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“When AnOther Magazine asked me to edit this Document on supernatural, all I could picture was plants. Botanical drawings of extravagant tropical plants – plants never before seen by Europeans – bell trumpets and tendrils of vines, poisons and balms, hallucinogenic plants. I figured I’d better pass, because I didn’t know much about any of this. But when AnOther wrote back that they were taking a very long view of supernatural that extended to ‘numerous elements of the natural world and human nature ... the hyperreal, the beyond-natural, the surreal as well as the natural’, things opened up and became clear. I think human nature is the most mysterious nature of all. These texts, by some of my favourite writers, describe internal psychological struggles, dystopian paradises, the precarious balance between humans and nature, and surprising leaps from the banal to the divine.” – Chris Kraus



“I love this Cecilia Pavón story for the way it veers between ordinary banal daily life and the supernatural – the narrator is shopping for H&M leggings when an enormous wave erupts from the fountain and floods the whole mall. I love the way Pavón probes the ordinary until it’s no longer banal. Why is the narrator shopping for leggings? Because she hopes to find love! Pavón has lived in Buenos Aires since 1992, publishing a popular zine, running a highly curated 99-cent store, and teaching writing workshops at her home. As [the Argentine writer] César Aira has noted, her writing creates a parallel world that unfolds ‘like a dream, just like reality’.”

## By Cecilia Pavón

Any writing that doesn’t move toward love will crash into a wall or some other hard thing, like that time in the Once railway station when the train couldn’t stop. It’s a Sunday afternoon and I’m remembering a perfect day. All my stories are about thinking or remembering. Although I was going to write a story about killing, I was inspired by a beautiful ceramic sculpture that my eight-year-old son made: four knives resting on a rough ground with a mossy green glaze. The knives are grey, each is a different size, and they’re laid out from biggest to smallest. Although this is not the time to talk about knives, but about a perfect day ...

The 20th of January 2016 was a perfect day. A day of torrid heat in the city of Santiago, Chile. I had arrived there with my son in tow, so he could visit his Chilean father, after crossing the mountain range in a bus and waiting in line for five hours at customs. Hordes of Argentines – yes, you could say “hordes” – waiting their turn to cross into the neighbouring country, motivated by the illusive wish to find cheap merchandise on the other side of the Andes. All because of the famous exchange rate. In Argentina the exchange rate, the relationship between the peso and the dollar, the dollar, the dollar ... is an omnipresent subject. As if the Argentine peso didn’t exist, as if it were nothing more than a phantom dancing around the American currency. And it doesn’t exist, it’s only a weak abstraction floating around a more powerful one, a handful of dry leaves.

The previous president didn’t allow the purchase of dollars, because they were necessary for national industry; the new president liberated the currency market, his programme was based – as he said during his campaign – on commerce and liberty. Commerce and liberty. It’s been a month since Argentines have been able to buy dollars on the open market and they’re already racing in their cars to the other side of the border to buy clothes and computers imported from Asia ... Clothes and computers: the two things that define my life. The computer because it’s where I write, and I work as a writer. (I’m a woman who works as a writer.) And clothes because they’re what I have closest at hand for transforming myself into a woman and enabling myself to be a woman who writes.

On Wednesday, January 20, 2016, I met up with Gary and Eugenia to go shopping at the Costanera Centre mall. A friend of Gary’s told him that from the balcony of his building the Costanera Centre mall looks like a lit cigarette. At the mall you can find all the possible brands they don’t have in Argentina because of the high import duties on textiles imposed by the governments of Néstor and Cristina Kirchner: H&M (HyM), Forever 21, Topshop, Banana Republic, Gap, etc. All the brands that have surely gone out of style in Europe but cause a furore in this part of the world. One of the main attractions of the commercial centre is a waterfall that produces images and text on drops

of water in free fall; it’s eight metres wide and 12 metres tall and it was designed and constructed by a German company called OASE, according to Wikipedia. On Wikipedia, it’s possible to find the history of every Chilean mall. I don’t know why I decided to Google these details and I don’t know why I’m transcribing them here. Maybe because it struck me that the company that manages the branding for the Costanera Centre mall emphasises the existence of this waterfall as its main attraction. Or because despite having spent six hours in this commercial centre I never saw the images and the words produced by the drops of water in free fall; I think probably no one has seen them because they’re a total accessory to the ecstatic experience of shopping. Or perhaps some child has seen them, it could be. When I read about the waterfall, I immediately thought of contemporary art: words and images without meaning flowing in free fall to promote market transactions. On Wikipedia I also came across the history of the first mall in Latin America, which was inaugurated in Chile during the government of Augusto Pinochet: “*The Parque Arauco Mall opened to the public on April 2, 1982, and was inaugurated the next day by José Toribio Merino, Army Commander in Chief and member of the military junta.*” That same day, the second of April, the Malvinas War began in Argentina. Could it be said, then, that two wars began in the Southern Cone on April 2, 1982? Well, in reality they were the same war, but this would take a long time to explain. I will just say that a single war moves articles of clothing, weapons and works of art through the world.

