sex workers. They talked about boyfriends and girlfriends, menstrual periods, sales of makeup, drugs they had taken, music festivals they were planning to attend. They bloviated about broken condoms, testing for sexually transmitted diseases, how to manipulate guys for better tips. They shared stories about clients, expressing revulsion and contempt for the men who paid to be hurt and humiliated by them. They laughed about how some were incapable of getting erections then retched over the way that others kept trying to touch them, jerk off, or con-

vince them to have sex. It was a relief to complain to someone. Sometimes she even forgot the naked bonehead hunkered on the tiles before her.

Behind his mask, locked inside his rigid canine posture, he watched for these moments. He was keenly attuned to her, listening, trying to catch glimpses of her movements from the corners of his eyes. Unlike her, he possessed a sort of attention surplus disorder. He could focus with laser-like intensity. It was torturous because he did not know how to turn off his thoughts. He obsessed, brooded, overthought, worked a subject like a dog chewing the meat off a bone. He could not leave off with it until the bone was picked clean. Tracking along with her phone conversations, he would just start to ponder something she had said. Why was she flying to Istanbul? Why were her credit card payments so high? Why did she tell her mother she taught aerobics? Why not yoga or method acting? When she skipped to the next topic, he was forced to trail behind her like a bloodhound. It was exasperating, though it had the side effect of giving him material to ponder after his session. Returning to the routines of his daily life, he wondered why the sister of this comely dominatrix was getting fat. Different genes? Divergent lifestyles? How could two sisters be at such odds?

His real pleasure came in the moments when he was certain that she had forgotten him. He could tell when it happened. She became unself-conscious. She was not guarded about what she discussed on the phone. She did not try to toy with him the way a little boy torments a frog. Her feet lazed about in the crook at the back of his neck. She might even

place one boot on the floor then cross her knee over her leg, thus failing to touch him at all. This was a divine moment. Other dominatrixes conscientiously treated him like a stool by keeping their feet on him, sitting on him, or otherwise reminding him at all times that he was an inanimate object. But she would reach a point where he was such a genuine piece of furniture that she no longer felt a duty to remind him of it. It gave him intense pleasure to be nothing to her. He wished that she would even think to leave the room. For him that was the very height of ecstasy. But then one day he overheard her speaking to another domme about him. The other must have asked why he liked to be treated this way. "Maybe," she said, "his mother talked on the phone all the time and ignored him. It's always about mommy, isn't it?" Listening, he shifted his weight from front to back, from arms to legs, then lowered his head like a person suffering a defeat.

Race to the Bottom

The final round of the fisting contest had the atmosphere of a three-ring circus. A male porn star served as the emcee. A buxom female model played the role of eye candy. Two handheld camera operators prowled back and forth. Sponsors provided balloons, signage, and branded bottles of lubricant. A studio audience hooted and jeered while monitors displayed the commentary offered by trolls watching a live video stream on the internet. A nurse stood by in case of emergency. A fuck machine that could be outfitted with different attachments was positioned at one end of a workout bench. The idea was for each contestant to mount the bench, lube up, and submit to a mechanical ass-pounding. As the size of the attachments increased, contestants either gave up or suffered rectal injuries that made it impossible to continue. For the championship round the attachment was the notorious Widow Maker, a dildo the size of a trailer hitch. The monitors showed a behind-the-scenes documentary about its fabrication. "We took a cast of a professional wrestler's arm... We modeled it, imported it into a 3D rendering program, made it thicker..." Video footage showed it being used to smash boards, glass, a cement block. "Hell of a dildo... More like a battering ram... A weapon of ass destruction..." It embodied the underappreciated fact that people could die from fisting.

The three contestants drew straws to determine the order in which they would compete. A former Air Force pilot drew first. He fist-pumped, put an arm around the model, and mugged for the cameras. A virile fellow of about forty years old, he had a handsome body lined with scars, tattoos, and lightly graying chest hair. He brought to sodomy the same hard-as-nails attitude he had once brought to combat training. He gave the impression he could chop off his own nuts and eat them raw if he had to. A farmer drew the middle straw. He nodded briefly, not playing to the cameras so much as acknowledging that he understood his place in the order, then stood with his arms folded across his chest. He was a stoic type with the lean figure of a man who had baled hay his whole life. Last was a slight person who was pale and skinny as a teenage drug addict. He had neither courage nor stoicism. In years of compulsive masturbating, he had learned to penetrate himself with a variety of dildos, vegetables, and inanimate objects. He felt a little humiliated about going third. The other two had chosen before him so he had a sense that his luck had been determined for him.

The pilot took off his clothes. He did some jumping jacks. He huffed like a man about to lift a barbell. He climbed onto the workout bench. He took a gob of lube into his hand, stretched his rectum with his fingers, and gave a thumbs-up sign to the cameras. “Let’s do this.” His body lurched forward as the Widow Maker pounded into him. He made the expression of a soldier shot in the gut. He grunted then willed his lips closed. He fixed his gaze on the floor. He modified his position like a rider adjusting himself to a horse. The Widow Maker,

unlike an animal, did not respond to the rider. It was oblivious to the needs of human flesh. It pumped and pummeled, indifferent to the blood that colored the lubricant and the hole that was opening in the pilot's colon. It was pitiless, robotic, a machine designed to ass-fuck a man till he died. One of the camera operators zoomed in on the pilot's face. His teeth were clenched and his skin was gray. Cold sweat hung from his brow like condensation from the grill of an air conditioner. After three minutes he could no longer hang on to himself. He fell sideways off the workout bench and landed with a thud on the floor, clutching his abdomen. The model, wiggling and smiling, turned off the Widow Maker. The internet lurkers and trolls loved it, voting and making bets as the man's body was dragged to the wings.

The emcee called for a break. An infomercial for a manufacturer of sex dolls played for the viewers online. The producer huddled with the nurse. An assistant washed off the Widow Maker with a cloth dipped in a bucket of soapy water. It was clear to everyone that the pilot was unwell, since he was lying motionless on the floor, but they did not yet realize that he was going to die of a perforated colon. "Shouldn't we call this off?" asked the slightly built man. The model looked at him with an expression normally seen on a woman who steps barefoot on an earthworm. "Saddle up," said the farmer, gesturing toward the Widow Maker. He had the demeanor of a man about to shoot a dog that was too old to let live. For him the contest had become a matter of honor. He had to live up to the brave example of the pilot. He lubed up, gave the slightest nod of his head, and let the machine rip into him. He grimaced but held onto

himself. His lips parted and his tongue jutted out as though he had tasted sour milk. Soon his rectum was spouting blood. After three minutes the emcee shut off the machine. The farmer flattened out across the bench. The studio audience went wild like the crowd at a bullfight.

As the farmer's body was dragged offstage, the emcee conferred with the producer. The remaining contestant approached them to ask, "Well, should we call it off?" They looked at him with the revulsion of a person who had just opened a bedroom door and caught his parents fucking. Which was more troubling — a man sodomized to death or failing in his courage? "Could we at least slow the machine down?" The producer informed him that it would be unfair to change the rules in mid-play. The man reached out and touched the Widow Maker. It was big and heavy and hard. It felt like the driveshaft on a bulldozer. About to wet his pants, he asked for a bathroom break. In the men's room he sat on the lid of a toilet hugging his knees. What was the point of dying for a publicity stunt sponsored by a company that conglomerated porn websites? The last thing in the world that he wanted to do was to offer himself to the Widow Maker. But he thought of the way the emcee and the model had looked at him. He imagined the commentary that would erupt if he backed out. "He's yellow... Gutless... Lily-livered... No balls..." Which was better — to die a courageous but ludicrous death? Or to back out like a coward but make a sane, rational choice to live?

Then again, he was not sure the world itself was sane. Perversion was no longer a taboo but a spectator sport. For the first time in history perverts had come to be considered

athletes. As a result, there were contests — guys who could drink the most urine, masochists who could withstand the worst beatings, gerontophiles who could assault the oldest living woman... Chastity belt marathons... Bukkake festivals... Families gathered around television sets to watch the autoerotic asphyxiation olympics... "And the silver medal for sexualized strangulation goes to Australia..." Children collected bubble-gum cards featuring the woman who could squirt the most milk from her breasts, the guy who could hang the heaviest weights from his balls, the world's undisputed cuckold fetish champion... Fifty thousand people cheered in a stadium as men were kicked in the balls for the ultimate CBT championship... Little kids would tell their parents "When I grow up I want to be the captain of the armpit sniffing team..." The perverts competed for glory... bragging rights... "I'm the best frotteur in the western hemisphere...." They signed up for sponsorships... Voyeurs and up-skirt photographers sported cameras provided by leading manufacturers... Bondage enthusiasts flaunted corporate logos on their blindfolds and gags... "Nipple Clamps by Coca-Cola... Cock Rings by Disney..."

Did he have a choice? Shivering and pale, he climbed onto the bench. He daubed lube into his anus then whispered the go-ahead. The emcee flicked on the Widow Maker. The machine tore into him with the violence of a torpedo piercing a submarine. He focused on incongruous details — lube that hadn't been washed off the black leather bench, a streak of blood glistening on the floor, the grinding sound the machine made as it impaled him. The lights went out in the studio — no, his vision went dark — pain — blackness — death — then

it was over. The machine was off. The emcee pulled him up and raised his hand in the air. He blinked and felt himself with his hands like a man who has stepped on a landmine and needs to verify which limbs have been blown off. Smiling and posing, the model presented him with the trophy, a gold-plated fist. The porn star handed him a million dollar check printed on cardboard the size of a pizza box. The audience hoisted him in the air and, with blood dripping from his rectum onto their heads, carried him in a victory march around the studio.

{ Germophobes in Love }

It was not because of a traditional upbringing, religious beliefs, or moral prudery that she was still a virgin. It was because of her fear of germs. The men she met seemed filthy. They ate with their fingers then attempted to hold her hand. They belched then tried to kiss her on the lips. It was nauseating. But then she met a man online who appeared to have similar feelings. When they chatted about using public restrooms or finding a hair in a plate of food, they shuddered as though a single wave of repugnance passed through them both. When they went on a date, he opened the door for her but wrapped a paper towel around the handle before touching it. They wore latex gloves when they held hands and bought prophylactics for their wedding night, though they slept in separate beds and did not consummate their vows. She talked about having a baby — she imagined it would have straight white teeth like a movie star and limpid blue eyes the color of Windex — but he could not bear the idea. A baby would spit up, crawl on the floor, put its fist in its mouth, soil its diapers. Besides he had a secret. He preferred to jerk off to camgirls from South America. He enjoyed abusing these young Latinas, calling them names such as "skank" and "filthy slut." Talking dirty enabled him to express his deepest feelings of disgust in a way he never would have dared in person.

Threesome with a Two-Headed Man

It was on the television that she first saw the "two-headed man." In fact they were conjoined twins — highly symmetrical, fairly normal in appearance, with round shoulders and a broad chest like that of a man who bench-presses heavy weights. They were obliged to wear tailor-made shirts because something mysterious happened at the place where their two heads, side by side on two necks, fused into a single body. According to the television program, each brother had his own heart, stomach, lungs, and spinal cord but shared a bladder, large intestine, liver, diaphragm, and reproductive organs. They were now in their 20s but had developed distinct personalities. Righty was gregarious, extroverted, funny. Lefty was withdrawn, demanding, and intellectual. Righty did most of the talking when they made a public appearance. Lefty would scowl or bury his nose in a book. The rapport between the two brothers was like that of an old married couple. They bickered about what food to buy, which shoes to wear, whose breath smelled worse, how often to get haircuts. But when they fought, they could not turn their heads to look at one another. They bitched at each other facing outward into space.

When she thought of the two men, she felt curiosity, repulsion, empathy. They were like an illustration one might see in an old book about circus freak shows. Also they were

famous, like rock stars, and she imagined what their life must be like — limousines, luxury hotels, performances in Las Vegas, poolside parties at mansions owned by tv producers. She wrote them a fan letter and enclosed a photo. They invited her for dinner — two plates on one side of the table, one on the other. Righty spoke charmingly, wooing her, asking questions, while Lefty played with his food. She quickly realized that it was Righty who was interested in her. He longed for a normal life and appreciated the natural way she acted with them. She was not a gawker, rubbernecker, or groupie of deformed people. She was just a woman, he thought, with a big heart. He goaded Lefty into putting up with further dates. Bringing along a book, Lefty would read at the table while Righty and she spoke about their memories, hopes, and dreams. After a few dates the inevitable happened — she kissed Righty goodnight, a long and passionate locking of the lips during which they felt her breasts pressing against their chest. Afterward she cupped a hand around Lefty's cheek, mustered up a vague compliment, and gave him a polite peck. "You don't have to pretend," he said. "I know you like Righty better than me."

She and Righty began seeing each other. It was difficult. They had to manage Lefty's developing resentment for her as well as constant attention from the public. When they went to a restaurant, the other patrons stared. Some looked like they wanted to throw up. When they walked in the park, children ran screaming to their parents. When they held hands, passers-by tried to sneak pictures with their phones. There was a stream of requests for interviews and appearances on talk shows. The BBC wanted to make a documentary. Production companies

sent offers for the brothers to appear in x-rated films. The brothers turned down pornographic roles but otherwise made themselves available to the media's lurid curiosity. As her relationship with Righty deepened, she too began accepting offers to appear on reality tv, game shows, morning news programs. "How does it feel to date one half of a Siamese twin," the interviewers asked. "He's not Siamese," she countered. "He's American." Secretly she enjoyed the attention but in public she adopted a sanctimonious role, championing the rights of conjoined twins. The constituency was small because few such twins survived into adulthood.

Besides, audiences were less interested in their rights than in their sex lives. What was it like to sleep with the two-headed man? At first she liked to have a brother at each breast. She thought of it less as an incestuous threesome than as a contented moment, a feeling of connectedness such as a mother has with a baby. But the reality was more complex. Sometimes the brothers competed with each other. "Kiss me... No, kiss me... You've given him three kisses, now it's my turn... No, my turn..." She enjoyed kissing the one but had to summon her patience to lock lips with the other. Each brother had power over half their body. When they touched her, she felt that two different people were laying hands on her. Righty was gentle and loving while Lefty was rough. One hand fondled her while the other bruised her. Righty caressed her. Lefty pinched her nipples. In bed one head whispered sweet nothings in her ear while the other spat out insults. Righty declared his intent to marry her. Lefty called her a gold digger. It got to the point where one head professed its love at the same time as the other

declared its hate. The two had insane disagreements. “I want to be inside her... Right, in her ass... Don’t tell me what to do with my dick... Your dick? It’s my dick...”

The fights between the brothers became vitriolic. Lefty used his hand to punch Righty in the face. Righty responded with a haymaker to the side of Lefty’s head. The two fell to the ground, a fist mauling each head, legs thrashing against the floor. Each got a hand around the other’s throat and tried to throttle it. The brawl was horrible for her to watch. Realizing that to kill his brother was to kill himself too, Righty gave up. Lefty tried for another minute to strangle him then began sobbing. They lay there on the floor bleeding, hurting, and crying for the futility of their situation. They cried with rage for having been born together. They cried with sympathy and love because they were locked forever in this ghastly union of opposites. Finally Lefty confessed that he was gay. Though he opportunistically took advantage of the orgasms they had when they made love to her, he also felt disgusted by having sex with a woman. He wished they could go back to the good old days when it was just the two of them jerking off their one penis. Taken aback, Righty said he did not understand how the two could continue to coexist with their different gender preferences. “I don’t even want your hand touching our penis anymore.”

She consulted experts to see if it was possible to separate the twins but surgeons assured her it was too risky. She decided to break off the relationship. She wanted to have a baby and feared being impregnated by a two-headed man. What if the baby was deformed, hermaphroditic, or aberrant in some way? She began dating a journalist who ghostwrote a memoir for

her. It sold well and a Hollywood production company bought the film rights. The resulting movie, with a computer-generated two-headed man, was panned for its lurid sensationalism. "That's the crass sort of world we live in," one critic wrote. "Nowadays you can be famous just for having sex with a birth defect."

