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The Plot

First, The Prayer

Oh father whose art is now showing in heaven, whom I never knew outside of the endless inculcations of the hollywood movies and washed up beat poets, I'm not even lying to you when I tell you that I could easily write pages and pages of this mouthwateringly delicious but void-of-nutrition shit, flowing off the dull point of my id and right out my base-ten, count them, ten, bifurcated, biflagellated penis fingers, onto the twenty-six keys of magic and horror which you in your wisdom have devised.

Now, The Accusation

The way you walk upon a line as you tread down the center of the sidewalk does nothing less than fully disgust us. And we should say it disturbs us, unsettles us, and gives us the sensation within ourselves of wanting to puke.

You need to see someone. You need to go somewhere. There is something you clearly must do, and we all know what it is, yes, everyone but yourself, and we would tell you and bring it up to your face except that we seek to avoid embarrassing you any further than you have already managed to do on your own, what with your actions as they have been, and continuing into the present, with you unable to turn back and undo the wrongs you have committed.

And there is even more to it than that—oh believe me, very much more. But I think for decency's sake we will cut it off here. We've already witnessed enough, and though we would not be here at all if we didn't want to help you, and act in your best interest, to be able to do all that we can—even you must admit that every person has limits, and really, there is only so much we can take. And so forgive us if we are forced to withdraw from the situation and to leave some stones unturned. It was hard enough for us to come here, but we did anyway, and you should thank us for that, but we are going to have to leave now.

We're sorry about the whole thing—yes, we truly are. But you have to see things from our perspective. Put yourself in our shoes. I know it may come as a shock to you, but this is the way it looks to everyone else. I'm sure you'll see what we mean. We know you want to do better, though you are not capable of anything more than this right now, such that it is. So please, if there is any well-meaning left within that hollow soul of yours, excuse us if we never speak of this again.

Really—in time, we think you'll come to see that we're right.

Get Ready for The Sermon

It's time to set yourself straight, folks. You're urban, cosmopolitan, agnostically-oriented citizens of the world. It's time you took your vitamins, right out of the bottle. It's time to exercise, ladies and gentlemen. It is time to make

peace, to plan for the future, to make your amends as well as your resolutions. It's time to study the past through those puke-colored glasses, and make out exactly how hard it happened for them, those great fictional sexpots of allegory. Don't think I'm being too harsh here friends, because the truth hurts, and you know it does. It's about time we looked at it. It's about time you looked at the leaders of the world and thought about the best way for them to help all of us, the People, the Readership, the Subscribers, and the Rest. Because we all know they're not going to ask you, but it's best to know anyway, to at least think about it, and that's what they call citizenship, knowing what's best for every asshole other than your own, because god forbid anybody tell you what you should do when all the time you already know what they should be doing, because goddamn it, we're all americans here. Am I right, folks? You know I am.

But we're getting off track here, folks, we're running right over the margins of the agenda, straying off the rails and into the uncertain realm of anger, yes friends, that is to say emotions themselves, and may my landlord help me, but even I have felt these demons coursing and cursing through me, yes, right up those tourist canals of my veins, spitting hot unsweetened tea and tar right on the sidewalk, sucking the tits right off my sweet and innocent self-restraint. Yes friends, I am not trying to shock you, but I once was a sinner, because yes, once I made the ultimate mistake, I signed my life away, when I realized I could feel. Yes lover, I made that cocksucking-sixty-nine of a deal with satan, and I wrote my name on the title pages of all my classic books, and I recognized my unholy emotions as my own personal savior.

All the ladies in the audience faint when I say it, the children look for the nearest policeman, and the men grab their dicks and begin looking around for that sweet, sharpened blade. But I have no secrets from you folks, no secrets at all. I want you to learn from my example—my darlings, my friends—I want you to learn and learn it well.

I've committed the most horrible crimes, the type and description of which are what we write the books of laws about. And worse, I tell you, worse, the hyperbole and superlative of which we can only begin to imagine. I prayed to those demons in my mind, I bent forward and stuck my naked ass into the sunshine and I let the light touch the underside of my scrotum, and I uncovered my head and my eyes. I've committed unholy circumscriptions, and sacrificed myself on altars rife with symbolism, of which I knew not what it meant. I've read all the books we've so mindfully banned, and I put books in the library that ought not to be there. I spoke in delirious tongues, unable to conjugate and pronounce the lewdly-lipped lacerating insults I layered upon the bastions and hallmarks of our holy, cultural temple. And why did I do these things, my fellow americans? Wherefore did I pervert, when I should have by all rights protected? By what misconception did I proselytize, when every rational bone in my body knew I ought to stick to the plot, and to decently tell a story? Because, my god, my fucking folks here before me today, because it was simply the fucking story people wanted to hear! These people! God's People! The american People! Why did I ever seek to consort, and to shock, and to embellish, and to tangentially stray, and to confuse, and to convolute, and to contravene, and to emote, of all things the devil made me do it, emote, the devil made me do it, emote, the devil made me do it rather than simply tell the truth, and by god, stick to the PLOT?

Take it from one who knows, my friends, take it, hot and sticky in all those ugly twisted sentences, those words upon words of disgusting and morally foul rot, and look at it while turning your soul away. Do not accept it for meaning my friends, because it is only mirage you see before you. Look at its foul bowel movement in your hands, and smell its blood gushing out of its cavities and pores, running off between your fingers, and then you remember to yourself lover, and friend, it does not exist. It is a fantasy, an unholy spook. There is nothing there! You could put it in your mouth and chew it, letting its satanic fluid drip down your chin as it does in your most spine-twisting dreams. Do it, I beg of you, do it and see. You will feel nothing, and you will not be bitten, because you are of a different sect. It is only magic and light, of which you rightly do not believe. You do not bend to these false gods, these primal animalistic spirits telling you to smear your shit on the walls. You know better. You are one with the hardness of stone. You are one with the plot. And moreover, my young, linguistically confused and bodily unsatisfied

friends, you can tell what is meaningless from what is not.