In reality, it doesn’t matter where malls come from (or where they’re going). What’s important is that they exist, like eternally lit cigarettes, or maybe like giant refrigerators on this suffocating day at the beginning of 2016. It’s the hottest day of the year and there are almost no places with air conditioning in this city. Electricity is incredibly expensive in Chile and only large businesses like the Costanera Centre mall have the budget for a climate control system. And that’s where I’m headed on the metro, all alone, thinking about my life, which is what I always do when I travel alone on public transportation. My son is with the family of his father Fabio, who was my boyfriend for seven years, and who always came with me to this country. He left me exactly ten months ago for an American girl. Samantha, a rich girl from California whose problems with her authoritarian father – another war, one might say – had caused her to take refuge in Buenos Aires. Fabio met her at a tourist bar and maintained a secret affair with her for two months. I realised that something strange was happening in our relationship because he started compulsively reading books in English, until one morning after breakfast he told me that he was helplessly in love with a foreigner. I still feel bad about what happened, and he never spoke to me again, except in short, clipped emails, cold and unaffectionate, in which he told me it was destiny, that he had found true love, and that soon I was gong to find it too ... soon. I don’t know if it’s a form of torture or because I’m a woman who writes, but I

read the articles and poems that Samantha publishes on the internet. They’re in English but I read them anyway, because I studied English as a child. She is also a woman who writes, like me. And now that she lives on this side of the world she’s extremely interested in Latin American literature. Recently, she published a survey on Bolivian poetry. At the end of the introduction, she writes: “*Poets from Bolivia form a small part of a global movement in which nations as we know them are disappearing, along with progressive ‘developmentalist’ thought, so that all that remains is the pure flow of money, art and ideas.*” (The translation is mine.) “The pure flow of money, art and ideas” ... Now that I think about it the German company OASE probably had something similar in mind when they built the fountain of text and images that form on drops of water in the Costanera Centre mall.

As for me, there was nothing on my mind when I arrived on the second floor of HyM, where Gary and Eugenia and I had agreed to meet. I was carrying the equivalent of \$106 in Chilean pesos, which I had set aside from my slim savings to spend on clothes. I’m 43 years old and make my living teaching poetry workshops in the living room of my house. People sign up for my workshops because they like the things I write, I suppose. Sometimes I fantasise about the idea that they think I’m close to poetry, I like to think so, wherever it is that poetry might be. “Anyone can write something brilliant,” I tell them, “what’s difficult is connecting to the source of brilliance itself.” And where is poetry for women who write? I’m going to make a confession that makes me feel bad. Because even though it’s a childish feeling, it’s something I’ve felt, a feeling I’ve had, which belonged to me, and for that reason it’s real. Maybe by putting it into words here, if I manage to have these words read by someone else, converted into literature, perhaps I’ll get this fatal feeling to abandon me and vanish: I walked into HyM hoping that the clothes I was going to buy would help me, once back in Buenos Aires, to find a boyfriend. Now that I’m writing this I realise that during all those months, solitude had given me the fantasy that fashion could save me. The sadness of solitude had led to unfortunate feelings like the belief that if I’m well-dressed, someone will love me. And a woman who writes always writes about love. Because if I stop to think about it, that’s the only reason I’m here buying clothes right now. To find love. Because if there’s anything I don’t need it’s more pants, more dresses, more miniskirts, more shoes ... Much less clothing transported from Asia inside containers stacked like coffins on ships sailing through the South Pacific. The ocean is too beautiful to be ruined by those enormous boats full of grey boxes! Why does the world have to be this way? It’s hard being a woman who writes. For any writer, man or woman, literature is the most important thing in life, and literature has no body; words have neither colour nor form. But as women who are writers, we have to think about being dressed as women all the time on top of thinking about our books. We have to make thousands of small strategic decisions to perfect our costumes as

women. Being a woman is the same as being a transvestite, or worse, because at least transvestites can exaggerate, while we can't, we have to be discreet, put ourselves together but without making it too visible ... I think about presidents' wives, all the newspapers do is talk about their look. As soon as their husbands take power, hundreds of articles come out talking about what they wore to this or that event. And if the wives of the most powerful men only have this function, what's left for common and poor women? For poor women writers pursuing a war?