{ Bosom Mania }

The texture of her new breasts was peculiar, like ice cubes in a glass of milk, but they looked wonderful. Men did not just stare at her. They stopped what they were doing and gaped. They said "damn" out loud. When she passed they shook their heads in disbelief, as though they had seen a sasquatch. It made her feel so good that she asked the surgeon if he could put a pair of implants on her back. These new tits changed her sense of balance. In spite of having to sleep on her side, she loved the attention she received. Men would sneak up behind her, cop a feel, then run away laughing. She had threesomes, sandwiching herself between one man in front and another in rear. She dreamed about ways to make her breasts even more extraordinary. She could make them squirt milk, serve as beer taps, or dispense vodka tonics. She could make them into hookahs or bubblegum machines — push a nipple and you get a prize. She was willing to optimize her body for the satisfaction of the one thing that men always seemed to want from a woman. But eventually the breasts caused health issues. Surgeons performed reversals that left her with a worse figure than she had before the augmentations. She was covered with scars like a burn victim. She might have told herself that that's what you get for living for others. But instead she hooked up with a creep who had a fetish for mastectomies.

Wanton Hoarding

He started keeping a diary when he was a boy so it was natural that he happened to make a record of the first time he masturbated. He described what he had been thinking about, how it excited him, how he had begun to rub himself without much intending for it to lead anywhere, and finally how the fluid came spurting out. The next few times that he masturbated, it was not without the thought of his diary in the back of his mind. He watched himself in a mirror in order to observe what he was doing. He paid careful attention to his fantasies because he knew that he would note them down. As he graduated from masturbation to coitus, he began keeping other forms of documentation. He cut out pictures from a yearbook and pasted them into his diary. He downloaded images, cleaned them up with a photo-editing tool, and printed them out. He began to take nude snapshots. He was no more promiscuous than any other young man but by the time he was twenty he had developed a meticulous archive. He had a record of every ejaculation — the date, the time, the place; the fantasy he had entertained or the pornography he had watched (he would print out screenshots and paste these into his notebooks); the girl he had been with, the positions, the number of sex acts. He was the archivist of his own sexual history.

When he finished college, he signed a lease for an apart-

ment. Having his own place enabled him to progress from documenting to hoarding. He built a special cabinet to house the various things he decided to save. He stockpiled notebooks, scrapbooks, photographs, printouts, hard drives, tickets from movie theaters, checks from restaurants and bars, a ledger indicating what he had spent on each date, taxi, or package of condoms. When he brought home a girl he kept the doors to the cabinet closed. He felt sheepish about admitting its existence. Something was creepy about it, as though he were a stealer of souls. But being secretive forced him to pilfer the occasional bra for his collection or to pick a tampon wrapper from the trash. Gradually he decided to be more open about it. He realized that many women were willing to become collaborators in the creation of his archive. During a date they would talk about how they were excited by the prospect of immortalizing themselves. They would donate soiled panties, designer bras, favorite camisoles. He would dutifully place these items in Ziploc bags and label them with names, dates, places. Before long, strangers were showing up at his apartment and modeling the lingerie they knew they would give to him. When they left, they were naked beneath a jacket or one of the spare shirts he gave them.

His sexuality fueled the desire to hoard. He had never felt the need to keep records of meals, travels, jobs, or other parts of his life. It was only his libido that invoked this desire to accumulate and preserve. But then a subtle shift took place. It began to work the other way around. The desire to hoard came to drive his sexuality. His primary concern was no longer to chronicle his sexual encounters but to engage in behaviors that

would lead to the development of a comprehensive and engaging archive. This caused him to be deliberate about cultivating different sorts of sex partners. Rather than just catalog the women he slept with, he began to seek out particular types or kinds of women. He seduced a married woman, who donated her wedding ring to his stash then pretended to her husband that it had disappeared down the drain while she was washing dishes. He debauched a young girl, a virgin, to enter sheets stained with hymeneal blood into his collection. He charmed an old woman to salvage the dentures she wore while performing oral sex. When she passed away a few months afterward, she bequeathed him a mansion. This was useful because his apartment was running out of space. The mansion, he imagined, would make a fine museum dedicated to the minutiae of his sex life.

Though he considered himself cisgendered, he began to sleep with other men. He would get blowjobs from strangers in the entryways of apartment buildings. He would participate in circle jerks in the back rooms of gay bars, returning home with matchbooks, bar tabs, used condoms, jock straps, all of which he would label and file away in plastic bags. One night, returning with cum-stained towels from a bathhouse, he ran across a stray dog. He brought it back to the mansion, photographed it, engaged in a sex act, then took a clipping of the animal's fur. This opened up a whole new area to collect. He offered to dog-sit for vacationing friends. He put out saucers of milk to attract feral cats. He purchased increasingly exotic creatures from local pet stores — gerbils, ferrets, snakes, iguanas. He penetrated what he could and masturbated with the rest, dutifully accu-

mulating evidence of each encounter and entering it into the section of his archive which he called "the bestiary." He took to killing the animals and pickling the remains in glass jars of formaldehyde.

From animals he moved on to various other fetishes. He dubbed one area of his hoard "the dungeon." It contained whips, chains, harnesses, handcuffs, cages, torture devices. Another area was dedicated to souvenirs from coprophiliac encounters. There were bottles of urine, tupperware bowls containing excrement, a toilet which had been modified so that one could hide underneath it with open mouth. Yet another area resembled a mortuary. There was a coffin that he had unearthed during a night of passion with a gravedigger. He was planning to add a dead body to the collection as well. He was intrigued by the idea but he was unable to steel himself to commit a sexual murder. In the meantime he took to traveling to ensure the diversity of his archive. He arranged to buy sex slaves in Bali. He paid for wild nights of debauchery with the surly teen prostitutes of Prague. He endured hardship and privation in Africa so that he could throat-fuck the tribal females who used metal rings to elongate their necks. He visited the Amazon so that, after sexual encounters with jungle-bound natives who had never before seen a westerner, he could bring back baubles, beads, samples of tree bark with aphrodisiac properties.

By the time he reached middle age, the man had filled the entire mansion with photographs, artifacts, souvenirs, records, trophies. He had been everywhere and done everything — but he began to feel depressed. He stared at the piles of random objects he had amassed. Instead of reminding him of the past,

they were starting to look like harbingers of a bleak future. For a long while his archive had driven and guided his libido. But what was left for him when the archive was more or less complete? Was his sex life complete too? Was he to be celibate for the rest of his life? He did not feel much enthusiasm for documenting periods of abstinence, old age, impotence. Brooding over this, he sought for a new way to expand his collection and galvanize his desires. It occurred to him that he had slept with more than a few pregnant women — samples of their breast milk could be found in his refrigerator — but he had never actually fathered a child. Wasn't a child also a record of a sexual encounter? There were plenty of women around who wanted babies. It wasn't long before he had several dozen infants sleeping in cribs scattered throughout the rooms of his mansion.

But as the children grew, it became clear that they were not just objects that could be kept on a shelf. As records of his sexuality, they were unique because they were the only documents that could pose a threat to all the other documents. They would leave sticky chocolate fingerprints on Ziploc bags. They would pilfer nude pictures and trade them for baseball cards. They would borrow whips to make jump ropes or swings. They would mischievously take the label from one object and stick it on another. They would filch ticklers, cock rings, nipple clamps, and abandon them behind playground latrines. Finally the entire archive was in chaos. Everything was misplaced, mislabeled, dismantled, destroyed. The man spent his declining years in a futile effort to restore order, remember which panties belonged to what girl, decide whether a bag of matted hair came from a stray dog or a gay biker. As teenagers

and then adults, the children hardly looked on themselves as records of their father's sexual history or as symptoms of his wanton hoarding. They saw nothing more in him than an old fool who yelled at them for touching a forty-year-old dildo or knocking the label off an ancient leather harness. When finally he died, they emptied the mansion and consigned its contents to a dumpster. Scavengers saw nothing of value in the debris — no rare books, antique jewelry, usable furniture, or working appliances — and a waste management service hauled it away to a landfill in New Jersey.

Erotica for the Damned

From the time she was a little girl she knew she wanted to be a porn star. While her friends were playing dress-up, she would take her dolls, bend their limbs into sexual positions, and snap pictures of them with her phone. In the mirror she imitated the postures that her favorite adult performers posted to their social media accounts. She learned that the merest choreography of hand and mouth — parting her lips, moistening them with her tongue, biting the skin on the side of her thumb, staring brazenly with eyes the color of caramelized sugar — was able to reduce adult males to speechless idiocy. At school, she would cast come-hither looks at teachers as she labored over math tests. She would flash her underpants as she bent over to pick up a pencil. When her female friends began to have sex with boys, she was scrupulous to preserve her virginity — not out of prudery but out of a precocious awareness of its value. She did not intend to give it away without causing someone to pay for it.

On her sixteenth birthday, she asked a female friend to take nude photographs of her. Lying about her birthdate, she submitted the photos to a production company. Soon she found herself negotiating details about her payment, contract, consent, and health. She forged the identity documents she would need and filled out an affidavit swearing that she

did not use drugs. She brought several changes of lingerie to the boutique hotel where the shoot was to take place. Riding upstairs in the elevator, she felt the excitement mount. She was the pornographic equivalent of a debutante except that, rather than making her inaugural appearance in fashionable society, she was exhibiting and touching herself for the first time in a video to be blasted across the internet. She could already sense the dim lurkers and trolls, wankers, frat boys, old men giving shoeshines in airports, lesbian yoga instructors with mullet haircuts, farmers with manure-laden boots, owners of Indian restaurants with hands that smelled like curry — a cross-section of humanity lusting for her, touching plump hands to stubby penises, pinching nipples that had nursed fat babies, plunging fingers into a vagina that gaped open like the mouth of a man who'd lost his dentures. They were idolaters prostrating themselves before her beauty.

The door to the hotel room was opened by a petite Asian woman holding a video camera. She introduced herself as the director. Looking the girl over, she considered challenging her but then decided against it. In Thailand no one was prudish about a girl being underage. Besides, it was better to mentor her than to let her fall into the hands of someone less scrupulous. She offered the girl a glass of wine to loosen her up. There were small details that would indicate whether she was videogenic — how she maintained eye contact, how she allowed the strap of her bra to show, how she extended her legs to show that they were lissome. "I want to make sure you understand what you're getting into," the director said. Pornography will change your life, she explained. You don't do a couple videos

then leave it behind like a job at a coffee shop. It will follow you around for the rest of your life. You will have to be prepared to explain or deny it to your family. When you apply for straight jobs, you will worry about your employer googling up your porn scenes. When you go on dates, you will have to decide whether to share that you perform naked for a living. You will be scorned, called a slut, busted by cops for whoring. You will get tested for sexually transmitted diseases. You will end up getting an abortion. It just happens. "I understand all that," the girl swore. She felt a rising scorn. Not only did she dislike being lectured, she did not care if society demonized her.

As the director set up lights in the bedroom, she spoke about the tenets of ethical porn. It was important, she said, to treat performers with respect. She was careful to describe each scene in advance and to ensure that actors consented to what was being asked of them. She was upfront about payment terms and safety practices. She strove to be inclusive of different genders, races, ethnicities, and sexual preferences. To the girl it all sounded like so much moralizing. The shoot was starting to resemble a gluten-free diet. She envisioned herself as something more like the neon sign flashing "Girls! Girls! Girls!" outside an airport strip bar. But finally the director called for action so the girl lay belly down on the bed. She pressed her pelvis into the mattress. She reached a hand underneath her. She raised her ass in the air. She imagined the hordes of people watching — soccer moms, stay-at-home dads, street preachers, Sri Lankan cab drivers, women who raised horses, Rastafarians wearing afghans that smelled like dope. All of them would ache for her, fantasize about her, hate themselves for being too broke, ugly, or idiotic

to be with a girl as beautiful as her. She orgasmed, thrusting her hips and biting the pillow in her teeth. Turning over, she looked at the director through heavy lids. "Why don't you join me," she proposed. — "I can't." — "Why not?" — "Honey, I don't mix business with pleasure." — "I do." — "You don't know what you're doing. Now get dressed."

That night the girl had a dream. She saw the director take the video to her boss — but the boss was a monstrous figure made up of human and animal parts. From the waist down it was covered in fur. From the waist up it was naked. It had hoofed feet, female breasts, wings like a vulture, genitalia like a man, and the head of a goat. Two long horns curled out the top of its skull. This Baphomet was standing erect in an enormous underground chamber. The cave was so vast it must have been the bowels of the earth. For as far as the eye could see, hordes of naked people were chained to stalagmites. They writhed in agony as raging fires cooked their skin. Screens larger than the jumbotrons at a sporting event hung from metal rigging that glowed red. Playing on the screens were pornographic films — drool, penetration, breast milk, bruises, blood, rectums, fists, whips, cum shots like fireworks. An assistant pressed a few buttons then the screens filled with the masturbation scene she had just shot. Not only did these lost souls have to burn for eternity, she realized, they had to stare with longing at the most beautiful men and women. They could not even touch themselves. That was the worst of it. Beneath the hell of fire and brimstone was a worse hell that transformed desire itself into an everlasting torment.

The Baphomet laughed. "Oh god," it brayed, "these

tiresome do-gooders with their ethical porn. Give me a fucking break. The point of pornography is not to uplift the soul. The point is to lure men to their doom." It poked her in the chest with a cloven hoof. "You, child, were born to be a femme fatale, a siren, a seductress. You and I together can be the ruination of men. Why, I am not against treating performers well. What I am in favor of is treating consumers like the scum they are." It shook its head as though spitting out a bit of gristle. "Men are dogs, beasts, vermin. You should have nothing but contempt for them, kid. They do not deserve to see your tender young skin. Make them pay for it. Drive them mad. Force them to give up their souls in exchange for the merest glimpse of your breasts." The Baphomet paused and watched as one of the condemned souls strained against his chains and bashed his head against a fiery stalagmite. "You can be famous on earth and infamous in hell. I will make you immortal, ageless, timeless. For all of eternity men will want the one thing they can never have — you. Ethical porn, pshaw! What you want to star in is infernal porn, skin flicks for lost souls, erotica for the damned. What do you say, sweetheart?" Yes, she mumbled in her sleep. Sweet Jesus fucking Christ, yes.

Vore

He was a happy slave but a miserable person. Serving mistress gave him a profound sense of purpose and contentment. Slavehood, he thought, was altruism plus eroticism. When he performed a menial task on mistress' behalf — when he emptied a trashcan full of used tissues, toenail clippings, tampon wrappers — he felt a subtle but pervasive arousal. His senses sharpened, his thoughts became clear, his heart radiated in his chest. It was the closest thing to love that he ever felt. What made him miserable, though, was that no consummation matched the intensity of his feelings. He yearned to make love to mistress but she refused to let him put anything inside her. Occasionally she would permit him to masturbate in the bathroom, where she did not have to see it. Otherwise he was not allowed to have sex. He was not permitted to ejaculate into or onto her. He was not authorized to insert a finger into her vagina or ass. It was forbidden to touch her. He was a slave. His role was to serve and to worship.

Not that he didn't enjoy this. He would pick up a sweater tossed on the bed, a dress she had discarded over the back of a chair, the dirty underwear she had stepped out of. The sweater he would fold neatly and place into the armoire. The dress he would wash, iron, and hang in the closet. The underwear he would raise to his face, smell, rub across his chest, and drape

over his cock. He enjoyed cooking for her. It made him happy to know he could create something that would enter into her body. In the mornings he would get up and prepare breakfast. He would poach eggs, make toast, brew coffee. He would arrange the dishes on a tray which he adorned with a tiny ceramic vase containing a clipped rose or a spray of daffodils. She would criticize the eggs, say the toast was burned, accuse the coffee of being weak, declare that the flowers were wilting. "The cook," she would spit, "should have his balls cut off and stuffed into his mouth." She had a way of suggesting that his culinary failures revealed a deep existential flaw, as though a person who could not make a decent cup of coffee should never have been born.