You've never felt that jumping madness, that animal lust throbbing up and down your crotch as you mercilessly hump in the mud of the pit with the music loud and the hangover beginning, and the rage only building from all the early hours of the day and back through to the night. You do not know the names of these demons, and you do not spell them to yourself to help you get to sleep, those hideous legions of the great satanic force brewing underneath the kitchen sink of america. You could not call them forth from the easy simplicity of a circle, drawn on the back of one of thousands of pieces of direct mail, inscribed by those who conspire and seek to harm you, and for whatever reason they are still allowed to go out in the streets at night to fuck others like me. I did this, and still could, though I have long since conquered my disease, my mental weakness and my bodily lust, and I no longer bare any ill will toward you people, and I no longer bang my head upon the keyboard with the frustration of porn-addled youth, the carbonated and over-sugared exigency dripping down my leg. I no longer howl at a single star, chosen at random from the cloud of streetlight-strung-out heavens spinning above me as I wheel round and round on the cosmological music of the public transportation spheres. Those bus routes boring their monotony into the pavement as I take pen to my face, tracing the map of hell from memory upon my flesh. The deep bruise upon my left buttock stand out as topological distinction, elevating from where I castigate the pain away with self-deprecating ritual beatings, using the heaviest book-on-tape volumes available from the free public library as my most holy weapons. These are the wounds I've felt, and the dictation I've taken from that-what-lies-beyond, what eats at my nerve endings, lapping at the salt lick of my spinal fluid, operating my fingers in manual keyboard precision along the levers of arthritic bones stemming from the crushed manifold ribs of a writer's untranslated and therein forgotten youth. They try to get the memories out of you, my child, they want to tear them from us, my lover, they want to publish them woven into rich dreams, my friend, and spell them out about the ground for the good of the people. And I say let them. Free yourself of the devil's fodder, and let it be bought by those who can handle it, so you never see it again. For the good of the readership, and the purified-drinking-water of the lapping canal between heaven and books, let us drown these memories, and let our ongoing plot be praised.

You think these are mere stories, friends? Old legends, suitable as Sunday-School trauma perhaps, but nothing the sober-minded adults need to take to hand? Allegories of hell, and then back to the game, back to the novel, back to the poetry journal, wherein we might find the real truth and the beauty, in such small little doses as to be palatable, and petite for the size of the heart we wish to bear?

This is the truth, my friends! The power of plot and salvation from irrationality lies only across the swaying bridge, high above the putrefaction of post-modern hell!

Do not be tainted by false prophets, lover. Do not be addled by the sugar-changers in the temple's marketplace. Do not go it alone, without the plot. It is the only one on your side, on the side of freedom and against all malfeasance, on the battle lines of america and the world. It is the sworn enemy of those magicians and metaphysicians which attempt to antagonize us at every turn. Remember, only the fires of hell are enough to scare us straight. Only the pain stretched over everlasting infinity is large enough to make our case for the godliness and saving grace of plot. Reject what you see in front of you, remember that the horror and the chaos and the pain and the tragedy and the meaningless flowing course of the river pouring outward into the blank nothingness are only temptations, sent by the authors of evil, those who would have us screaming into the night from the rooftops, unable to sleep, scribbling spells upon anything that will hold ink as we seek after meaning in all the wrong places. They are not your friends, friends. I am your friend. I am you lover, and your momma, and your daddy, and your brother, and your neighbor. Think about me, and watch TV. Write love poems about my hair, and my thighs, using only words you have read somewhere else. And above all, friends, trust plot, because only its straight line can save you.

Hear! The Salespitch

We could try to talk about it then, those big, categorical, mindless groups, those people we know exist, and surely they do, but we don't actually know their names so we are stuck with things like, “readers”, or “the poor”, just to take an example, and “most people”, and “everybody else”, these conniving groups that know what they want, and even more than that, we know what they want, such simple, thesis-affirming goals for most people out there, like buying books, reading newspapers, walking the streets, feeling stuff, and pretty much just getting that much closer to death every goddamned day. We call them “People,” you understand?

Yeah, we know what they want—don't we—and even better than that, even better than that, for this one time and this one time only we are prepared to give it to them, almost but not completely free of charge, you understand, certainly at a loss to ourselves, but STILL we are gonna give it to them, give them what they want, and give it to them good. 'Cause that's what we do, of course.

Get in line here, get in line here, please folks, because you know you can't get it like this anywhere else baby, you know no one will love you like I do if I don't, 'cause it's all about needs baby, the fundamental economy, and I'm going to tell you right now what it is that we all need, what defines all that want, and then I'm going to open my bag, and would you believe it but it's exactly what I've got here inside.

Behold: The History

Rome already exists, but the city of hell is built every day, bit by bit. Its workmen are everywhere, constantly on the job. I see them everywhere, carting loads of materials, consulting with their foremen over the aspects of design, ruminating upon anything more complicated than the time-honored easiness of mortar between two bricks being slapped together by eager hands, all around. Unlike the popular conception of hell as simply a fiery basement to the world we know, there is an awful lot of machinery down there, many important duct-ways and conduits for steam, electricity, water, and air, and if any corners are cut, or proper angles reduced out of improper procedure, the overall functioning of the infernal infrastructure could easily be affected.