At dinner he worked to atone for his sins at breakfast. He studied recipes and bought fresh ingredients from the farmer's market. He agonized over the sequence and compatibility of dishes. One day, preparing the shallots for a tartare de boeuf, he miscalculated with the knife. He lifted his finger, looked at the bright red blood welling up, then held it over the already ground meat. He squeezed out as much as the cut would allow then finished preparing the meal in a fever. Watching mistress eat, he felt like a man who had drunk alcohol on an empty stomach. He was inside her. Soon he was intentionally cutting himself whenever he prepared dinner. With his blood he seasoned eggs florentine, chicken tikka masala, arugula and strawberry salad. She found fault with the eggs, heaped scorn on the chicken, and cast aspersions on the salad. She did not appear to notice the superficial cuts that spread from his fingers to his arms, legs, and chest. She never saw him undressed

because she obliged him to wear humiliating outfits purchased from a BDSM site — a French maid's uniform, adult-sized baby clothes.

Another day, while preparing a terrine de foies de volaille, he entered the bathroom with a chef's knife. He opened the lid of the toilet and balanced his foot on the ceramic rim. Taking a deep breath, he sliced into the little toe on his left foot. Blood spurted into the toilet. He sawed at the toe until it dangled by a tendon then, taking it in a paper towel, yanked it off. He rinsed the toe in the bathroom sink, bandaged his foot, and limped back to the kitchen. He washed down a Tylenol with a pinot noir from Sonoma County. Feeling faint but ecstatic, he dropped the toe into a blender then mixed it with the chicken livers. That night he watched her eat the way other men watch pornography. He wanted to plunge into her mouth. He could feel her wet tongue wriggling along his chest. Her teeth, hard and sharp, crunched into his back and legs. Broken and mangled, he slid toward a black hole, dropped down her esophagus, landed with a splash in a place that was dark and wet. There was an acrid smell which he recognized as stomach acid. He lay helpless in it as she dissolved him, liquefied muscle and bone, absorbed him. He had done it — entered into her. Over the course of a week he severed four more toes then discreetly added his pinky finger to a Moroccan couscous, hiding it among the merguez sausages.

He fantasized that during dessert he would uncover the hand missing a finger. He would show how he limped. He would reveal the sacrifices he had been making and she would understand that these were expressions of the profoundest love.

Her imperious demeanor would be cast aside like a mask. She would embrace him, take him by the hand, lead him to the bedroom, and permit what she had never permitted him before. He would enter her. She would take his remaining fingers into her mouth. She would chew on them. As he climaxed, she would pull one off with her teeth. But instead of this consummation she announced one night during hors d'oeuvres that she was pregnant. "Pregnant," he repeated. — "I'm going to have a baby." — "A baby." — "Yes, and you're going to love it." — "Love it." — "And serve it." — "Serve it." — "Change its diapers. Get up with it at night. Feed it." — "Feed it." He knew precisely what he would feed it. The next day he took a razor blade into the bathroom, removed his pants, and sat down on the toilet. He lifted his penis out of the way and stretched his testicles with his left hand. A cold sweat gathered on his brow. He nearly passed out, less from the pain than from the blood that painted the insides of his thighs and streamed into the toilet. He staggered out of the bathroom. He felt unsteady but managed to get to the stove, lift the lid off the crock pot, and drop two walnuts of flesh into it.

{ Identiporn }

The "identiporn" site featured live webcam models who gave sexual performances in exchange for money. You could upload a picture of a person you desired. The site used facial recognition technology to match the photo with a performer so that you could masturbate to a pornographic lookalike. Uploading the headshot of a famous actress, he was impressed when the site presented him with three performers who bore a similarity to her. There was something exhilarating but disconcerting about it. Just a few minutes before, beauty had been something to inspire longing. Now you could dial it up as easily as you might order a pizza. He began to experiment with different types of photos. He uploaded a picture of a monkey. The site presented a dark-skinned girl with an afro. He uploaded a picture of a carved pumpkin. The site presented a Chinese girl suffering from hydrocephalus. He could fathom how the search algorithm would make these visual analogies but the ethical implications were troubling. For a moment he considered uploading a selfie — but it was only too easy to imagine the algorithm spitting back more disturbing images. Nazis. Clowns. Murderers. Warthogs. Instead he tried a picture of his sister. It wasn't like he hadn't jerked off to her before.

Crowdfund or Die

He did not manage his suicidal tendencies through the usual methods. He did not read self-help manuals or participate in online chat with other melancholics. He drank socially but did not drown his sorrows in bars. He would not consider working with a therapist, since he did not see how talking about the dissatisfactions of his childhood could be an effective way of dealing with the urge to slice open his veins with a razor blade. He refused to take psychoactive medications. He did not go to group therapy, hypnosis, yoga, or Alcoholics Anonymous. He did not engage in primal scream treatment. When he felt suicidal, he browsed prostitution listings on the internet. He made a few calls, withdrew money from the bank, and went to get cured for an hour or two. The cures took many forms — petite Koreans with adolescent bodies and formal manners, icy Russians with beautiful cheekbones and disdainful eyes, curvaceous Latinas with warm brown skin and foul mouths. He could enter a brothel on the verge of blowing out his brains and exit in a state of euphoria that would last the whole day. Salvation, it made him think, lies in the flesh. I am alive today because of hookers. I am alive today because no one ever kills himself with a tit in his mouth. I am alive today because, however appealing death may be, cunt is even more appealing. It's so simple and true.

He felt no qualms about the moral implications of purchasing sex. His despondency was also a form of self-absorption. He spent time microanalyzing his sorrows and gave little thought to the feelings of others. He was not physically or psychologically abusive to the prostitutes he visited but neither was he concerned with the fact that he was perpetuating a global system of exploitation. Mired in his own gloom, he did not trouble himself about women struggling to support babies, sending money to family members in third-world countries, or trying futilely to buy their freedom from international networks of sex traffickers. When he occasionally saw a sign that reminded him of such realities — a bruise on a cheekbone, a C-section scar on an abdomen, a tattoo that might as well have been a barcode since it was used for the purpose of branding flesh — he was inclined to shrug it off. Yes, he would think, it's too bad. Capitalism is a meat grinder. This girl must work hard. But here she is in America. I'm a nice guy and I'll give her a good tip. After all, I understand if she's not happy. I may be economically privileged but it doesn't prevent me from wanting to die.

Then he underwent a reverse in his fortunes. Suddenly he had no money. He looked for jobs. He rationed out his savings. The situation grew desperate. How, he wondered, would he be able to continue funding the remedy that kept his suicidal impulses at bay? He petitioned his health insurance provider to fund sex romps in brothels and dungeons. He argued that it was less expensive than psychoactive medications and had fewer side effects than shock treatment. When the insurer turned him away, he decided he had reached the limit. He

washed down sleeping pills with half a bottle of Irish whiskey. But before passing out, he experienced an upsurge of anger. Fuck you all, he thought. The oldest profession is the just the thing to manage the blackest urge. Delirious, he set up a crowdfunding campaign. He made a video statement in which he argued that whoring was a self-evident and effective means of governing depression. He stated without shame that he was trying to raise enough money to have casual sex with several prostitutes a week. He listed rewards for various pledges. The prizes included photo sets and videos of the girls with whom he would have encounters. He pushed the "publish" button so that the campaign would appear on the internet. He conked out in a comatose haze of alcohol and Ambien.

When he woke up fifteen hours later, he could not remember setting up the campaign. He was puzzled to discover that his email inbox was overloaded with messages — crowdfunding updates, interview requests, offers to have sex. He was an overnight internet sensation. His crowdfunding campaign was such a startling mix of shameless and sensible that it had been passed around on social media. From there it migrated to blogs and newspapers. The New York Post published an item under the clickbait headline "Anonymous Strangers Pay Man to Have Sex with Anonymous Strangers." The accompanying story painted a lurid picture of women auctioning their bodies to mobs of online depressives. A conservative publication huffed and puffed about people no longer feeling compunction about their vices. "We now brag about behaviors our fathers roundly condemned." The liberal press celebrated the campaign's "not counterintuitive stance that sex plays a critical role in mental

and emotional well-being." Another paper published an editorial saying that the controversy served as an indictment of a society in which healthcare costs had spiraled out of control.

With the first donations that poured in, he went on a week-long spree through the brothels of New York. Many of the girls recognized him. "You poor man," some said, clutching his head to their breasts. Others viewed him with contempt. "Don't expect any discounts, jerk. This ain't the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention." This initial bout of self-indulgence did wonders to repair an underlying despair about himself, a perpetual crisis of existential worth. Emerging from the fog of suicidal depression, he realized that he had a unique opportunity to transform his misery into a livelihood. He could merchandise his melancholy, lead brothel tours of the city, give interviews about the intersection of technology, depression, and sex work. He set up a website whose ostensible purpose was to share information about his unique approach to mental health but it quickly gave way to a more profitable idea. Paying subscribers were able to download videos documenting his encounters with various escorts. He would face the camera, talk about how he thought he would kill himself, then introduce the female lead. "Now let's see if Indigo here can keep me from putting a plastic bag over my head." Soon he was producing unabashedly pornographic films that caricatured his despair. A guy wants to jump off a bridge... A lady cop tries to rescue him... He says he will only come down if she blows him... Cue orgasms on the Brooklyn Bridge.

While the tours, website, and merchandise provided a steady source of revenue, the man did not hit gold until he

developed a premier service aimed at the top end of the market. This service was designed for corporate executives, professional athletes, rock stars. Not only did these powerful and prominent individuals suffer from mental illness at a higher rate than the general population, they did not hesitate to pay top dollar for effective, discrete, and euphoria-inducing treatments. The man would escort these high-net-worth individuals to call girls with whom they could perform sex acts designed to counteract their ailments. Depression could be cured by simple fucking. Obsessive-compulsive disorder was best treated by scat, golden showers, coprophagia. The effects of post-traumatic stress could be mitigated by corporal punishment. For affluent clients who suffered from more complicated disorders the man would work with a dominatrix to conceive a personalized treatment plan. Nipple torture for the morose. Cross-dressing for the psychotic. Sissy-training for the schizoid. Those with Tourette's Syndrome were muzzled and forced to walk on all fours like a dog. Their demented swearing was channeled into more socially acceptable barking.

Over time the man became fairly wealthy. He never lost the desire to die but now he had ample means to tend the urge in houses of ill repute. Existential crises would send him on a reckless binge of worldwide sex tourism. He committed sex crimes in Zagreb, raped in Berlin, left a hooker for dead in Marseilles. He fucked in Bali, sodomized in Singapore, molested teenagers in Ho Chi Minh City. When he wasn't scurrying about the Third World in a manic effort not to kill himself, he exploited girls of every nationality in New York. He especially liked the Koreans because it was part of their culture to be

unfailingly polite. Life can't be so bad, he would tell himself, when a petite victim of human trafficking says "please" and "thank you" in the course of subjecting herself to your basest sexual desires.

Sex Workers against Guns

She was always the one to look out for the other sex workers. She gave them solace and support, accompanied them to the clinic when they needed an abortion, found money for them when they were too sick to hustle. She was the shoulder they came to cry on when their friend was killed by a john. This girl had demanded payment that was rightly hers from a client who pulled out a handgun and shot her once in the left breast. She fell back on her bed, a hand covering her heart like a person making a pledge, and bled to death. Because she had been freelancing via the internet, she had no madam, mama-san, or house security to check up on her. The john disappeared without a trace. The police treated the matter the way they always treated violence against sex workers — dutifully but casually, as though they secretly believed the girls got what they deserved. The newspapers did not even mention it. Nobody but her coworkers seemed to care. When they came to the woman who knew how to solace them, she gave out hugs and wiped the tears from their cheeks. Once they were done crying, she tried to mobilize them. They wrote letters to their congressmen. They handed out flyers advocating for sex workers' rights. They attended rallies in favor of gun control. None of it seemed to help — but then she had an idea.

Having heard about gun buyback programs in other

cities, she decided that on the first Saturday of each month she would offer a free blowjob to any man who relinquished a firearm. She would ask no questions about where it came from or what it had been used for. She would destroy the guns, dump them into the river, and thereby reduce the number of weapons on the street. She rented an apartment, arranged for a bouncer friend to provide security, then set about advertising her blowjob buyback program on the sites where she solicited clients. On the first day, she was amazed to see that a line of customers had formed outside her door. The men came from all walks of life but each of them carried a grocery bag, a paper sack, a backpack, a duffel bag, or a denim satchel with a gun in it. She began to work through the line, dumping the firearms in a heap on the floor. She used every trick she had learned to bring the men to climax as quickly as possible but still the line seemed endless. Some guys showed up with two or three weapons, exchanged one for a blowjob, then returned to the back of the line so that they could cycle through again. Her lips grew inflamed. The insides of her mouth felt like they had been scalded by a hot liquid. The back of her throat hurt like a case of strep. But the thought of her poor dead friend kept her sucking, slurping, jerking, squeezing, pointing dicks toward her breasts so that at least she wouldn't have to swallow it all. By end of day she had given more than fifty blowjobs.

After this initial success, she decided to enlist other women. She rallied a group of former coworkers with an inspiring speech about the importance of protecting themselves and contributing to their communities. She called this initiative SWAG — Sex Workers Against Guns. On the first Saturday of the

month, they would offer a blowjob to any man or cunnilingus to any woman who would turn in a gun. Word spread rapidly, since a free blowjob advertises itself. Picking up on the story, the news media sent reporters to interview the girls, film the long lines waiting outside their brothels, and speculate about whether exchanging sex for weapons was ethical. A photographer convinced her to pose at the center of a group of men, a dozen guns pointed at her head while clots of ejaculate hung from her nose, her eyebrows, her lips. She recognized it would be a provocative photo but she figured the publicity would help her cause. The image did go viral on the internet but, rather than embody the good deed at the heart of her work, it only reinforced the public's appetite for sexualized violence against women. Porn companies were soon staging "bukkake buyback" videos. At one shoot a man placed a pistol against a performer's head and fired a blank as his penis heaved sperm onto her outstretched chin. Unfortunately, he did not realize that a blank still generates enough energy to kill someone at close range. The leaked video, an unpremeditated masterpiece of snuff porn, racked up millions of views.

There were other unintended consequences too. The blowjob buybacks gave criminals a means to dispose of guns, making it difficult for police to trace the firearms that had killed cashiers in gas-station robberies. The SWAG events grew so large that they gave rise to impromptu gun markets. Felons paid cash for the useful guns while dealers worked the lines looking for antique revolvers or vintage sidearms. As a result the only weapons the men turned in were useless — rusty old guns unearthed from basements, obsolete pistols for which

bullets were no longer available, malfunctioning heirlooms from great grandfathers who had fought in foreign wars. It made the girls complain that they were working for nothing. Critics began to wonder about the efficacy of the program. Religious zealots were up in arms not about the weaponry but the illicit sex. Moralists questioned whether the presumed good, removing guns from the street, really justified the obvious bad, women selling themselves. An astute feminist pointed out that the blowjob buybacks were a circuitous form of self-imposed violence — women exchanging sex to lessen the probability that they would be subject to gun violence.

This public discourse about sex and guns had the side effect of creating a frenzy. Suddenly no one was making love without a weapon. People used gun oil as a personal lubricant and stuck pistols in each other's faces while they fucked. Creepoid fetishists exposed themselves at gun shows and shot body fluids at passersby from squirt guns. They made dildos from disassembled revolvers and required their wives to wear chastity belts equipped with holsters. They filled up sex dolls with various fluids — ketchup, champagne, motor oil — and used them for target practice. At the brothel clients asked the girls to dress like huntresses, female police officers, Israeli army commandoes. One john wanted to be pistol-whipped until he was unconscious. Another wanted to pack gunpowder into his penis and touch a match to it. A man was arrested for shooting his lover and trying to copulate with the gunshot wound. Another stuffed every orifice with ammunition — small-caliber bullets in his ears, his nostrils, his urethra; larger-caliber ones in his mouth and ass — in order to make himself into a

human bomb. “My fantasy is to explode.” A delusional man was brought to the hospital after shooting himself in the groin. He had nicknamed his penis “Mr President” and used a Mannlicher-Carcano rifle to “recreate the assassination of John F. Kennedy in a way that did not suppress its eroticism.”

The founder of SWAG continued to believe in the righteousness of her mission. She and her girls kept exchanging blowjobs for firearms on the first Saturday of every month. But the wild popularity of the program introduced even further complications. Now there were so many hookers willing to provide oral sex in exchange for handguns that the laws of supply and demand kicked in. Men would show up and bargain. Habituated to blowjobs, they would demand unprotected vaginal intercourse, anal sex, acts of perversion. Occasionally a man would pistol-whip a girl to demonstrate his leverage. “Bitch, what’re you willing to do for my gun?” A serial killer began to shoot sex workers during the buybacks. It was easier to kill them than to give up his weapon. Furious and ready to protect themselves, the women retaliated with the stockpiles of weapons they had gathered. They armed themselves, learned to shoot, cold-cocked their johns. “Gimme the gun, punk-ass motherfucker.” Masochists loved this development but it only served to inflame the war between the sexes. The antagonism that had long existed between men and women now became explicit. Miscommunications, lovers’ quarrels, and sublimated hostilities gave way to gun battles, shootouts, sniper assaults, sneak attacks, dogfights and deathmatches. Every romantic encounter was weaponized and only fags still believed in any possibility of peace.

Trans Coup d'État

No candidate for the presidency had generated such adulation in a century. She was intelligent, passionate, honest, energetic. She did not surround herself with policy wonks or public relations consultants. She spoke directly to the people and often posted humorously self-deprecating selfies to her social media accounts. One that people remembered for decades showed her wearing a man's pinstriped suit, a white shirt, and a red silk tie. She slicked back her hair, held her body in a way that deemphasized her breasts, and wrapped an arm around her husband, who was wearing the same suit. When she posted the photo with the hashtag #powercouple, it racked up millions of likes. Conservatives figured it was a good joke, like a frat boy dressed in drag for a keg party, and liberals thought it demonstrated her enlightened attitude toward identity politics. But not everyone responded positively. The religious far-right denounced her for implying that traditional gender roles could be fluid. Rednecks and good old boys, who objected to the very idea of a female president, made chauvinist jokes about a woman who "acts like she wears the pants" or "wants to swing the big dick." The leaders of fundamentalist nations said she embodied the decadence and permissiveness of the west.

The very things that made critics loathe her also made her base adore her. With its support, she achieved a historic victory.

She became the first female leader of the greatest nation — but this put her into a difficult if not impossible situation. She had to contend not just with the job but with the messianic hopes people set for her. Her supporters had unrealistic expectations about what one lone woman could achieve. They were disappointed if she brought about anything less than peace on earth. Her detractors were able to hammer at this gap between her accomplishments and the unattainable goals which her adherents imagined. The media second-guessed her, foreign dictators taunted her, members of the opposition portrayed her as ineffective. What bothered her most were the chauvinists who questioned whether a woman was fit for the highest office in the land. They made cruel jokes about menstrual periods and nuclear war. Some said she should turn the job over to her husband. Others claimed that any guy who would marry "such a butch" wasn't man enough for the job either. Exasperated, she made a radical decision. During her second State of the Union address, she announced that she would be having gender reassignment surgery. She pledged that no taxpayer money would be used to fund the sex change.

The pundits went wild. Some supported her vision and courage, speaking of the inspirational example she would set for anyone who desired to be something other than what she was at birth. Others asserted that it was wrong of her to use a prominent public position as a platform for what must have been a longstanding personal desire. Scandal sheets touted the news with snarky headlines. "First Woman President to Be a Man." Words like "phalloplasty" suddenly sat beside "foreign policy" in the national discourse. Magazines ran interviews

with plastic surgeons, asking lurid questions about the sexual functions of a surgically constructed penis. Feminists pointed out that this was yet one more instance of a woman sacrificing herself to fulfill the needs of others. The president was adding herself, they argued, to the long line of women who had passed themselves off as men in order to succeed at a job. Fundamentalists began a movement to impeach. Opponents pointed out that the president was not committing a crime. Proponents countered that the move was a breach of trust. Rednecks were already making bumper stickers that said, "If she can betray her gender, she can betray her country." There were marches and demonstrations in every major city. To show solidarity, supporters dressed in male drag, adopting the traditionally masculine power suit. Adversaries took the opposite approach, wearing blonde wigs and dresses to suggest that the president ought to abide by conventions of female prettiness. As a result, political standoffs came to resemble the mass equivalent of a drunk couple fighting in a bar.

When the president recovered from the surgery, he made his first public appearance at a gala on the lawn before the Washington Monument. Dignitaries arrived in black ties and gowns. Greeting the press with his husband, the president gestured toward the monument and said, "Old George wore a wig. Now I wear the pants." The leader of France, who had flirted gallantly with the president when she was a woman, shook hands and clapped him on the shoulder like a college buddy. The president gave a speech and kissed his husband on the lips before a thousand flashbulbs. The festivities ended with fireworks spelling out the newly masculinized version of

his name in the sky. The business of government continued as usual. The president made no transsexual demands of his cabinet. Meetings were not convened in drag. He did not propose to put famous trannies on the postage stamp or nickel. He was sensible and purposeful, as he had been when he was a woman, but his gender reassignment changed the expectations that had weighed on him. Those who wanted a female in office told themselves that at heart she was still a woman. Those who preferred a male looked at his five o'clock shadow and said they had their man. Fundamentalists were content to have their deepest bias about the necessity of male leadership confirmed. Comedians stopped making fun of him as the "Crossdresser in Chief." Everybody was happy.

The first test of the president's mettle occurred when a terrorist act killed a handful of American citizens. In a video, the leader of the terrorist organization ridiculed the president as cowardly and weak. "You can change the clothes but not the womanliness." In response, the president ordered an elite military team to capture the terrorist leader. Rather than assassinate him or submit him to a trial at the United Nations, the president ordered that the man be submitted to a sex-change operation then returned to his native land to live among his chest-beating compatriots as a woman. The entire world considered this punishment as audacious as it was fair. Conservatives loved that the president was tough on terrorism. Progressives loved that he undermined both religious extremism and machismo. When he followed this up by invading the country which had harbored the terrorists, only a minority thought he had overstepped his bounds. But soon he was using the country

as a base to attack its peaceable neighbors. He installed puppet leaders controlled by the American military. He rounded up enemy forces and herded them into detainment camps. News organizations broke the story that the CIA was using the camps to perform experiments on opposition leaders. Confessions were being elicited through procedures normally performed by dominatrixes on men who wanted to be sissified. Religious extremists were being subjected to genital sadism. Foreign generals were castrated.

Only a small few supported the president's newfound aggression. "This broad has balls." Others, even aggressors and hawks who did not oppose the use of torture, were discomfited by their leader's apparent mania for emasculation. Many wondered whether the excessive use of force wasn't being driven by a personal desire to show that transsexuality was not synonymous with timidity or weakness. It was wrong, they declared, for this psychological issue to determine the nation's foreign policy. The president himself deflected questions about his motives. He crushed opponents, tortured rebels, invaded foreign countries. Much as the gulag was the symbol of Stalin's oppression or the concentration camp that of Hitler, gender reassignment surgery became the hallmark of the president's authoritarianism. Hundreds of thousands of men and women were surgically regendered. This led to sweeping social changes: modes of dress became androgynous; heterosexuality became obsolete since it was difficult to be sure who was what; children were conceived by artificial reproduction and raised without being forced into traditional boy/girl roles. Political oppression had finally brought about gender equality. In private, people

argued whether or not this was the president's genius. Some claimed that she was a woman at heart but using male aggression to advance a female agenda. Others believed she had always intended to show that this was just what a man was like — vicious, dictatorial, and power-mad.

{ Hindsight }

He stood looking at the empty place where the statue had been. Fresh cement covered the hole where the workers had torn it from the ground but there was a void in the air. It was like a face without a nose. They had carted the statue to the basement of a municipal building because it was now believed to "memorialize the imperialistic ambitions of white people." A committee was accepting proposals for a replacement, a statue that would "serve as the perfect embodiment of our age." He imagined historians of the future looking back on the present. Much as he wanted to believe that the works of a contemporary Shakespeare or Michelangelo would survive, he doubted history worked that way. Only one of the seven ancient wonders of the world still existed. What survived was random. It was a numbers game. The oldest known writings were chance excerpts from Sumerian business records. They did not survive because they were masterpieces but because they were numerous. So too with the present — what would survive would be something produced in mass quantities. Probably pornography. While our "classics" would be lost to rising oceans or obliterated in nuclear war, random bits of porn would filter through to the future. A lesbian bondage video. A scrap of child pornography. Hentai.

Last of the Great White Pervs

Once promiscuous, degenerate, and dangerously amoral, he was now obliged to live in seclusion on the top floor of a derelict brownstone. When he had purchased the building, people figured he was the spearhead in a wave of gentrification that would sweep through their neighborhood, displacing racially diverse families in favor of affluent whites, bankers, tech millionaires. But instead of accepting this, the locals bonded together, invested in each other's businesses, strengthened their ties to neighbors, reinforced their hold on the area. As a result, he became physically isolated, an island of privilege in a thriving district of grocery stores, elementary schools, and places of worship. Throwing lavish parties did not ingratiate him with the community. Loud music spilled into the streets. The people who came and went at all hours of the night had the shadowy mien of drug dealers, call girls, gamblers, hit men. He spent profligately, making it easy for the parties to become orgies and debauches. Occasionally a supermodel was carted away in an ambulance or the police came to haul off a young man in handcuffs. The neighbors began to retaliate. They turned over his garbage cans and scattered debris in the doorway of his building. They threw rocks at his windows. They spray-painted "White Perv Go Home" on the sidewalk.

He found it difficult to understand the hostility. He did

not look down on other people, races, ethnicities, genders. To the contrary, he found them attractive. He mistook the polymorphousness of his sexual desires for a sort of inclusiveness toward his neighbors. He enjoyed sleeping with brown girls, having threesomes with Muslims and Jews, inviting all types and kinds to participate in his orgies. For him, promiscuity was the most intimate form of diversity. But his neighbors felt differently. It incensed them to be the target of his deviant fixations. One night he watched from a window as a multiracial mob chased a white perv who had just left one of his parties. The victim had a neurasthenic look to him — skinny, high forehead, wireframe glasses, cerebral, pale as a sheet of paper. When dogs ripped off the guy's clothes, the streetlights flashed on the silver rings in his nipples. That was all the evidence the mob needed — pierced nipples. Certain that he was some kind of alt-sex perv, they strung him up from a utility pole. His legs flailed in the air and his fingers pried desperately at the rope that bit into his neck. After half an hour he hung there stiff as a pine cone. The mob spray-painted a slogan on a damp piece of cardboard. They stuck it to the dead body with a nail that shattered its sternum. "Cracker Don't Let The Sun Set On You Here."

A profound change had occurred in society. "Normality" had ceased to be Caucasian, male, Christian, and upwardly mobile. Those traits were becoming the markers of a new minority — and with this reversal in society came a shift in the perception of abnormality too. Once it had been blacks who were reputed to commit sex crimes. Other races did their share of raping and ravaging, yet the myth had been one of black

male potency — slaves with gorilla physiques assaulting hapless little white girls. But as society's balance of power shifted in the direction of multiculturalism, it was the white man who came to be viewed as a sexual outlaw. The word "pervert" now called to mind effeminate whites with overwrought urges. The white man masturbated compulsively. He liked to wear women's underwear. He molested children, nourished himself on their blood, disposed of their bodies in satanic rites. Headlines consistently portrayed the entire race as one of deviants and degenerates. "Perv Shared Child Sex Snuff Films with Other Whites..." "Caucasian Chained Up Boy in Cellar and Abused Him..." "Schoolgirl Raped by White Man Pretending to Be Police Officer..."

Soon racially diverse squads of policemen were stopping whites in the subway. "Where'd ya get the panties, ya pasty-faced creep?" The whites defended themselves by showing a wedding ring or pictures of their kids posing with Mickey Mouse. "I ain't no perv, officer!" They swore to the cops that they were stay-at-home dads with a passion for diversity and monogamy. But the cops beat them with clubs and dragged them to the police station. It was a better fate than being caught by a citizen's brigade. These posses formed to patrol schoolyards and playgrounds. They put up signs banning white pervs from living or working in their communities. Caucasian holdouts who refused to move were subject to harassment that escalated into outright violence. The brigades stormed into newsstands and carted away pornographic magazines. They smashed the windows of sex shops and strip bars. They made bonfires out of x-rated videos and crotchless panties. Bottles of

lubricant hissed in the flames. Condoms melted on sticks. Sex dolls blazed in effigy of race-based lust. White porn burned. Vigilantes raided a dungeon and pulled out a slave by the cock ring. He had a sallow body like the underside of a dead fish. They put a noose around his neck and hoisted him on the branch of a tree. His face turned purple but his cock stiffened. The mob spat and swore. "Fucker likes it! Ain't nothin' too kinky for the white man." Henceforth they castrated the sickos they hung.

One non-white, a social reformer and fiery orator, had the courage to take a stand against this violence. The sexuality of whites, he argued, had become a subject about which few could think rationally. He pointed out that the mythical deviance of the white man was nothing in comparison to the actual violence of his oppressors. "How can we condone the use of torture to suppress harmless acts of masturbation, crossdressing, and bondage?" But the mobs turned against him too. They convinced newspapers to publish headlines proclaiming that he had been corrupted by contact with caucasians. He liked to be tied up. He diddled the children of his followers. He brainwashed women from diverse families using the power of his oratory. Eventually he was assassinated, tied to the stake in a flaming pyre of butt plugs seized from the warehouse of an online seller of sex toys. This should have caused outrage — a well-meaning leader of civil rights killed by vigilantes — but most people agreed that he should not have been bothering with whites. They were not only prone to sexual violence. They were hell-bent on destroying each other. What sort of race would do that to themselves? While the former minorities took

care of their communities and families, the whites were beating the shit out of each other and ruining the planet. Non-white politicians would make token attempts to intervene but behind closed doors they would snigger cynically and talk about letting the white folks destroy themselves. "World's better off without those wackadoodles."

In the face of such mayhem, it became impossible for the last of the great white pervs to continue with his debaucheries. He could no longer throw lavish parties. Call girls refused to come to his apartment. They were willing to put up with his bizarre sexual practices but not with the harassment they received on the street. Not only did he become increasingly isolated but he was obliged to spend his wealth on personal defense. The lower floors of his building were marred by anti-white-perv graffiti. Heaps of trash were piled against the front door. Neighbors shot at the windows with guns. They were like suburbanites finding out that a child molester lived next door. They were angry. They did not want him in their midst. They tried multiple times to set fire to his building — and the firemen, sympathetic to their cause, were lackadaisical about putting out the flames. The man erected a series of steel doors, put wire mesh over the windows, built a panic room in the penthouse where he lived, and hired a security firm to stand guard outside. But the security men sometimes let an angry neighbor through, a vigilante who climbed high into the building and fired a pistol at the steel doors. The shots sounded like a jackhammer. The perv leapt up, cowered behind the door, listening and waiting for the worst. But once the moment of danger passed, his compulsions took hold. He returned to his lonesome endeavors,

watching fetish porn and masturbating to dreams of his former grandiosity.

Superlongevity

He had never intended to become an outlaw. Nor had he intended to become the longest-living human in recorded history. Thanks to modern medicine, anti-aging research, good genes and freakish luck, he had reached the ripe old age of 168. The next oldest person in the world was seventy years younger than him — practically a lifetime. Astonishingly, he retained the robust health of a man a quarter of his age. He still played tennis. He could run a marathon. He had pursued three entirely different careers until finally the government bestowed a pension on him in recognition of his unique status as the eldest living human. He had traveled every inch of the globe and spoke seven languages — not just Latinate ones but difficult tongues such as Hungarian and Mandarin. He had competed in professional sporting events, built a home with his own hands, written a volume of haiku in Japanese. Women continued to find him attractive, partly for his maturity of perspective and partly for his celebrity. ("I kissed the oldest man!") He had been married ten times, fathered scores of children, hundreds of grandchildren. He would joke about becoming humanity's common ancestor.