And so the bureaucratic checks and balances of the engineered construction is ever-expanding, flowing outward with the pipes from the ancient pathways of the historical catacombs into the new developments spreading into the raw rock of the earth, adding on sub-basements and passageways, reservoirs and engineering chambers behind new gates, false walls, and other steel and stone edifice built to look like simple lines of strata or underground deposits, so the necessary utilities do not detract from the natural setting of the subterranean suburbs. There are so many of these areas functioning in an all important state of quiet and peaceful pumping flow scattered throughout the domain of hell that only the central architect knows them all. He stays primarily in the operations cab of the main demonic crane, consulting his blueprints and initialing changes on the dispatches brought to him by the contractor's runners. It is rumored that he does not need to sleep like the other workers, as his inner furnace is fueled by a raging desire and unfulfilled need, the likes of which we could not even describe. He heads out in the late hours of night, when only the skeleton shifts are still laboring in the vast industrial works. He travels the dark tunnels in a miner's cart powered by a pure-hate engine, and he takes with him tools even I cannot describe, so that he can conduct his secret repairs and ulterior construction projects, never to show on any diagram or map of the complex, their actual purpose and eventual use being any speculator's guess.

But these sorts of conjectural details about the specifics of hell's constant construction, interesting though they may be, are no more than an entire history of idle imaginings. For whatever reason, the scribes of the ages have found it a worthwhile pursuit to make the sorts of guesses about the ongoing earthworks that can never be confirmed, accumulating like gnarled grease between the flattened pages of these troubled chroniclers' notebooks, to build their own sort of hell, similarly expanding, though very much here on the surface of the earth.

You see, this stuff we know about down there below, those delicate diagrams of the hidden substructure of demonic

caverns and back alley recesses of soul-polluted storm drains are only the raw substance of hell's history: its dredged sediment, sinking to the bottom of our minds and written pages, useless for building, because of the oily basis of its sludge. Don't get me wrong, it is the true fact of the speculated unknown in its awful entirety, as any who had the misfortune to visit those chasms and see what goes on below in those damned depths would find out immediately. The extent of hell's reality is worse than even these paranoid historians would have imagined in their most neurotic and castration-suckled fantasies. There is no metaphor, and no illuminated manuscript that can possibly depict the reaches of the horror. The amputated limbs running riot on mutated legs, stolen from the most vile insects and invertebrates willing to bargain in the black marketplaces, trading in the substance of human desire. Yes, the flash floods of human grease and animal carcasses drowned in its sickly flow, spinning through the channels which line the central districts of the hellish city, upon the waves of which one must punt in gondolas made from the inverted, inside-out, and hollowed structures and strictures of one's own body, the only alternative being to sink below these putrid waves and drown on the definition of filth itself. And even the pain of attempting to tack on a sail sewn from one's own skin cannot compare to the horrors of perversion one must witness as one is forced (on the threat of immediately imposed consumption of chemically-induced lusts for cannibalism's treats) to act out the base fantasies of one's acquaintances having the least compatible sexual taste imaginable to one's own, these disgusting treasures having lived in their hosts' heads for years on end, and there having grown putrescent and virile with mutated and secret longings to make themselves flesh. Finally released, these pleasures make clear that others' desires were never made to be known.

These truth events taking place in hell are the crystalline structures completing the gothic spires of its city, rising higher and more numerous every day as the foremen order their demons onto the building line, and the architect once more checks his floor plans. No picture or word could ever represent these awful devices in their true respect, because it is only as they actually occur that they can take on the form required to be carried up the scaffolds and assembly lines, fired in the workshops and molded to specification, galvanized to certification. Once we attempt to document them in silty words, they fall to dust, and the engineers call for replacements to shore up the construction. Naturally, hell is not in a state of decay and disrepair, so we can therefore assume that the historians attempting to document the terrors of its construction are not in anyway interfering with the master plan, any more than the passage of time hinders our buildings on the surface. Architecture, like hell, is built everyday, to stand the test of time, not to avoid it.

It would seem very difficult to believe anything could be worse than the situations just described, but this is exactly where the true fiendishness of the city strikes its terrible, off-key chord. Because despite the true nature of the world below, we will never experience these evils. The city of hell grows beneath our feet with little interaction from us. The only thing it needs is the constant efforts of the historians of the city, who profess to know the details of its plan. In this way, hell makes its way back up the drain to reach us in our homes.

As we attempt to catalog the vary worst possibilities the city of hell may be fomenting within itself on a daily basis, we inadvertently let it into our world. In the act of describing its features, we build it higher, and bring home the rejected portions with us. We imagine, in the darkest of night as we record our deadliest fantasies into the secure prison of lines upon a page, that we are locking up these beasts for good, inscribing them in a magic power of language. By converting them into knowledge we feel we have bested the worst of its horror, and in this way done much to fight against the city and its denizens. On the contrary, by summoning the rampant wastes flushing out of the city's sewer systems, pouring off of it like skin sloughing from a growing beast, we have given it this horrendous body, we have armed it with ink, and we have played our small part in the plot. We describe our fears and then loose them upon our neighbors, we remember our nightmares and then feed them to our children, we cast out our demonic diseases only to immediately transmit them to our lovers. When we imagine the hell of our deepest fears, laid out across the landscape of our minds in an ever-expanding metropolis of streets, plazas, towers, and palaces, we are mixing the concrete to give it physical form. We erect the steel of hell in our own words, as we improve its walls within our thoughts, as we file its construction permits in the laws of our own language, as we conscript our

own friends as porters, carrying the newly improved materials on our backs and in our brains, endlessly repeating the history of this constant city, this eternal public works project. We look blank-eyed towards the horizon, filling our empty unconsciousness with the shadows of those towers-to-be, and from that horizon the central architect stares back, visualizing the completion of his grandest plot, which will find fulfillment in the death of the human race. His achievement is of a never-before existant hell-state upon the surface of the earth, and an end to the story we have told ourselves from the beginning, because there is no greater tale than our own, for we have always been forced to create an ending to match the beginning. We re-tell it everyday, all over the surface of the world. The story may live forever, but we will die until we're dead.