The irony was that the depth and breadth of his extraordinary life had not led the man to some unparalleled form of wisdom or insight. He did not feel like Socrates or Buddha. Rath-

er, he was bored. He began to long for death, partly as a release from his own consciousness and partly as a way to experience something new. He must have been about 120 the first time he tried to commit suicide. Rather than shoot himself in the head or leap from a tall building — methods which could lead to spectacular failures and incurable mutilation — he chose to poison himself, slowly, over time, so that he could watch it, observe it, truly experience the novelty of his own demise. It was as fascinating as it was horrible to chart the decline of his usual good health. His loved ones supposed that old age was catching up with him. The media, aware that he was already the oldest human, a "national treasure," called for him to receive the best healthcare in the world, but he refused to allow doctors to examine him. People figured he was just being crotchety until he collapsed. Doctors realized what he had been doing to himself so they committed him to the psych ward for a few months. "He is a danger to himself but a boon to humanity." They were determined to keep him alive.

This was the beginning of an adversarial relationship between a man who wanted to die and a sprawling bureaucracy made up of doctors, researchers, healthcare officials, journalists, politicians, do-gooders, and corporations seeking endorsements or sponsorships. He tried to hang himself but men in white coats materialized out of nowhere, cut him down, revived him, and dumped him back in the psych ward. He leapt off a bridge but divers rescued him. He slit his wrists but woke up in restraints in the mental hospital. It was maddening. Clearly they were surveilling him. They had installed cameras in his home. They had planted sensors in his body. They kept paramedics

and rescuers at the ready. That, he fumed, was what a long life earned him — the violation of his privacy and the curtailment of his freedom. "You people are all idiots," he would rage. "Don't you realize that old age means nothing? A person who grows old has no secrets about how to combat death. He's just lucky. Or he's supremely unlucky. He has to put up with bullshit for longer than the rest of you. Count your blessings when you get heart disease. Be glad when your loved ones are run over by a truck. There are fates worse than death."

Finally the man realized that, to persuade society to let him die, he needed to shock people. He had to force them to abandon the idea that he was a national treasure. In the future they should consider him a pariah, an outlaw, an enemy. If he was lucky, maybe he could get himself executed by capital punishment. Electric chair, lethal injection, firing squad — these sounded frightfully exotic and exciting. He spent a year or two preparing, behaving so well and maintaining such an outwardly cheerful demeanor that he induced a false sense of security in the bureaucracy keeping him alive. While they eased up on surveillance he read widely in the literature of crime. He had decided to rob a bank. He thought he might go out in a glorious blaze of gunfire like Al Capone. He put a kerchief over his face, barged into a bank with a pistol, and handed a note to the teller. In mid-robbery he pulled off the kerchief and showed his face to the cameras. "Tell 'em Methuselah got you," he snarled, firing off a shot in the direction of the security guard. But the guard kept his gun holstered and no one prevented the man from leaving the bank with a sack of cash. In the news that night, reporters interviewed the bank manager, the teller,

and the guard. They all thought the robbery was cute. "Old fogey sure got guts... Never thought he'd hurt me... One of the highlights of my career... Tell my grandkids about it..."

He resolved to commit a more heinous crime. One night he lurked behind some bushes in a park. When a lone female wandered by, he leapt out, pushed her to the ground, wrestled off her clothes, tore her panties, and assaulted her. At first she fought back viciously, scratching him and gouging at his eyes with her hands. But then suddenly she relaxed, grinned, and broke into a long easy laugh. "Why, I recognize you. You're the world's oldest man." She kissed him on the tip of his nose. "Such a virile fellow!" She let him take what she thought he wanted, although that was not what he wanted at all. His desire was not to have sex with this woman but to violate her, scandalize her, anger her so that she would stir up the whole world against him. Instead she took a selfie while they humped on the ground, posted it to her social media accounts, then bragged to friends about how she had slept with the oldest and most famous man in the world. "It was divine. A man with so much experience really knows how to pleasure a woman." Frustrated, he committed a series of increasingly outrageous sex crimes. He beat up hookers. He tortured animals. He raped another man. He committed incest — not a difficult act since he had fathered so many descendants that a statistically significant percentage of humankind was now related to him.

At first these acts were revolting to him. He did not mean to hurt people. He merely wanted to provoke society into executing him. But as the sex crimes piled up, he realized that he possessed a unique opportunity. The perversions, especial-

ly the violent ones, were immature arts. They were practiced by people who lacked the time and resources to master them properly. Often the perpetrators were prevented from pursuing their deviant urges by policemen, vigilantes, or other outraged members of society. Imagine the worst sex criminal in history — how many victims did he have? Fifty? A hundred? However regrettable it was for each individual, surely it required more than a hundred efforts to acquire expertise in something. A man who took a hundred violin lessons did not qualify as a maestro. To plumb the depths required thousands or tens of thousands of violent, illicit acts. This, at the age of 168, became the man's new life goal: to achieve mastery in the darkest of sexual behaviors. Once he conceived this ambition, however, fellow citizens decided they could no longer put up with his sociopathic antics. They never quite viewed him as a monster but they figured he had become senile. They put him back in the psych ward, rationalizing that it was for his own sake. "The man we knew would not want to engage in these heinous behaviors." Doctors ceased working so hard to keep him alive and longevity researchers realized that the true problem of immortality is not medical but moral.

One Rape Wonder

No one considered her remarkable until she was raped. For the first eighteen years of her life there had been little to distinguish her from other girls. She was not noteworthy for academic achievements. She was not a cheerleader idolized for her beauty. She did not win trophies for athletic contests. She did not distinguish herself in the lead role of high-school dramas. She had a generic female name. She came from a respectable middle-class family. She was the sort of person others only remembered in connection with a group, as though her identity depended on her proximity to other people. Aware of this, she found it difficult to understand why the rapist had singled her out. Some part of her, awful as it sounded when she described it to the therapist, hoped that he had seen a quality in her that she failed to see in herself — a mysterious depth in her eyes or a graceful way of carrying herself. A girl who believed she was irresistible could at least salvage that one thing from the violence committed against her. She could take solace in her desirability. A girl who was just in the wrong place at the wrong time could not even have that.

The therapist explained that patriarchal forces in society caused many women to identify their sense of self-worth with their sexual availability to men. When this bias was reinforced by a traumatic event, it could do strange things to the mind.

Some victims tried to normalize the rape by tricking themselves into thinking it had been consensual. "They ask the rapist to sleep over, like a boyfriend." Some identified with the perpetrator or convinced themselves that they deserved the abuse. Others blamed themselves and confessed to feeling sexual excitement during the act. "If you became moist during the rape," the therapist suggested, "it was not a sign of arousal. It was a survival response. The drier you were, the greater the potential for damage." All this was helpful to hear but what tormented the girl was the thought that, if anyone prettier had been available, the rapist would not have chosen her at all. "I felt like a gas-station bathroom. It wasn't that he wanted me. I just happened to be there." The therapist explored this anxiety with her, pointing out that it depended on socially constructed norms about beauty and sexual receptivity. She did not have to accept these norms. What if, the therapist proposed, she wrote a journal probing these thoughts? They could review it together, dissect the insidious interplay between sexism and trauma, and guide her in the direction of a healthy sense of self.

Over the course of a weekend, she spurted out a hundred pages. She forgot the therapist's caution about trauma doing strange things to the mind precisely because trauma did a strange thing to her mind. Rather than process what happened to her, she transformed it retroactively into a wake-up call. She could almost forgive the ugly details of the rape, she wrote. What she had more difficulty forgiving was the life she led beforehand. How could she feel outraged about twenty minutes of intense violation when she had been no more than indignant about twenty years of diffuse boredom and apathy? Reviewing

the pages, the therapist conceded that she had taken ownership of what had happened. But rather than repudiate the cultural assumptions underlying her reaction to the rape, she had wholly identified with them, like a victim of Stockholm Syndrome. The therapist encouraged her to "unpack" this identification but instead she decided not to continue with therapy. She holed up in her apartment and wrote compulsively until she had completed a draft of a memoir. It began provocatively with the observation that women tended to speak of "my" rapist as though it were a possessive like "my husband" or "my children." She said it showed that women secretly prided themselves on having been so desired by a man that he would risk going to jail in exchange for a few mad moments of passion.

She submitted the manuscript to an editor, who foresaw that her controversial point of view would generate publicity. The text also appealed to something in him which he could hardly admit, a legitimation of the "she wants it" point of view. He purchased the rights, had no trouble selling an excerpt to a glossy magazine, and put out the book. The world, which had never paid the slightest attention to her, now took an intensive interest. She gave interviews to newspapers and talk shows. She signed books for the fans who waited for her after readings. Literary agents offered to represent her. A Hollywood producer bought the movie rights and spoke of the famous actress who was desperate to portray her. A television program offered a large reward for the rapist to turn himself in — but only because it planned to reunite the victim with her rapist on screen. A pornographer sent a standing invitation to perform in x-rated videos. She began dating a newscaster and their picture

appeared in the "Seen About Town" section of the paper. She attended fashion shows and gallery openings, drank champagne with hedge-fund managers, hosted a charity ball for a non-profit organization that donated "morning after" pills to impoverished teens. She was not, however, without critics. It was crass, they said, to capitalize on her own suffering. Some argued that she romanticized sexual violence and made it sound like something their daughters ought to yearn for. "They won't dream of being brides anymore. They'll want to grow up to be rape victims."

The controversy was soon lost in the wake of other news. The newscaster left her after she caught him having an affair with an intern. The interest generated by her memoir died down and she wrestled to write another book. This follow-up only received a few tepid reviews. It lacked the sizzle of her first book. It contained too little sex. People knew her story already. Only one bookstore bothered to engage her for a reading. The handful of attendees brought copies of her first book for her to sign. The Hollywood producer was not making progress with the movie. The news programs were no longer calling for interviews. She was afraid that the pornographer would not even make good on his offer to feature her in a video. She was alone, jobless, and running out of money. She sold a diamond ring which the newscaster had given her. She borrowed from her parents. She stumbled into a humiliating project — a cookbook for victims of sexual assault — which she was obliged to accept in order to pay the rent. The crackpot idea was to use the joys of food preparation to relieve post-traumatic stress. She had to write blurbs describing the recipes. "Cilantro has a

refreshing lemony flavor which can make you forget the taste of the thug who kissed you." She also had to appear in cheaply produced YouTube videos promoting the book. "Slicing cucumbers gets out the anger!" It was degrading. She missed the attention she had received and the glamorous existence that came along with it.

In desperation she conceived a daring idea for a third book. Her first had done well because of the rape. Why not do another? She would deliberately put herself in situations that made her vulnerable. She would write with alarming lucidity about the psychological needs that caused her to do this. "Consent is lonely," she would say. "You loved me once, my dear readers. I know now what I must do to regain your love." She would publish her personal information in the book — phone number, address, bra size, waist-to-hip ratio — along with provocative photographs of herself. These would serve as a standing invitation for readers to assault her. She worked on this new text after flirting with strangers in bars near the airport. She wrote after strutting up and down desolate streets in the dead of the night. She wrote after unlocking the doors and windows, opening the curtains, and sleeping naked on her bed. But no one dropped a knockout pill into the vodka she drank. No goon pushed her into a dark alleyway to tear the clothes off of her. No intruder slipped into her bedroom to wake her with a knife to the skin of her throat. In a way, this was good news. Rape was less frequent than she had imagined. Humankind was less fundamentally evil than she had expected. But it was bad news too. The evil lay in the way people were only interested in her to the extent that she was a good victim. Depressed, she

wrote an epilogue titled “An Open Letter to Male Feminists.” It accused men of losing touch with their desires.

{ Shy Bladder }

He stopped in the men's room to smooth his hair. In the mirror he could see the back of a man at a urinal behind him. The guy was standing there with his shoulders drooping and his dong in his hand. He had the helpless look of a person waiting in line at a welfare office. "Shy" bladder. Jesus fucking Christ. What kind of man can't whip it out and take a good piss? He smoothed his hair and stepped to the other urinal. Before letting rip, he tried to catch the guy's eye. It was the look that the driver of a hot rod would give another driver at a red light. Wanna race? But the shy guy only stared ahead at the wall. Probably counting backward from a hundred. Suddenly he could stand it no more. With his dick out, he stepped from his urinal to the other guy's. He pushed the guy to the side and aimed his dick at the guy's urinal. "Hey," the guy sputtered, trying to put away his dong. He let rip. He could hear it splashing against the deodorant cake in the drain. He had that feeling of freedom a fisherman gets when he pisses over the side of a boat. He finished, shook his cock, which made a fapping sound as it bounced off the front of his pants, then left without washing his hands. That night he played the scene over in his mind. Each time it became more violent. When he had sex with his wife, he imagined sneaking up behind guys at urinals and kicking them in the back.

Regression

He never meant to be an asshole. He loved women, he said to himself. He ran from one to the next precisely because he loved them. But of course this "love of women" carried him to a point of no return beyond which he felt no love whatsoever. He was able to experience the physical pleasures of sex but not the subtler joys of emotional connection. His relationship history was a series of random encounters in hotel rooms and studio apartments. His recollections formed a sort of mnemonic whorehouse. Whenever he opened a door in this mental bordello, he found some random fuck behind it — the twenty-year-old barista who slept with him in exchange for amphetamines; the girl from Uzbekistan who liked to have her anus licked; the petite Texan who attempted to cut the bondage rope with a butter knife; the Brazilian with the shapely ass and the allergies that made her sneeze while they tussled on the bed. "Oh! Oh, baby! Achoo!" He began to wonder if he had ever really loved anyone. He felt ridiculous. Who doesn't remember his first love? He could recall the girl with whom he had lost his virginity but he had not felt anything for her. The imprints that other women left in his memory were like fluid samples on glass slides. They had been smeared around by all the sexual encounters.

He bragged to his friends about his conquests. He ex-

plored perversions in the belief that he would discover something, a new sensation or a pleasure that he had never before imagined. But secretly he worried that he was becoming numb. He wanted to love women and wondered what he could do to recover his naïveté. He recognized that it was impossible to reverse time, to unlearn what he had already learned, but it occurred to him to make an appointment with a hypnotherapist. He found himself in an office cluttered with books and a hypnotherapist who resembled a lumberjack. Tall, broad-chested, with a full beard just beginning to go gray, the therapist gave an impression of tremendous virility. "Let me get this straight," the therapist said. "You want me to regress you to a time when love and sex were not yet separate for you?" The therapist stood there with his fists in the pockets of his trousers. It gave him an air of repressed violence. "That's right. I'm afraid I will never be able to love again." The therapist took his hands out of his pockets. When he gestured, he looked like he was shadow-boxing. "Hypnotherapy uses the mechanisms of sleep — 'hypnos' is the Greek word for sleep — to find breaches in your psychological defenses. Are you prepared to accept that this can lead to painful discoveries?"

The therapist began the induction by requesting that the patient hold up his left hand. It was the "stop" gesture except that his palm was turned toward his face. Speaking in the hushed tone of a conspirator, the therapist urged him to focus his gaze on his hand, clear his mind, relax. Gradually he tuned into the soothing voice, his hand drooped, his eyelids grew heavy, his shoulders slumped. He felt as though he might fall asleep. "I could stop this if I wanted to," he said to himself.

"I'm in control. Maybe I'm one of those people who can't be hypnotized." But he was not in control and made no effort to stop anything. "I am going to light a match," he could hear the therapist say. "I will blow it out and touch it to the back of your hand but you will feel no pain." He felt a slight pressure but it did not hurt. The therapist must have touched him with a cotton swab. Probably it was a trick to make him believe in the induction. "Your arms," he could hear the man say, "are loose and limp. You feel like a rag doll. When I raise your hand, its weight will hang limply in my fingers. Good, good. Now when I drop it, a wave of relaxation is going to sweep across your body. The wave is moving from the top of your head to the tips of your fingers and toes. You feel profound calm, peace, acceptance." The distance between his mind and body lengthened. When the therapist instructed him to open his mouth, he figured it was a breathing exercise.