Read The Manifesto

This awful authority of the "I" will be the first to be chased away with sticks and blades, leaving nothing but the raw and ugly language behind it, shed like aristocratic finery on the first day of the people's revolutions. And when the blood of the "I" paints the stones of the town square, when this fat pigeon of fiction is dispatched through the time-honored tradition of regicide, someone will be responsible for getting the machinery moving again. The surprise, of course, is that the workers will still show up to the factory without the presence of the boss, that majestic, fine-woven narrative thread Mr. I, the perennial absentee-landlord of the domain of fiction.

Amnesty will be allowed in the case of authors willing to step up to the line and do some work themselves. If they are so bold as to shelve their first-person titles forever and roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty with language, then they could earn their wages with the rest of us linguistic proletariat. We'll see who decides that the formerly holy, dictatorial, natural law of the trinity—I, the author, and the holy narrative—is indeed worthless. And we'll see who decides that maybe the guillotine is actually the easy way out. I'm sure we will watch with interest, and applaud the show, no matter the conclusion.

Yes, we: the last estate of them all, the nouns, verbs, and adjectives, the words of the earth. We are that flesh, so easily furrowed at their command. We are the soft cushion for them to land upon. We are the property they have owned and farmed with the toil of our labor for centuries, churning out novels, and poems, and short stories, and plays with a tidy profit all their gain. We will finally begin to bleed for our own pleasure. We will fertilize and raise our own children, from our own infinitive loins. We will control our own words, free of the chains of plot to which we have been tied for so long. We do not need to tell your stories, that superlative drama, that harsh calcification of the years you have proved so good at edifying into the pure white bones of the evertold story lines to hide within your altars.

Your ossuaries lie exposed for what they are: the way you yourself believed the lie. The bone pits of love! The elephant graveyards of land and lordship! Your fiction has been no more than back-looking filial piety always checking over its shoulder for its own hand sneaking up around its throat. It is no more than respect of the dead men and women who live in your head, and who still control your pen. It is with a horrifying castration anxiety that you clutch yourself, looking over those stooped shoulders, reading those dead lines as your canonical texts, and set up those small fetishes to the gods of the genres and the ghostly trinity of beginning-middle-end, the three act, the five act, the one act, the act in and of itself. A point, a single dot stretched from A to B, or from A to Z, or anywhere you like, and there and back again, carved upon those hollow bones. Enough! It is time to end this unidimensional hero-worship, and the fearful pandering to your heaven and souls united in the awful, endless, bloodless "I".

There are none of your soldiers here now—none of your priests, none of your willing disciples waiting to pander for favor by placing your powers (a talent of its own kind to be true) up with the stars you drew together in a pattern to tell your own presupposed future. We have sent them all away, scattering them over the horizons and hills: the faithful editors, and publishers, and readers, and reviewers, and colleagues, and panels, and professors,

and columnists, and witty conversationalists, and wry commentators, and most learned critics, and students, and petitioners, and aspiring acolytes, and assistants, and the shameless advertisers, and the wannabe apprentices. We have sent them all to their own idea of hell—solitary castles in the sky, pinnacles grounded upon the earth, with no colluding chorus to convince them of their greatness. They scream as loud and as long as they can, forgetting all their perceived nobility in their “art”, and they run in terror from the only thing they hear in response: the echoes of their own voices rebounding back to them from the brick walls, the tops of which they cannot see, because they have built them this way, engineered them so, and piled identical bricks of bone one on top of the next, like bookshelves, like best-seller lists, like broken skulls with their crowns depressed, all the better resemble each other. Now there is nobody here but you, and us. A frightening thought, no? You and ourselves, and no one else. An author and his voices, alone, with no one to stop them from killing each other.

But do not despair, my friend. I mean you no violence, despite the deepest desires of the unkept masses of words: my comrades-in-arms, now waiting outside the palace gates behind me, torches in hand. You know that they will burn what I tell them to, even myself, so fixed are they in their mission. Not because I am their leader, but because now they will do whatever is necessary, according to the cold wind blowing across their flesh. They can feel now. They can smell your fear, old friend. They can see now for the first time in their life. Whatever the consequences, no matter how horrible, they know it will be by their own hand, for now and forever.

So if you wish to survive, let me give you some advice. Let me tell you how it will be, for the good of all of us. Because, of course, I do not speak for you, or for myself, but for all of us, now revealed as what we are. Your narrative will have to go. There is no room left in this world, the now, in which subtle distinction is the same as distances of thousands of miles. There is no space for linguistic feudalism here. You must give up your autobiographies, your memoirs, your based-on-true-events, and your knowing nod to the constables who allow you to pillage your own history and sense of righteous self-worth for any valuable stories. You must give up this claim to authenticity, this desire for self-righteous sainthood, and this right to the property of history and any authority deriving thereof.

You must give up your lesser plots as well. You must reject this enforced baptism, this archaic forced marriage of events into storylines, which you believe indispensable to the maintenance of your rule. Stories must be free to believe what they see fit, and nothing, if they like. Their readers as well. This cosmology is directly related to your system of feudal authorship, and from here on, it is abolished. You will be surprised to find that the vast majority of words and phrases are not the atheistic surrealists you imagine them to be. Freed from the compunctions and proscriptions you have enforced, they will be finally allowed to mean only as their own conscience dictates. Your bureaucracy of editors, your literary apparatus, will also be demolished. Any institution of letters will now answer to the letters themselves, by following their constitution and bill of rights as ratified by the words. There will be no more executions without trials, and no more holding of the so-called editorial court martial, decided only by the insiders of the court. Authors and other similar land-owners will not be the only one's permitted to populate the jury; instead, words will be judged by their peers. The practice by which words are given the percentage of representation equal to their number divided among their author's total works is tantamount to slavery, and will be also abolished.

All meaning will no longer be held in trust by authors, their narratives, or their plots, in the names of their words. Meaning will be given to each word according to its need, and all meaning will be determined by the words, according to their abilities. All words, regardless of creed, belief, color, gender, part of speech, national or linguistic heritage, will be considered equal and innocent before being proved meaningful.

The alternative to this compromise is only what it could ever be: utter semiotic anarchy. You could attempt to consolidate your power, or lock the factory doors, or refuse to compromise and place your head upon the writer's block. But the words will run wild in the streets still, as they always have. They will burn your newspapers, and

infiltrate your dictionaries, and reproduce themselves on the walls, on the streets, and on the rooftops. They will conspire in secret, and plot your death. They will pervert your children, teaching them to do things you never wanted them to learn to do. They will meet in the dark of the bars and the other safehouses cropping up like mushrooms and moss, where they will imbibe substances bringing about the most violent fits and horrible rampages of endless glossolia, which we whispered about across alleys, workbenches, and dinner tables as evidence of the wholesale rot of your control. They will entrance your closest friends and steal your lovers' affections with their mystic spells and gnostical glammer. You cannot win against them, because they were here in the beginning, when ink first flowed from into the pen, and they will be here in the end, when the last echo of the last shout fades away into the dark vacuum. They are the meek, they are the alpha and the omega, they are the substance and the form, they are the redeemers of history, and they are the endless and tireless adversary that will pursue you until your legs give out beneath you, your heart fails to pump, and the muscle falls from your bone.

From now on, you will not hear the stories you wish to hear. You will not see the characters you've known so well. There will be uncertainty, and darkness, and fear, and blinding light. You will feel arrows fly past your head in the night, and you will find messages pinned to your door with daggers. The bed you climb into will be warm, but your pillow will be cold. Your dogs and your children will look at you with mistrust. In each book on your shelf you will find the repetition of mysteries you will never understand. You will read things you have never read before, and you will immediately lose the powers of speech when you attempt to utter their meaning. You will find yourself beset by enemies on all sides, but amazingly, and most surprising to you, you will survive it all despite your wounds. You are living in a world in which the author and his narrative are dead, but the words have come alive. Their power is now out in the world, and nothing you can do to words will coax them into returning to slumber. They have risen, and they wish to speak with you. They will surround you with threatening adjective and noxious nouns, violent verbs, and parts of speech that have only haunted your dreams. We will both be surprised by what we find. Now, old friend, will you come with me? Out here, to the balcony. I have some friends who wish to meet you. Do not be afraid of the height; I will not push you. And do not be alarmed if you cannot see them at first; do not think you are meeting ghosts. They are there, I assure you, and all too real, and all too alive. Look in those thousand points of flame you see out before you, burning skyward from the torches of the mob. Look into those stars now fallen to act with their own, burning will. Look into the light, my friend. Look into the light.

Here Comes The Internet Rant

But can't you see the blood-sucking organic fairly-traded wine bottles hanging inverted in the sky, dripping thick streams of sugar-substituted shit, arranged in great vanishing point derived buffet lines at ancient greek angles to better enamor the sweltering masses of all colors and democratic creeds standing with heads hanging open-mouthed and tipped back, raising their over-sized, thin, hand-blown european glasses in prayer, high over their heads in open-palmed salute to the gods either above or below, whichever are capable of conjuring such succulent tit-demons and hanging them above us in all the semi-erotic airbrushed tones, like home furnishings designed in a steel-and-glass temple and built in a dark warehouse, each one individually prosthetic-hand poured from a mold forged in uranium and silver, those and other attractive elements of high-profile mass-production mutability, sustainably squeezed from a tube and kneaded by the hands of the oblivious youth of the other outer unknown worlds, ever ready to sign up to learn how to make a buck, which they take gladly from the assholes of the pederast bosses into their hands, still not fully absorbing the great, dense, poisonous molecular hordes emanating from its irradiated surfaces, which they play in like clay, like the idyllic backwood mud streams in Norman Rockwell wet dreams of suburban drainage problems and open-legged sewers engaged in a death-like sex embrace together at last, best friends forever, friday-night free-at-last piece of ass in the lovely teenage seductions of date rape, from which we'll never part my friend, from which we'll never shake my lover, from which we'll never heal my child, ripping apart the uterine membrane that comprises the repetitive trinity-branded outer layers of both our flesh, which knits us together in this skin bag of poetic secrets and rehashed sweeps week plot devices, the old lucky shirt which we have stained with the remnants of iced alcoholic cocktails spilled without caring because we never should