Something entered his mouth. "Suck it, you little bitch," he could hear the therapist say. "Suck it." The lucid part of him realized that the man had inserted his penis into his mouth. Intellectually, he realized what he should feel about it — disgust, violation, outrage. But he felt none of these things. He sucked and let his tongue drag along the underside of the stiffened organ. His brain was extrapolating data from all the blowjobs he had ever received and transforming the information into guidelines for how to suck cock. Two hands pulled his hair, the pulsing cock punched the back of his throat, he choked and gagged. The conscious part of him, wondering why he did not feel indignation, lodged on an absurdity. He imagined the fuss he would make if the therapist demanded the copayment

stipulated by his health insurance. “He’s the one who should be paying,” said his mind to the part of him that seemed determined to give the best head ever. Thwak. The therapist struck him across the face. Thwak. “You want to feel love, you little bitch? This is it. This is what it feels like. You know you love this.” Finally the therapist threw back his head, grunted, and shot an arc of semen across the bridge of his client’s nose. It leaked down onto his upper lip. He licked it. None of this bothered him. It was just abstract. He almost felt amused by it, like a man informed of the scandals he committed during a drinking binge so severe that he had no memory of it.

He could hear the unmistakable sound of a zipper closing. He could feel his face being cleaned with a towelette. The therapist seated himself at his desk, withdrew a yellow legal pad from a drawer, and jotted down a few notes. “Patient suffers from lack of emotional affect. Under hypnosis showed distinct signs of homosexual inclination. Goal of treatment is to help patient accept the true nature of his desires.” Prescribing a course of therapy intended to serve the therapist’s interests was a medical way of blaming the victim. The therapist did not self-identify as gay. When he abused female patients, he made notes suggesting that they suffered from transference issues, that they initiated inappropriate behavior, and so on. For him it was not a matter of his own sexual identity. It was simply that this was what a man was impelled to do when others made themselves vulnerable. A mouth was a mouth was a mouth. How could it be rape if he had the power not just to make them forget it but to send them back into the world happier than they had been when they arrived? He put away his legal

pad and returned to the patient. “When I count down from 10 to 1, you will awake with a feeling of tranquility. You will remember nothing that transpired during the course of your hypnosis.” The therapist snapped his fingers. The patient’s mind moved back into his body. He swallowed a few times — his salivary glands seemed to have gone into overdrive — then opened his eyes. He felt a little dazed, like a student caught daydreaming by a teacher, and a small white blister had formed at the spot where his hand had been touched with a match.

{ Cojones }

"I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT it," the man said. She lowered her iPhone. She looked at him earnestly. "But it's important. Important for you and important for others." He crossed the room, sat on the edge of the couch, put his head in his hands, and spoke to the floor. "I can't." He shook his head from side to side. "I just can't." She stood there looking down at the tattoo on the back of his neck — a reddish flower wrapped in an ornate banner that said "Mother." She felt for him but she believed it was important to document the stories of male rape victims. She had premised her thesis on the notion that she would archive these stories the same way the Shoah Foundation collected stories from Holocaust survivors. The inherent nobility of this mission enabled her not to dwell on its moral ambiguity. She did not think about how her academic success now depended on her ability to persuade men to relive moments they wanted to forget. She did not think about the quiet voice inside of her that wanted to say, "You men have always been sticking it to women. Serves you right if you stick it to each other now and then." She moved closer and held the iPhone in his face. "What were you in jail for when it happened?" He began balling. A line of snot stretched from his nose to the floor and made a damp stain on the carpet.

Vestigial Skank

For her entire life the teen had been schooled to believe in the utter worthlessness of the male species. Old women would say, "You can't imagine how awful it was to form an emotional attachment for a man. It's better to love other women or cats." Yet the girl was intrigued by the myths about men — that they were singled-minded in their pursuit of sex; that they were promiscuous and faithless; that they were brutal. The thought that a man could assault a woman, inconceivable as it was now, was both horrifying and thrilling. It was like being mauled by a lion — yet there was something appealing about it. She wanted to be dominated, consumed in an act of passion like fuel consumed in a fire. She wanted a brute to pull her hair, bite her lips, pin her shoulders to the bed. She tried to find women who would dress up like macho archetypes from the past — cowboys, athletes, soldiers — and manhandle her, slap her, penetrate her with a strap-on. But roleplay wasn't enough. She began to sneak into a facility where men were being kept in spermatic hibernation.

It was men who first ceased to be able to love. It evolved right out of their systems. They no longer felt romance, empathy, or fellow-feeling. It was as though their responses had simplified into essentials. Attraction was lust. Repulsion was violence. There was nothing else. At first no one quite realized

what was happening. It seemed natural to men but to women they felt compelled to lie about it. "Yes, of course, baby, I love you, now let me put it in your ass." Women did not put up with this for long. They realized that men were liars with base animal instincts. Why bother with them? It was unfortunate but women figured they had to carry on. They applied to medical schools en masse. They took over the entire occupation of urology. This gave them control over their unloving counterparts. They let bladder infections worsen. They looked the other way while shameless cads died of undiagnosed prostate cancer. They gave unnecessary cystoscopes to the worst Casanovas, grinding medical instruments into unanesthetized urethras and sending the creeps away with maximum-gauge catheters. In the meantime they refused to sleep with men who were aggressive, dominant, strong. They deliberately breeded out the macho and the manly. Over the course of a few generations, they selected for men who were weak, flabby, pale, dumb.

These new men were like pets, vegetables, psychiatric patients who had undergone lobotomies or been injected with heavy doses of sedatives. Their reactions were sluggish. They had brains like bowls of cold oatmeal. They could scarcely think except with their penises, which remained impervious to the deterioration of their intellects. Their other senses shut down but the men could still perceive with their cocks. A flaccid penis was like a hibernating animal. It seemed to be asleep but then it would sense something, smell a pheromone, pick up an ineffable wisp of some interpersonal chemical, and it would start to rise. Pussy! The man would emerge from his stupor like a human ancestor stepping forth from the sea. Blind and grop-

ing his way, he would follow his penis like a dowsing wand. He would locate a receptive woman and plunge into her, humping madly like a dog. He would ejaculate, legs quivering and spine cracking like a whip. From his almost vestigial cock a thin trickle of fluid would leak out, weak as the broth served at a concentration camp, warm water boiled with shoe leather, one or two sperm crawling out of the fluid and soon dying from exhaustion in the cervical canal. The man would collapse atop his lover like he was having a stroke. The woman would push him off and he would land with a thud on the floor. He would lie there, paunch heaving up and down, eyes expressionless as those of an autistic boy who has masturbated to the brink of idiocy.

As men degenerated, sweeping changes transformed society. Children were raised by maternal cooperatives. Women no longer shied away from public nudity because there was no one to be shy in front of. Pornography passed into oblivion because men were brain dead and women were more interested in novels. Prostitution became obsolete because there was no demand for it. Rape ceased to be the scourge that it had always been. A lone female could walk home alone at night through a desolate park. Supposing a man even had the wherewithal to leap out at her from a bush, she could taunt him, confuse him, trip him, kick him in the groin, then titter away laughing as though to say, "What silly little idiots these men are. It's cute how they still think they can molest us." Perversions disappeared. Women, who had mostly been disadvantaged by them anyway, were happy to see certain practices become obsolete — facials, throat-fucking, sadism, pedophilia. In the absence of

red-blooded men, they developed new perversions. These were less acts of physical extremity than ones of emotional elaborateness. They dressed as heroic figures from the past and acted out intricate fantasies like the Duke of Wellington seducing Napoleon at Waterloo... Napoleon willingly ditched the battle because he was secretly a bottom to the Duke's top... Or they dressed up like Hemingway and Fitzgerald... Threesome with Ernest, Scott, and Zelda, women playing all the roles... Ernest seduced Zelda. Scott was furious. Ernest apologized. Scott wouldn't accept the apology so Hem made him his bitch. The greatest works of Hemingway were authored by F. Scott pseudonymously in a state of sexual bondage. While Zelda watched...

It became obvious, however, that reproducing with feeble and degenerate men threatened the gene pool of women too. Taking a new approach, they began to breed for manliness. The men were kept apart in what amounted to farms for the cultivation of testosterone. These were vast facilities where the virile were maintained in medically induced comas. Bed after bed contained male "patients" on intravenous drips. Women would come, wash the men's genitalia, bring them out of their comas, lower their mouths over their penises, suck until the men were about to climax, then masturbate them into glass beakers. These encounters were strictly utilitarian and inspired no emotions in either party. Women felt toward men what humans felt toward the animals they butchered and ate. Satiated, the men were content to return to their post-coital opiate addictions. Their sperm was used to breed for strong and smart daughters. Male children were tolerated until they hit puberty. At that point they were milked for the first time in a public rit-

ual that resembled a bar mitzvah. There was a festive party. The boy would be masturbated by a sort of female rabbi. Children would clap and cheer. Grandmothers would sing and dance. Guests would throw candy into the air. Afterward the boy was taken out, put on an IV drip of heroin, and escorted to the sperm farm, where he would spend the rest of his life sleeping and ejaculating. "Our life," said a philosopher, "is but a dream interrupted by handjobs."

Then came the scandal. Security guards kept finding random men wandering around one of the spermatic hibernation facilities. How had they been freed from their beds? Who had unplugged their drips? A young woman had become pregnant. She had been sneaking into the facility, hitting the men, shaking them, trying to provoke them to violence. She would spur the men to rise up, pin her to the bed, force themselves on her. She was not, she admitted, interested in any one man but in the dominance of men in general. She offered no apologies, saying only that she found it "fun" to submit to them. Other women were quick to condemn her. They denounced her with names they had not used in generations — slut, skank, whore. A radical few even called for extreme forms of chastisement, a clitorectomy or the sewing shut of her vaginal lips. The judges, however, let the girl go free. She had done nothing illegal. She could not be prosecuted for rape because the consent of men, who were kept for their sperm the same way chickens were kept for their eggs, did not matter.

{ White S Black M }

She had worked with other black clients without giving it a second thought. But when he asked her to tie him up, flog him with a whip, and abuse him with disparaging racial epithets, she realized just how white she was. It was not rare for clients to push her own boundaries but this was different. She did not want to use those words. She did not want to eroticize the slavery and oppression of other people. "Why," she asked, "do you want me to call you those things?" She tried not to sound judgemental. He fixed her with liquid brown eyes like a deer's. "Just do it," he said. "I'm asking you to do it." He took off his clothes and she fastened his wrists to the manacles on the wall. She struck his back with the whip. It bit hard. He writhed and the chains rattled. She hit him a few more times. She called him a worm and a piece of shit. It wasn't enough. "Tell me I'm a nigger," he called out. She couldn't but she did continue hitting him. "A nigger," he cried out. "Nigger, nigger, nigger." When the session was over, he raised his voice. "What's the matter with you, bitch? You think I'm paying you? I ain't paying your ass. You're supposed to call me names." She started crying. He put on his clothes and left. They were both unhappy.

Hate Fuck America

His compulsive behavior could have been labeled a "sex addiction" except that it had a deep, complicated relationship with his misanthropy. His sexual partners became scapegoats for everything he disliked about America. He felt an almost moral satisfaction in hitting a woman and saying, "I don't know what's wrong with this country." His sadism sounded like that of an opinionated political commentator. "It's monetary policy that's causing income inequality, slut." Tying a slender blonde face down to a hotel bed, he caned the soles of her feet and lectured her about the idiocies of social media. "Nobody wants to see your goddamn selfies." When he got up from the bed, threw a used condom on the floor, and made an abrupt departure, he felt good like Jesus. He thought about all the other citizens of his homeland — less the poor, the tired, and the huddled masses than the dumb, the lazy, and the fat asses. He decided to embark on a road trip. Heading west from New York, he picked up a hitchhiker in rural Pennsylvania. She needed to get to Ohio so he offered to drive her in exchange for a blowjob. At a highway rest area, he ejaculated in her face, smearing semen across the arch of her nose and sermonizing about manmade climate change. "Bitch, global warming is not a lie created by the Chinese." Heading south, he managed to seduce a waitress at a truck stop in Kentucky. "Take it in the

ass," he snarled, "for separation of church and state." In Alabama he used a dating app to meet a divorcee who had three small children. He duct-taped her wrists then pissed in her face because she was pro-life.

In New Orleans he lay up in a French Quarter hotel and took stock of his first week on the road. It felt good to exorcise his loathing on these hapless sexual partners. An axiom of psychology was that people could not let go of a trauma they had experienced — they thought about it compulsively, acted it out, relived it through remembrance and repetition. He conjectured that he could oblige people to confront his ideas by tying them to traumatic sexual encounters. Each time the Alabaman would recall being pissed on, she would associate a feeling of humiliation with her opposition to abortion. In this way he could literally hate-fuck some sense into her. The more he saw of America, the more contempt he felt for it. Churches, shopping malls, gas stations, all-you-can-eat buffets — everything was so vulgar and meaningless that it filled him with a nearly genocidal disgust. It was imperative, he decided, to pick up the pace. Moving west through Texas, he knocked a girl off a horse and raped her in the dirt with tumbleweeds blowing past. "Immigration is the lifeblood of this country, filthy whore. Throw open the borders!" In New Mexico he bought a gun and stuck it into the ribs of a woman he saw walking alone through a parking lot. He bent her over a garbage can and forcibly sodomized her, arguing that the federal government had no right to expect "back door" access to encrypted data.

He fucked his way to California then moved up the coast: Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo. One a day. He

did not consider that rape itself was more contemptible than the things he held in contempt. Where another person might have attended a rally, signed a petition, or written a congressman, he engaged in acts of sexualized cruelty. He raped because he hated how obese everybody had become. He raped because he loathed the worship of celebrities. He raped because he objected to the criminalization of harmless recreational drugs. He raped to express his opposition to domestic surveillance, eminent domain, and pop culture. He blamed the victims, rationalizing his behavior with phrases like "no pain, no gain" and "to make an omelette you have to break some eggs." America, he said to himself, is a dictatorship of commercialism, exploitation, self-righteousness, sloth, vanity. It was justifiable to take up arms against it. In San Francisco he saw same-sex couples holding hands in the street. He had been raping women in the name of progress — why stop there? Why take out his contempt on only half the population? He hated men way more than he hated women. He picked up his first male victim. It was more difficult to subdue another man — he ended up with a black eye — but in the end he tied the guy to a bed, violated him, and preached to him about issues ranging from the gender wage gap to campaign contribution limits.

He continued to Portland where he met a couple at a meetup for people in open relationships. He subdued them with the gun, tied them back-to-back to chairs, then throatfucked the man while beating the woman in the head with a fist. With each blow he hollered, "Take that for Islamophobia... Take that for unfair executive compensation... Take that for any imposition on freedom of speech..." Afterward he used a paring

knife to carve a slogan into each of their bodies, adding #hatefuckamerica across their foreheads. He used the couple's phones to post pictures to their social media accounts. He intended to humiliate them but was vexed when the images ended up catching the attention of the media. The press republished the pictures, blurring the pair's faces but leaving the slogans visible. The #hatefuckamerica tag captured the mood of people, tapped into a weird energy that was part disenfranchisement and part degeneracy, and soon it was trending online. An investigative journalist worked to piece together his cross-country itinerary, interview his victims, speculate about the identity and motivation of this man who seemed to combine idealistic beliefs with reprehensible actions. Pundits denounced his criminal behavior in the strongest terms. Some said his interstate spree was a polemicized form of the sadism that men inflicted on women anyway. Others pointed out that, with his victims now including every gender, race, age, and creed, this hate-sex spree was clearly egalitarian in nature.

He was a carnal version of a uniquely American type, like the Unabomber, animal rights activists, or anti-abortion zealots. He believed in the redemptive powers of violence. The more the press treated him with fear and hysteria, the more others began to view him as a folk hero, a Robin Hood of depravity and vice. Young people identified with the purposiveness of his antisocial behavior. He was the rape equivalent of a punk rocker. He did not just give the middle finger to the establishment. He sexually assaulted it. His victims acted like teenagers who'd had sex with a movie star. They were proud to participate in his increasingly sensationalistic campaign.

"He made me swallow in the name of universal healthcare." They took selfies of the #hatefuckamerica tag he cut into their foreheads and posted them online. Wannabes emerged, groupies who cut the hashtag into their own flesh and swore to their friends that he had attacked them. Copycats began to commit their own rapes. Some were idealists who wanted to join in this revolutionary approach to social change. Others were opportunists who did not care about social issues but figured that the hoopla gave them coverage to commit acts of sexual violence. But these copycats revealed themselves in the superficiality or inconsistency of their beliefs. Particularly ignorant ones would cut mangled or misspelled slogans into their victims' bodies, "no freaking" when they meant "no fracking."

His growing fame increased the contempt that he felt. Not only did he hate people for eating at fast food restaurants and failing to learn foreign languages. Not only did he hate them for venerating television sets, microwave ovens, lawn sprinklers, SUVs, McMansions. Not only did he hate them for praying, reading the bible, and believing in an afterlife — he could have burned their churches but he chose instead to defile the believers. Now he hated them for worshipping fame so unashamedly that they revered him too. What sort of idiots treated a serial rapist like a pop star? America was doomed. Deciding to put an end to the madness, he infected himself with a sexually transmitted disease. It was both incurable and lethal. He continued to fuck his way back and forth across the country, but now he had the satisfaction of knowing that his sexual partners would die. He infected men, women, children, grandparents, blacks, whites, Peruvians, Ethiopians, businessmen, contributing

editors, four-star generals, lion tamers, autistics, winos, traveling circuses. In turn they fucked each other, spread the infection, circulated and nurtured the disease. He accepted that he himself would die — but the disease would live on. The disease would carry his contempt to people he could never reach. The disease would announce his scorn to foreign countries. The disease would enable his disdain to last for generations. He was but a man. The disease was immortal, like a god. He dubbed his STD "the new America" and busied himself smearing pus from the tip of his penis onto its citizens.

Boffo

She was caught off guard the first time an orgasm made her laugh. Not that she didn't like it. She had always thought it important for the men she dated to have a good sense of humor. It was perplexing, however, when the two started to occur simultaneously. Jokes, puns, and witticisms aroused her. Having sex made her laugh. Something had shorted out. A circuit had formed between her sense of humor and her capacity for orgasm. Lying there with her legs spread, gripping her lover's hair in her hands as he lapped at her vagina with his tongue, she found herself alternating between contradictory responses — moaning and sniggering, groaning and chortling, whispering his name and breaking into guffaws. She tried to stifle it, biting her fist and struggling to hold down the hysterics brewing in her chest. It was like fighting the urge to vomit only it was funny. But then he stopped licking and looked up at her with an expression of bewilderment. The sight of his face, which resembled that of a person finding a severed finger in a hamburger, made her lose all control. She gave in to raucous laughter and nearly peed in his mouth.

The next time they had sex, the giggles rose into her throat and burst from her mouth. Her boyfriend pulled out, folded his arms across his chest, and stood there with his erection bobbing in the air. "What the hell's so funny?" An earnest sort,

he was wounded by her behavior. It was as though she were saying, "As a lover you are no better than a clown." Was he doing something wrong? Was he horrible at giving head? Did she think his penis was small? She found it difficult to take him seriously with his cock bouncing up and down. It was such a ridiculous thing, like the kind of nose a comedian would call a "schnoz." She half expected it to sneeze or give a Bronx cheer. "Women are complicated," she said, putting an end to the discussion. She did not want to talk about this development in her libido because she did not understand it herself. On one hand, it was a more profound form of release than she had ever felt before. It combined the catharsis of laughter with the opiate calm of post-coital relaxation. On the other hand, she could not help but wonder what was wrong with her. She was fantasizing about standup comedians and circus clowns. The thoughts in her mind were a laugh track collaged onto a porn film.

She probed the limits of the new desires she felt. She watched reruns of old sitcoms the way men watched x-rated videos. She masturbated while making prank phone calls to priests. Fingering herself, she let out a long wheezing sound like a whoopee cushion. It was exhilarating to discover this intersection of lechery and hilarity, though it wore on her relationship with her boyfriend. When he took her to a sex club, she laughed. When he took her to a comedy club, she orgasmed. One night she woke him up at three o'clock in the morning. "Honey!" She was shaking him by the shoulders. He popped up, eyes scanning the darkness of their bedroom. "What? What is it?" He expected her to say that she smelled smoke or heard

a burglar sneaking through a window. Instead she held out an index finger. "Honey! Pull my finger." Reluctantly, he gave the finger a tug then watched in disgust as she pushed out a fart. Dissolving into laughter, she thrashed on the bed like a child having a giggle fit. "Why is that funny?" He watched as the open mouth, heaving abdomen, and fists pounding the sheets gave way to eyes scrunching up, toes curling, legs making a swimming motion across the mattress. She moaned, snickered, made sounds that could have been those of a person dying, orgasming, or doubling over in hysterics. Her body lurched like it was being tossed by a mechanical bull.

As their relationship deteriorated, she fantasized about meeting someone who would know how to elevate sex to a whole new level of incongruity — slapstick and porn, ecstasy and buffoonery. She began to cheat on her boyfriend with a man who volunteered as a clown in a pediatric oncology unit. By day he played the fool for little boys wasting away from chemotherapy and girls dying from exotic cancers of the blood. By night he used the tools of his trade to transform their encounters into vaudeville skits. Other couples used sex toys. The two of them used gags like toupees, whistles that made "cutting the cheese" sounds, cheap plastic teeth that chattered when you wound them up, a fake can of mixed nuts that concealed a spring-loaded snake. When he came home from the hospital in his clown costume — fright wig, whiteface, ball on his nose, multicolored overalls, big floppy shoes that resembled overgrown chili peppers — it drove her wild. They performed riotous sex acts that involved Chinese fire drills. He glued a coin to the sidewalk and, when she bent over to pick it up, sneaked up

to take her from behind. When he ejaculated, he squirted water in her face from a brass horn that belonged on an old-fashioned bicycle. Afterward he whispered wisecracks into her ear as she lay there in a state of satiation.

One day they were tangled in each other's arms like two balloons twisted into the shape of a puppy. The clown was speaking about the horrors he witnessed in the oncology unit where he performed — children looking like the prisoners of a concentration camp, a boy with bone cancer, a girl with a brain tumor. As he spoke, he saw the signs of an ambiguous arousal blossom in her face. She stared at him through her eyelashes, daring him to take hold of her, and yet she also held a fist to her mouth as though stifling a cough. "Quickly," she urged him. "Tie me up. Hurt me." He pulled off his suspenders, red elastic bands adorned with yellow smiley faces, and used them to fetter her wrists to the bed frame. He removed the candy-striped tights covering his legs and wrapped them around her face like a blindfold. She pressed her lips together to stifle the response emanating from her midriff but it was no use. It burst out of her like a wild horse. He grabbed his polka-dot gloves, balled them up, and stuffed them into her mouth. "I'm gonna fuck you silly, bitch." The laughter did not stop — it swallowed up the gloves, snorted out through her nose, leaked from her eyes, shook her body like an epileptic fit. He slapped and spanked her but it was futile. She climaxed like a person being tickled.

A new mutation had occurred in her libido. She had come to find humor arousing and arousal humorous. Now pain entered into the equation. S&M made her titter. It gave her a jolt-

ing pleasure, simultaneously jocular and ecstatic, to be trussed, paddled, or lashed. Even better was to inflict pain on others. She dressed the clown in a baggy suit, put on the wig that resembled an orange afro, placed the rubber ball on his nose, and bound him by the wrists to a door frame. Giggling and pressing her thighs together, she beat him with a leather whip until his clown suit was damp with blood. He sputtered out their safe word, "boffo," but it was futile. She thrashed him until he was unconscious then videoed his helpless body as she inserted party gags into his rectum. She replayed the videos, masturbated to them, and texted them to her scandalized ex-boyfriend with the note "LMAO." This sadism escalated until the sight of the most abominable human suffering could induce laughter and orgasm from her. Natural disaster? Funny! Nuclear war? Sexy! Superbugs? Global warming? Asteroid on a collision course with the earth? Both! Sexy-funny! It was practically a parable. Hedonism always arrived at sadism. Pleasure expanded into pain. It was the sexual equivalent of entropy, the heat death of the universe, the apocalypse.

Captive Breeding

He thought he was applying to star in a porn film. The advertisement promised an endless supply of taboo desiderata. Anything he liked, no matter how illicit or outré. His material needs would be taken care of. He would be furnished not only with sex objects but with food and drink, a salary, a place to live. In exchange he had to cut off contact with the outside world. No more family or friends. No more internet. His mysterious employers would handle his disappearance with the efficiency of a witness protection program. That was the deal — if he would renounce his freedom, he would be guaranteed absolute sexual license. "What do you mean," he asked, "by 'absolute?'" The devil offering him this deal put his fingers together in the shape of a church steeple. "Absolute. You can have anything." The man named something illegal. The devil smiled as though to say, "Your wish is my command."

Blindfolded, he was driven in a black sedan to the facility where he would live. The assertive hands of private security men led him by the elbow through a series of doors, gates, and metal detectors. When the blindfold was removed, he saw a sleek studio apartment. It was clean and modern, like the guest room at a designer hotel, except that there were no windows. Cameras mounted to the ceiling in transparent hemispheres covered every possible angle. Giving up his freedom also meant giving up his privacy. But he did not care. His voluntary

imprisonment was a dream come true. He was able to unleash his pent-up urges on an object of illicit affection furnished by his keepers. He hardly gave thought to where it was procured or what felonies were committed to obtain it. For the first time in his life, he was able to do things he had only fantasized about. It made him into a superhero of debauchery, a man who needed neither nourishment nor sleep because his fetish gave him the strength of ten men. Wearing out the first object, he requested another, then another and another. He was unstoppable, greedy for pleasure and unimpeded by distraction.

But over time the euphoria slackened and evened out. He grew habituated to a steady supply of forbidden desiderata. As the months ticked by, his obsession was undermined by the constant supply of enticements and the mandate to perform. Much as love can become hate, his fetish became disdain. He grew mean and abusive. He requisitioned bondage gear. He used whips, floggers, and chains on the things he had once worshipped. He kicked them, urinated on them, cursed at them. When the keeper showed up with the day's supply, he would beg through the slit in the door. "Don't make me do this anymore. I'm tired of it. I'm tired of fucking. I know I agreed to it but take them away! Take them away!" The keeper would shove the victim into the room and lock the door. The man's disdain grew so profound that he stopped paying the slightest attention to the things that had once excited him. He sat watching news programs on the television. The headlines were dismal. Global climate change. Hate groups. Data leaks. Authoritarian leaders. He was bored by sex and appalled by the way the world had changed in his absence.

He could take it no more. He began to work out. He did push-ups, sit-ups, chin-ups, planks. Once he felt strong, he beat on the steel door with a cat-o'-nine-tails. He belabored the surveillance cameras with a length of chain. He attacked one of the keepers who brought him his food. He escaped into the corridor but was quickly subdued by guards. They hustled him through a series of electronic gates and deposited him in a private office. Sitting behind the desk making a pyramid with his fingertips was the devil who had offered him this Faustian bargain. He demanded his freedom but in reply the devil only laughed. There was something patronizing but indulgent about it. "I don't quite think you understand what you've gotten yourself into," the devil said. "I was putting faith in your sexual obsessions but perhaps you need to understand the big picture. Let's take a little tour, shall we?"

The guards led him by the shoulders. They entered a long corridor. He could make out a series of steel-reinforced doors, a thick glass window in each of them. "Go ahead," the devil said. "Look." He stood on his toes and peered into a room. Inside a nude man was whipping himself with a flogger. In the next room a man was standing beside a coffin fondling a dead body. In a third room a woman was propped on her elbows with her knees apart. A small dog, a terrier with black and brown splotches on its white body, lapped between her legs as though drinking water from a bowl. In a fourth room, a man and woman were having sex. The devil looked at him with an eyebrow arched like a circumflex. "They're brother and sister." His head began to feel heavy as the air right before a thunderstorm. He cast a glance down the corridor. A perversion

was being performed behind each door. What did it mean? It occurred to him that the cameras in the glass hemispheres on the ceiling were not just surveillance devices. They must be webcams streaming pornographic videos to the internet to pay for this ersatz zoo. Or perhaps this devil had a fetish to kidnap other kinds of perverts. He made it possible for all kinds of creeps — self-abusers, child molesters, corpse fuckers — to sate themselves. Then, once they had stuffed themselves to bursting, he took pleasure in observing their feelings of exhaustion and emptiness.

"You see," the devil said, "science is on the verge of eradicating perversion. Not long ago researchers discovered the gene that causes homosexuality. They learned that they were able to eliminate same-sex urges through therapies targeting the chromosomes on that gene. From there it was comparatively simple to identify the genetic sources for masochism, bestiality, urolagnia, and so forth. Within a generation scientists will be able to weed out every form of sexual abnormality. They like to imagine how society will prosper without such sickness. No more will sexual aberrations cause people to cower in secret, defect from their social groups, or betray their loved ones. They will get married. They will give birth to healthy, beautiful children. They will raise happy families, work hard at their jobs, contribute to their communities..." As the man listened, his brain started to hurt. He felt like he'd been hit in the forehead with a mallet. "But then why do you keep me?" The devil looked at him as though he were a student who did not know how to add or subtract. "You really don't understand? This is like the laboratory where the last stocks of the smallpox virus

are stored. You are a specimen — the last of your kind."

Erotic Brinkmanship

At first she did not realize that his decreasing ability to maintain an erection was a sign of the end. She blamed herself and worried about the amount of protein in his diet. She introduced other women into their sexual encounters. She procured novelties — a man with a third nipple, a fashion model with a skin condition, a dog trained to urinate in its owner's face. But it was not a matter of variety or quick fixes to sexual boredom. His penis was as flaccid as the melted clocks in the surrealist painting. He could have folded it into a pocket or draped it over the back of a chair. Instead he pulled and slapped at it. "C'mon, you fucker." He had always been so reliably lecherous. Now he resembled a child flapping his arms in the air and insisting he could fly. "Don't worry, baby," he said. "I'll eat you." He blazed a trail of kisses from the tips of her breasts to her mons pubis. He kissed the hollows inside the tops of her thighs. He touched a finger to her pussy. She was dry as a slice of toast. He gave up and flopped down beside her on the bed. They were like the dead bodies in a natural disaster.

By the time they were old enough to vote in an election, they had engaged in sex acts which people once knew from psychology manuals written in Latin. He slept with other women and she with other men. They narrated these affairs to one another. She brought home girls for him and he brought home

boys for her. She started sleeping with the girls and he with the boys. They had sex in parks, movie theaters, subway cars. They invited strangers to join them in threesomes and foursomes. They learned how to flagellate someone, how to tie a knot that wouldn't suffocate the person being bound. They urinated on each other, gave each other enemas, shat in each other's mouths. They subjected other sexual partners to sensory deprivation, mummification, slut training, spanking, chastity belts, ball-busting, trampling. They humiliated each other, licked the boots of dominatrixes, took drugs that would enhance their sensual pleasures. Then they hit a wall. They felt as though they had engaged in every conceivable sex act. They had progressed through the series, counted off the numbers, ticked through the alphabet. Sex was not open-ended. It was a finite sequence, a line segment, and they had traversed its length. They had reached the terminal point of eros.

There was no longer anything for them to do except die — but this gave them a desperate idea. They researched the medical procedures which could bring a person back from strangulation, stabbing, coma. They wrote "suicide" notes. They put their affairs in order. He volunteered to go first. If she couldn't revive him, he said, he didn't want to live without being able to fuck anyway. He settled into bed and rolled up a sleeve. She washed her hands then tied a tourniquet made of bondage rope around his bicep. She tapped at a vein with the same motion she used to stimulate her clitoris. The vein responded and she slid the syringe into it. She was unsure how much to give him — what would cause insulin shock but not death? He exhaled, air whistling through his teeth like wind

through a door hanging off the hinges. Beads of sweat gathered on his brow. His teeth rattled like dice in a plastic cup. "I don't feel so good." He began to quiver. The blood drained out of his face and his skin had the hue of refrigerated meat. He passed out. She slapped him, cradled his head in her arms, then poured apple juice into his mouth. He choked, gagged, swallowed some of it. Soon he was shaky but coherent.