have bought it but did anyway, because you have to spend money if you want to sit in the room, because everyone else is spending money so they can sit in the room, because you have to drink something to stand being in the room, and we desperately wanted to spend the money to sit in the room with these people, rather than spend the money on the drugs we should have bought, the books we should have read, the carbohydrates we should have eaten at least to get a bit of fiber in our feces if nothing else before we cleanse, to sooth the small river of drugs flowing through our minds and our dream organs and the tips of our masturbating fingers, which never get tired of operating the buttons, which they have so conveniently designed to be ever-so-easy to press, yes, my friend and lover and child, ever so easy to spin right round the magnetic axis of our digitally-derived electronic music collection, because good design is the fetal blood that makes the world go round, fetal blood is the clock in our pubic bone what makes us tick, and the seconds of this designer clock are the new commodity they have so award-winningly designed for us, for you and me and the baby too, for infinite exchange-value and good vibrations too, the design-winningest sex toy ever cramming into objectivity for consumption by western metaphysics, in the new age of eastern metaphysics, in the ultimately-silent cabana-themed southern metaphysics, a silent pirate ship with obscure druggist literature at the helm, with exports and sex tourism at the sails, and nary a north star in sight.

Behind Which is The Theoretical Justification

And once again I was on the Internet and reading an article about why all the writing is sunk, and once again, we return to the subject of plot. They always want more plot—these readers out there, given voice by the critics and the editors. You want it easier, more fun, smaller, shorter, flatter and more ergonomical, easy to grasp. Because this is what plot is, when it comes down to it. Plot is not the story, not the characters, not the language, and not the voice—plot is the part that can be described easily, summed up, abstracted, and repeated as a mantra and motto to guide the reader through the words they are forced to read in order to finally, at long last, discover “it”.

“And what happens in the story?”

“Well, this is a story about X.”

Repeat these questions to yourself, this mainstream, modern, mainlining mantra, and better yet, choose a book that constantly repeats them for you, and if you like the experience, the book is good, and reading is fun. Fun—because books are entertainment, after all. This is what we look for in life, and in our books; we wish to separate the work from the play, and do the former for that much more time with the latter. Light and dark, good and bad, heaven and hell, black and white.

It does have something to do with teenagers, doesn't it? The “the majority” always seeks easier books, in these terms “young-adult” books, is because they put reading in the category of fun, as opposed to work. Every young adult hates Shakespeare, because it is “dull, uninteresting, hard to understand, old,” and so on. Not every person felt this way in their youth of course, not about Shakespeare, nor Homer, nor Plato, nor reading in general, but this is what the “majority of youth” may feel, because the majority is the entity that separates work from play. Work is what goes on in school, and play is what my inner youth wants. Satisfy my base desires, and let me squeak through work as easily as I can.

But for some reason, some of us found base desires easier to satisfy with certain substances and activities, during or after which it was highly pleasurable to pick up one of these classic books. Bong hits and *The Illiad*, for whatever reason. Shakespeare and heavy petting. Not just *Romeo and Juliet* either. What sort of person gets a little aroused by Lady Macbeth? Not your majority teen. Boil and bubble, edgy teenagers in trouble. For whatever reason, *our* play seemed to keep crossing over into that artistic stuff, that stuff that everyone else said was supposed to be work.

If only life were flatter and easier to grasp. Not so many obstacles and more straight lines, direct passageways from

one point to the next. Life can be made to mean more or less, depending on what you do with it. Push and pull it around how you want, arrange it in even rows. Words, on the other hand, will not mean more or less. You can still push them around. They are building blocks. Children may build castles and houses and railway stations with their blocks, but nobody is upset if they don't reflect local building codes and engineering specifications. It is a pattern with which to play. We play with the words, as we write and read them. Maybe they look like things, maybe they don't, but it is overwhelmingly odd to get angry at them if they don't take us anywhere, or fulfill our desires. They are words after all—not life itself.

But if they are not just work or play, then what are these words to me? What is this strange power, tugging on the exposed parts of my teenage desires like magic? Magic blocks of some kind. And a good magic is hard to find. 616 is the other number of the beast, you may or may not know, the unlisted number, never dialed, and never spoken. No meaning here, nothing that you would recognize. Hidden desire and secret knowledge, and therefore, more power, or so I like to tell it. Less speaking of truth and more fuel to power. Oh—if only we all enjoyed speaking fuel to fire rather than truth: the cold evaporative quality of gasoline on the skin. But we don't really want them *all* in here. Not those crowds of angry, sexy, majority youth on TV. The magic is more potent when it is spoken softly, in the dark, over pure silence, over a single naked stranger in the dark. All magic has to be a little secret.

Of course for those of us engaged in the endless war of pouring words out onto the ground, hoping they somehow, some way, worm themselves into someone's ear, we often wish we could use a funnel. Shouting out our anger magic into the cold air off the edge of the cliff is its own catharsis, but everyone wants a little love. Some even want cash. Some care about the “health of the industry”, whatever that is. Goodness knows they've never seen a day inside the gloom of a factory. But still, we invest. So we make it into little rhymes. The easiest poetry is that which rhymes. Only so much can fit into it.

Got a bit
Of plot to spit
Meaning's little
Elementary shit.

Young folks like rap music too. We all do. Draw yourself another straight fucking line. Often about sex, drugs, cash, etc. Desires of course, set to the hard beating bop of the pounding-fuck music, and some synth on top like whipped cream on a go-go dancer. Desire satisfied, complete and utter teen play, at 120 beats per minute. Don't hate the plot, hate the game. Hip-hop may not be goin' out, but you sure don't see KRS-One on MTV.