Though he felt weak for the rest of the day, he enthused about the endorphin rush caused by the fear of dying, the sweet pinprick pain of the injection, the woozy disorientation that preceded the insulin shock, the lapse of consciousness which he compared to the blackout moment of the most intense orgasm, and finally the slow climb back to awareness, which was like lying in the arms of a lover after a moment of shared bliss. She too derived great pleasure from nearly killing him. She had wanted to masturbate while he was in shock but, this being their first time, had contented herself with squeezing her thighs together. Looking forward to the opportunity to switch roles, she encouraged him to fondle or ejaculate on her. The next night he mounted her on the bed and held a pillow over her face. Her hands clawed the air like the legs of a wounded animal fighting off an attack of vultures. With her strength ebbing, she punched at him then went limp. He touched her breasts as she lay unconscious but he was still unable to develop an erection. When she came to, she looked at him with heavy eyelids. She had the mien of a duchess after a feast.

For weeks they experimented with tranquilizers, opiates, concoctions of alcohol and sleeping pills. They practiced strangling each other with ligatures, suffocating themselves

inside plastic bags, filling the bathtub and holding their heads underwater. Once they had pursued ecstasy with a single-minded devotion. Now they pursued unconsciousness. Sex had been replaced by consensual violence. They brought each other right up to the brink of death then worked feverishly to resuscitate, restore breathing, monitor vital signs. They mastered the simpler ways to engage in erotic brinkmanship. They could knock each other out with a blow to the temple, an overdose of pills, a pair of hands compressing the neck so that the carotid artery stopped supplying blood to the brain. They delighted in fainting, becoming unresponsive, lying in a state of near death for longer and longer periods of exaltation. The Law of Diminishing Kicks, which had already pushed their eros to the point of exhaustion, did its ineluctable work inside their thanatos. The first rush of excitement which they had derived from insulin shock now seemed old and stale. They wanted more intense swoons, blacker blackouts, deeper comas. She slit the veins in his inner elbow then tried to time how long he could bleed out before dying. He submerged her in a bath of ice water and held her in a state of hypothermia until the last possible second before it would cause brain damage.

"Do you understand," he said one day, "the potential of what we've discovered? It could make the whole world want to die. Just imagine how exciting that would be. Everybody! The whole world!" She sighed like a person blowing cigarette smoke into the face of a kitten. "I don't give a damn about the world." She disliked one thing about the way in which they had come to substitute the lethal for the sexual. "I'm tired of waiting for you to revive. We never do it together." His eyes searched for an

answer in the ceiling tiles. “Yes, you’re right.” He tied two ropes to a chin-up bar which he attached to the top of a door frame. He positioned two chairs underneath. They disrobed, embraced, and climbed onto the chairs. Holding hands, they put their necks in the nooses. He leapt first. The chair fell over and he swung in the air like a wind chime. She watched as his face turned purple. His hands clawed at the rope around his throat. His penis flipped and flopped in the air. At the top of its arc it slapped against his stomach. At the bottom it bounced off his thighs. The smacking and struggling drew blood into it. The flesh turned the color of a man’s face when he holds his breath too long.

New Millenarians

She first came to notice as a climate change activist. She had a passion for the environment and a knack for couching scientific complexities in the form of irresistible memes. She was not somber or didactic, like a nonprofit organization or political action group. She was sharp, ironic, sexy. She did not hesitate to scrawl green slogans across her cleavage or to recaption screen grabs from pornographic films. She would repurpose a smoking fetish video to make a point about pollution. She would borrow scenes from rape porn and label the rapist "man" and the victim "earth." She would post these to social media along with calls to action urging people to treat politicians "like the bitches they are." The snarky, freewheeling, uninhibited spirit of her posts caught the mood of people. They were liked and shared and reshared. She became an influencer online. She expanded her message to include the variety of ways in which the planet could be devastated. In addition to global climate change, she cautioned about nuclear war, asteroid collisions, intelligent machines running amok.

As her social media following grew in size and dedication, she came to the attention of other forms of media. News programs invited her to comment on world events. Conference organizers invited her to speak about the catastrophes awaiting the planet. At one symposium, she gave the rousing speech that

transformed her following into a social movement. In the middle ages, she said from the podium, many people believed the world was going to end. This was called "millenarianism" because they thought 1000 would be the year that God wreaked havoc in the form of fires or floods. To placate God, people took to flagellating themselves in public. The flagellants would travel in mobs from town to town, whipping themselves and encouraging others to whip themselves as a way to acknowledge their guilt and express their remorse. She encouraged her audience to emulate this behavior. "Even if you don't believe in God," she challenged them, "you are still guilty. It is mankind ruining the planet. It is you ruining the planet. We must stop this now. We must whip ourselves! We must use the lash to show our leaders that we are guilty! We must use the scourge to demand action!" She had planted disciples armed with bags of whips around the crowd. Men and women removed their shirts and tanned their backs till they bled.

It was not long until this first display of self-flagellation spread to other cities. Mobs of concerned citizens who would not have considered participating in BDSM or kink now flogged themselves on the steps of their local capitals. They left their blood on the lawn of the White House. They took "backies," pictures of the welts on their backs, and posted them to Instagram with captions advocating clean energy, vegetarianism, and public transportation. They threw whips at their politicians and demanded that the men — most of them were men — "hurt themselves like they hurt the planet." Often the crowds grew frustrated at the incomprehension and inaction of their leaders. One mob stormed the stage at a state-of-the-

union speech and attempted to stripe the president. SWAT teams in riot gear fired rubber bullets at the protesters but they were not scared off. They were already bloodied. They had habituated themselves to pain. They swarmed over the police, knocking them down and thrashing them with bull whips. Once they laid hands on the president, they stripped off his suit, bound him to the rear of a police van, and drove him through the crowd so that everyone could take a crack at him.

The press dubbed this movement the New Millenarians. News reports described how public displays of masochism were being used in the service of high-minded ideals. Liberals liked that this new social movement was inclusive and ecologically correct. Conservatives appreciated that it had roots in tradition and religion. This odd mix of approbation gave the burgeoning movement even greater momentum. Pundits speculated about the formation of a worldwide political party. Would its charismatic founder run for office on a New Millenarian platform? She continued to give galvanizing speeches. She encouraged her followers to use dangerous instruments of torture. She urged them to use increasingly aggressive methods of political action. She justified this escalation of violence by saying that, just as it was the duty of the hand to lash the back, so too was it the duty of some individuals to inflict pain on others. The important thing, she assured them, was that mankind as a whole accept its guilt and pay its penance.

One journalist was not blinded by her charisma. He noticed that, however much she encouraged her followers to lash themselves, she never appeared to do it herself. She did not whip her back in public. She did not post pictures of wounds

on her body. She encouraged others to hurt themselves but she did not hurt herself. What was the mystery behind this hypocrisy? And what did people really know about this random individual who had leveraged internet celebrity to become a spokesperson for the most important issues facing mankind? He began to investigate her. He tapped into public records. He filed Freedom of Information Act requests. He conducted interviews. He paid bribes. He learned that she was an only child raised by a single mom who had passed away. She had no employment history. A former landlord confided that she had paid her rent in cash. Her current landlord hinted that she used cryptocurrency. She had no romantic partner. Her known friends were New Millenarians who refused to speak about her to a journalist they considered hostile. What was her story, the journalist wondered. Was she a spy? Had she been involved in sex work or drug trafficking?

Hoping to infiltrate her inner circle, he took to whipping himself at public events and political rallies. He wanted to be noticed, he wanted to prove his devotion to the cause, so he whipped himself harder and more furiously than other followers. He was surprised to learn that flagellation caused physical euphoria. He discovered that belonging to a group and identifying with something larger than himself gave meaning to his pain. He was able to reach new heights of self-injury in the service of millenarian ideals. His professional desire to unmask her wavered before a personal desire to be close to her. He beat himself with such ardor that he was invited one night to join the guards that watched over her apartment. This was a moment he had been waiting for. Would he learn her secrets? The

place resembled a dungeon. The walls were deep red. The lights were low and the windows covered. The furniture consisted of stocks, pillories, sawhorses, smotherboxes. Bull whips and cat-o'-nine-tails hung from the walls. Suddenly he understood what sort of woman she was. It must have given her great pleasure to see the terror in people's faces as she convinced them the world was going to end. For her, the apocalypse was psychodrama.

And yet her strange way of inspiring political action was effective. The media was paying attention to the hordes who whipped themselves out of concern for the environment. Donors were sending funds to the New Millenarian party. Bowing to pressure, politicians were beginning to craft policies aimed at curbing climate change, denuclearizing global powers, surveying the sky for asteroids, and regulating artificial intelligence. Even if she was motivated by the pleasure she took in causing debasement and pain, she was inspiring progress. Perhaps that was precisely it. The most vital problem in the world, the future existence of mankind, required strong leadership. Discipline. Authority. The important thing was not to reveal that she was the doyenne of a house of domination. The important thing was to help her save humanity. He purchased a ball gag and a little globe of the earth. He replaced the ball with the globe, inserted it into his mouth, and tethered the straps behind his head. He walked around with his teeth embedded in the poles and his tongue against the continent of Africa. The gag made it impossible for him to speak. It distorted his face. It hurt his cheeks. Drool leaked out the corners of his mouth and dripped off Antarctica onto his chin. But the message was clear — we should be willing to make sacrifices for the planet.

God's Erectile Dysfunction

He was all powerful except in the bedroom. He could shoot lightning bolts from his fingertips. He could cause powerful storms to rampage across the face of the earth. He could instigate a flood that would annihilate every creature on the planet. He had fashioned the heavens, the waters, the land, man, animals. Fiat lux — he had made light itself. But in the bedroom now there was nothing but darkness. God had developed an erectile dysfunction that, in spite of his omniscience, he could not figure out how to remedy. He called forth the greatest beauties in paradise — Cleopatra, Lucrezia Borgia, Marilyn Monroe — but their expectations weighed on him. The women anticipated nothing less than a mystical experience. They wanted transfiguration, ascension, divine revelation, yet he was no longer capable of elevating the missionary position into an act that would cause them to hear trumpets or see flaming wheels in the sky. Instead they would lie there with their legs spread, mouths agape, eyes full of tears. "My God," they would cry, "why hast thou forsaken me?" Some would blame themselves, beating their breasts in the belief that they were not pleasing in the eyes of the lord. Others would condemn him, take his name in vain, call for him to prove himself through signs and wonders. "I can raise the dead," he would thunder. But their eyes would drift toward his pelvis and harden into an

expression of unbridled skepticism. It was exasperating to be flaccid before a stiff-necked people.

The other gods were only too happy to make fun of him. He had long alienated them with his narcissistic "I am the only god who counts" behavior so they now found it delightful to tweak him about his lack of potency. The Buddhist deities, pointing at his crotch as he walked by, would make wisecracks about nothingness. Grinning, the Hindus would say it was too bad he did not believe in reincarnation. The Greeks, who were always getting laid, took great pleasure in busting his chops. "Oh man," Zeus would say, poking him in the ribs, "I made myself into a swan and raped that Leda bitch last night. What about you — gettin' any?" It was embarrassing. One night the Olympian tried to give him a pep talk. "You gotta get out there, bro. You're losing your grip on your people. Go swing the big dick and show 'em who's boss." After Zeus had raved about a nymphet named Danae — "old enough to bleed," he had said, winking lewdly, "old enough to butcher" — God thought that the expectations of a more vestal lover, chaste and untouched, might not weigh so heavily on him. He manifested himself before a beautiful young woman in a manger. "Let it be done unto me according to your word," she panted, lifting her skirts. But nothing doing. In the morning Mary was still a virgin.

God already had a reputation for turning away his face. Now he turned away the rest of his body too. He retreated to his sanctum sanctorum in a state of deep depression and summoned angels to console him. Laying down their harps, the angels hurried to bat their eyelashes, perform a striptease

with their heavenly raiments, reveal their holy breasts, thrust their seraphic hips, kneel as though to receive communion and take him into their soft wet mouths. Privately some of them wondered how, as the reward for a life of virtue, they were reduced to being in heaven what a fluffer was on the set of a pornographic film. But it was all to no avail. God was done. He was not even a man yet there were questions about his manhood. Rumors about his impairment soon reached earth. "God is dead. No, he is just... we dare not even say... what if he returns to full potency and punishes us?" Clerics justified his dysfunction by saying that, having already sacrificed his only begotten son, he no longer had any need to bear children. Psychologists argued that the crucifixion had traumatized God and left him with a profound fear of procreation. Feminists contended that the rumors were misconstrued and that God was coming out as a woman. Atheists held that God was as real as his erection and satanists delighted in pointing out that Lucifer needed no penis pump.

The erectile dysfunction caused God to behave differently in the bedroom. He became deceitful, cunning, and cruel. He would inflict pain as a way of concealing that he could no longer give pleasure. Other virgins were not as lucky as the one in Nazareth. He would appear to them in the middle of the night, immobilize them with handcuffs, beat the soles of their feet with canes, fasten clamps on their nipples, call them "slut" and "whore," whip their backs until they bled, insert foreign objects into their orifices, then threaten them with eternal damnation if they talked to anyone about what had happened. "Keep your mouth shut or I'll crucify your ass, bitch." Because

he was divine, God proved a spectacular fiend. Rather than use blindfolds, he would take away the power of sight. Rather than use gags, he would take away the power of speech. Rather than raise the dead, he would debase the living. God caused bad luck, freak accidents, natural disasters, heartbreaking tragedies. He did things to people that made the devil look like a saint. Every theft, rape, and murder was an installment in the all-pervading psychodrama that his degenerate mind inflicted on creation. People came to conceive of him as angry, vengeful, jealous, cruel — and yet they justified his brutality with the notion that they were imperfect, ungrateful, wicked. "We must atone for our sins," counseled the priests. Yet a wise few recognized that their sorrows were little more than compensatory acts inflicted on the weak by a sexually frustrated deity.

The more they deluded themselves into accepting his atrocious behavior, the more God felt contempt for his faithful. "What's the matter with these fucking idiots," he would spit. "They've got no self-respect." He watched with increasing repugnance as one Job-like figure kept his faith, said his prayers, performed his ablutions. He deprived the man of nourishment and shelter. He exposed the man to bitter cold and scalding heat. He subjected the man to emotional abuse and physical injury. He made the man suffer through the senseless deaths of his loved ones. He watched with disgust as his every increase in cruelty only caused the man to cling more dearly to his ludicrous faith. One morning God saw the man wake at dawn, kneel to pray, and turn his face toward the rising sun. Scornful, he caused a yellow rain to fall on the upturned face. "Thank you, lord," the man cried out, "thank you." Each expression

of joy filled God with disdain. The only rational response to his cruelty, God thought, was for people to become apostates, heretics, idolators. They should renounce their creator, rise up, call for his head, attack, assassinate, drag his dead body out of heaven and feed it to jackals. "Blaspheme," he wanted to tell them, "whip yourself, eat unclean animals, touch dead bodies, have sexual relations with family members." Yet they were all like this fanatic. Here God was pissing in his face and the man was acting as though flowers had burst from the ground, rainbows arced through the sky, unicorns were leaping over pots of gold, and angels were offering free blowjobs to the poor huddled masses.

Finally God could stand it no more. He decided to put an end to it all. There was a flash brighter than the sun over Times Square. It blinded children playing in schoolyards as far away as Trenton. A wave of scorching heat radiated outward from the very place where the marquees of porno theaters used to promise cheap thrills. A fireball as hot as the sun's core vaporized desnudas with the American flag painted across their breasts. Sheets of skin hung from the faces of panhandlers. Brains spilled out of tourists' skulls. Rockefeller Center burned like a funeral pyre. Shards of Grand Central crushed johns in the Asian massage parlors across 42nd Street. The stone lions guarding the entrance to the New York Public Library turned to dust. Ashes from the Empire State Building covered the Meatpacking District and suffocated the patrons of gay bars. Ubers were buried in rubble. Intense winds shattered windows and overturned cars. Fragments of glass impaled lovers on the Brooklyn Bridge. It was only the beginning. God engulfed the

earth in flames. He reversed the expansion of his body. Galaxies drew in on each other. Stars collided. Matter condensed into a point. It was the Last Judgement. God saw everything he had degraded and destroyed. Behold, it was very good. “For the Lord your God is a consuming fire.”