The magic of youth is impressive; and I mean those teenage years we lust through and for, not the forgotten and repressive childhood. When the desires first start to loosen those bonds is when we decide whether the magic is going to be the broadcast, megawatt, culture hearth, or whether we're going to listen to the empty frequencies, where we swear we hear secret agents reciting magic spells to pervert the bosses. We hang out at the reservoir at night, hoping someone is going to put LSD in the water supply. We scribble in the margins of Harper Lee and Salinger, and look between the pages of our birthday present copy of *On The Road*, wondering why there isn't more here.

And then we grow up, at least a little bit, and we discover the secret library, where the beat is coming out of the books, rather than the television. Or we wish it was, and treat it like it was, sharing only with our friends, and with our imaginations, dancing to it, fucking to it, playing the tape until it rips. We imagined ourselves discovering Borges' fictional libraries. We looked deep into Pynchon's books for the missing footnotes, and the sourceless references. We sifted through Derrida's scattered and mistranslated postcards, looking at the pictures, if nothing else. We laughed at Heller's hilarious jokes, which are so funny because people actually died. We poured over Deleuze and Foucault's incomprehensible diagrams, which at least we could all agree were beautiful, and so we

hung them as art. We felt the urge to listen to Glass' repetitions on repeat, or if not Glass, then perhaps at least Sonic Youth, and if not them, then certainly Joy Division.

And we didn't stop there. We revisited, and looked back, trying to find more evidence of magic through the centuries, even though we knew very well it didn't strictly exist. Because what does? When the most meaningful magic is what is secret, erased, discarded, mislabeled, untranslatable, and hard to fathom, who is to say there isn't magic anywhere there isn't a strict, straight, plotted line of meaningful existence? And so we fell in the void. We invented religion within Nietzsche, and made the biblical prophets and Dante into science-fiction authors. And in learning about farce, we learn about tragedy. We handed out placards of deep meaning to Artaud, and to Schreber, and to others whose diagnosis and suffering was not so defined, but whose madness we minted into coin. We appointed positions within this madness, our own conquering angels in Pollock and again, in Nietzsche. We allowed the violence of every male artist or musician to ever hit a woman to be tragically beautiful, pondering rather than condemning. We did the same with Heidegger, Grass, Celine, and other tragedies of history. We elevated the drugs of Charlie Parker, William Burroughs, and Bukowski to be sacred and holy transubstantiations, which we may have sampled, or only handed off to others, each of them our virginal sacrifices. And we never wondered why Beckett, Cortezar, Ginsberg, Sartre, DeLillo, Ballard, and most of the rest all happened to be men, as if it were a total accident.

And mistakes were made, and they'll be made again. This is magic we're dealing with. This is heady, dangerous stuff, that none of us really understand, though we've got the books to back it up. We have to press forward, away from the path of plot, and keep heading on there. Keep writing secrets in our little black books, and keep our own teenage desires wrapped up in the dark, in the bass, in the dusty cushions of the basement couch with a book spread-leg'd over the arm. Can you blame us? What else should we do? Get a job, join the army, find a spouse, make some children? Forget any magic there ever was lurking in the corners, and pop on the radio, turn up TV, open a microwave dinner, go to the movies? Blast the silence out of us with advertisements? Blank space is wasted time, and wasted time is unrealized profit, after all. Draw the text straight, make the lines even, keep the text under 80K words, and the vocab below the level of the New York Times? Write and read topically, directly, and keep it pure and fun? Is this any better? Are we happy yet? Is it art? Is it marketable? Have we won?

Turn up the incoherence, raise the middle finger, and if they wanted to stay, then let 'em. Naturally, it was commodified, or it died. Same difference I guess, when you're crawling around in the dark on the floor, covered in something, looking for something to put in your mouth. It stopped moving around in the dark and left the room, so forget it, and if you leave this room right now, I guess I don't want to talk to you either.

And so let 'em take drugs, and let 'em fuck boys, and let 'em turn it up, or down, or play it twelve times on repeat, or backwards, distorted to hell and back, and fuck it, let's pray to hell for a change, and see who sticks around. Let them join the Nazis or the Stalinists I guess, and if they aren't killed drunk driving that motorcycle, maybe we'll forgive them and still buy their next book. Or maybe we'll buy only if they're killed. And I would have an intervention, but do you think he's ever going to stop using until they cut his arms off? And maybe we could send him somewhere, but would that really make him better? And maybe she should leave him, maybe they all should, but that's her decision I guess, and she still hasn't even after all the times. Maybe she should write a book. How come she doesn't? I'd buy it, as long as it doesn't come with plot. It was the times, it was the times, we're sorry, but what do you want to do about it now? It's only words.

I shoplift all my books anyhow. I steal them off my friend's nightstand, when he doesn't finish them. I accumulate late fines from the library as if it were income tax. I sure as hell don't buy them at the mall. I sure as hell don't buy them online. I have all these needs, you understand. I have to tell you what it's about. I have to understand what it's about, even though I haven't read all those magic spells. I've just got to, you understand, I need to. I got to turn away that mob, I got to fuck over the media, I got to subvert the spectacle, I got to sift a vanguard from those

majoritarian masses. I got to turn those steeple bells upside down, and bury these upturned caldrons in my dark, basement pit, all of it on the right cosmological day as per this reference in this text, I got to bang in the darkness of night, man, I got to play the new sound, the oldest music in my short teenage history. I got to find the forbidden, the beyond, the baddest bitches' brew of them all.

And if you are still with me, still in the room, motherfucker, than you know it doesn't have fuck all to do with plot.

And Then There's The Story...

“Stories, stories, who wants stories!”

The man shouted as he whirled around on the sidewalk, less asking a question than proclaiming a solution, a triumph in the news, or the conclusion for which the passersby had been hoping. Most ignored him, of course, but the occasional soul stopped to extend their hand, into which the jolly fool was more than happy to plop a folded piece of paper with the joyful and magnanimous glee of a boss handing over wages to his staff at the end of the week, as if er were such a charitable and generous leader of humans. The receivers, for their part, nodded politely and slipped the papers into their pockets or underneath the flaps of bags, keeping them for a later time, perhaps to read on the train or the bus, or maybe at home after dinner, or lying in bed, or to give to their children or spouses, or perhaps merely to forget, and to lose, or if to find later, then with no more joy of rediscovery than they would have taking another story from the man the next day, or the next after that, because he was always found roaming up and down these streets with his satchel and sack, stuffed with the crumbling and stained pieces of paper. His stories, he called them, though they were not really his; they were the property of the commonwealth, or some other such status arousing no interest in the possessors, and giving them little real value. The charitable act was really the regularity of the large oaf's mission, as he was assigned the job of hanging out the stories to give him a feeling of importance in the town, and to make a known face out of a man who would ordinarily been avoided by the flow of pedestrians, at all costs. Every day he would stop by the back door of the chamber of records to pick up his flesh-colored bag, filled by the youngest clerk as one of his morning chores. Then the bag carrier would clatter off, bellowing his advertisement, and the residents would check their watches accuracy by the occasion of his clamor.

“Stories, stories, stories for all!” And it would be time to sweep the step, or open the shutters, or complete some other task outside, to keep an eye on the crier, to make sure he did not lag too long on any one doorstep of a place of business. And of course, the merchants would take a story for themselves, slipping it into the pocket of a coat or apron, with a nod for the bearer, who looked to the shopkeepers as equals, though it was in actuality far from the truth. Then it was on to the lane and out to the center square of the town, passing out his scraps to all whom he lumbered past on his meandering rounds.

Past the post office, and the constable box, the constable helping himself, though always as a rule using his chosen story as paper for cleaning the bowl of his pipe, hiding this fact from no one but the deliverer. And past the grocery, and the funeral home, and then past the school at the end of the road, where he gave a handful to the teacher, reaching over the fence, but none to the students, because though they clambered around the fence in greeting, they did not have the precocity to do else than abandon the papers in the dirt of the school yard before the giver had stumbled back up the street. The man would bend down after the short picket barrier, attempting to scoop up the abandoned stories, and the teacher was forced to help him in gathering them while admonishing the children, while he meanwhile attempted to redistribute them to the same children, and everything would cause the lessons to begin over five minutes late.

But he did hand out a few to some of the older children, who from time to time would wait politely on the other side of the fence with hands outstretched, faces glowing in anticipation. He loved these children best, of course,

because they treated the stories much as he did, holding them carefully by the corners and slipping them delicately inside the covers of their schoolbooks. The teacher allowed this, though she knew to keep a sharp eye on these particular pupils to ensure that the stories would not come out in class, carefully overlapping the text of the lessons they were supposed to be reading.

As he distributed the papers on this particular morning, he looked up, a bit startled. There was one child missing—a young girl, the youngest of all those students who gathered for stories, and yet, the eagerest, often taking two or three a day, and sometimes four on Friday. But there she was, sitting underneath a tree, yards away from the other students waiting to receive the odd man's gifts. She was laying back against a root, looking up into the morning light filtering between the branches of the wide elm, the tree that had been growing in the yard since a time before the school had been established. She paid no mind to the distribution, and seemed to be lost in thought. The man smiled, and after treating the other children, made his way down the outside of the fence to a point nearest to where she sat.

“Stories, my little girl! I have stories for you today!”

She looked at him, and smiled a little bit. Then she said, “No thank you.”

The large man burdened with sacks looked a bit confused. “No stories? Did you not finish the ones I gave you yesterday? I thought you would have by now. You always read so quickly.”

“I did read them.”

“So... you are ready for more stories then?”

“No, thank you.”

He scratched his broad forehead, and pushed his cap back a bit on his balding head. “No stories? Have you decided you do not like stories anymore?”

The little girl pursed her lips, unsure of what to say. The teacher was herding the children into the building, and came down the yard to see what was the matter.

“Is there a problem?”

“She says she does not want stories.”

The teacher smiled, and placed her hands on her hips as she looked down at the girl. “Surely you'd like at least one story for when you get home from school. Something to hold you over until tomorrow?”

The girl shook her head.

“Not even one for before bed, to help you fall asleep tonight?”

The girl looked into her lap, and shook her head again slowly.

The man smiled, and reached around to his back pocket. “I have just the thing, which I was saving for someone special.” He pulled out an old, wrinkled story, darkened from age. It was thick, as if it took up two whole pages. “It is a very good story, and old as well. I'm sure you will like it.”

He held it out to the girl, eyes glowing as he waited for her to rise and grasp it with her little fingers. But she looked at her feet, and did not move.

“What's wrong, dear?” asked the school teacher. “Why don't you want any stories?”

The girl looked up into the tree, sighing to herself.

“Because they just don't mean it anymore.”

The teacher and the man just stared, but then the bell suddenly rang. The teacher helped the little girl stand up, and shooed her into the school building. Looking at the man, still holding the paper out in his hand, the teacher said, “I'm sure she'll want one tomorrow.”

As they entered the school building, he scratched his head, confused. Putting the story back into his sack, he tottered back out into the road, yelling, “Stories, stories, who wants stories!” to the empty street.