But that day buying clothes was an excuse to get together with Eugenia and Gary, since for whatever reason I'd drifted away from them over the last seven or eight years. As soon as I saw them I realised I loved them very much and that they were incredible people, full of goodness and light, and I was glad to be in that mall spinning tables full of sale items with them. Now the clothes, receding into the background, served only as a vehicle for our reunion. They were simply the flint that relit the fire of our friendship. We tried on everything that looked nice to us and asked each other if it fit, we gave each other advice, and in the dressing room we told each other what had happened in our lives during the years we'd lost touch.

"Tonight we're putting together a reading at someone's house. We just published a zine with poems by a friend of yours, we grabbed them off her Facebook page without asking her," Eugenia informed me while I was trying on some black tights with fluorescent arabesques from the athletic apparel section. "Do you think she'll mind?"

No, why would she mind? On the contrary. Women poets want to be published. Besides, this girl ... I hadn't reached the end of my thought when we heard a deafening siren go off and disorientated people started to scatter and run. They dropped all the clothes they were carrying so the floor was covered with little stains of mismatched colours, almost like a Cy Twombly painting. I took off the tights as fast as I could and fled the dressing room at full speed, naked from the

waist down. Since I wasn't wearing shoes I quickly became aware that the floor was wet and a wave of freezing water was rising very quickly. The emporium for the democratisation of European fashion was beginning to be submerged. The waterfall in the central hall had malfunctioned and water was streaming out in torrents, apparently from a broken pipe. People always say water is scarce in Chile, but at that moment all the eternal snow in the Andes seemed to have melted and to be pouring through that ruptured pipe. And not only were the clothes from HyM floating, but those of all the other brands too. The mall, with its cylindrical form, was like a giant washing machine. All the merchandise destined to make women loved had been set adrift inside the enormous steel structure. The cheap fabrics of the pants and dresses were swelling up and sticking together.

The people who hadn't managed to get out in the first five minutes, either because they were distracted watching the spectacle or because they were looking for their friends and relatives, now had no other option but to swim toward the main door. With the water rising to my waist, it was impossible to swim fully clothed, so I had to undress. Luckily I was only wearing a skirt of light fabric and it was easy to take off. Dressed only in my underwear, I swam toward the main door. For a few minutes I held my breath and closed my eyes without thinking of anything. And in those moments, letting my mind go blank, I had a vision. It was of my next husband. My next boyfriend had no face but I saw his hands. They were large, rough hands and they were sewing. I saw us lying on the floor in my small living room cutting and sewing clothes for me. Hundreds of beautiful garments made just like that. I don't know if you could call them dresses because they were like giant bags (although some had frills and irregularities), and the fabrics were rustic and faded, in opaque colours. But they were amazing because they turned me into another person, someone more serious and transparent. Not at all like the clothes from HyM. That was a perfect day.

"Offering Flowers is one of the hundreds of shockingly contemporary-sounding poems, chants, prayers and invocations collected in Jerome Rothenberg's classic anthology *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania*. The book has been revised and expanded three times, most recently in 2011, since its initial publication more than five decades ago. As Rothenberg noted in his preface to the 1968 edition, 'Primitive means complex. Measure everything by the rocket and the world is full of primitive peoples. But change the unit of value to the poem or the dance-event or the dream and it becomes apparent what all those people have been doing all those years with all that time on their hands.'

"The Aztec Offering Flowers invocation blew me away first, because I'd only ever thought of the Aztecs as brutal warriors, and second, because it reminded me vividly of a song in Mark von Schlegell's first sci-fi novel, *Venusia*."

## Aztec

*(The Aztecs had a feast which fell out in the ninth month & which they called: The Flowers Are Offered)*

& two days before the feast, when flowers were sought, all scattered over the mountains, that every flower might be found

& when these were gathered, when they had come to the flowers & arrived where they were, at dawn they strung them together; everyone strung them

& when the flowers had been threaded, then these were twisted & wound in garlands – long ones, very long, & thick – very thick

& when morning broke the temple guardians then ministered to Uitzilopochtli; they adorned him with garlands of flowers; they placed flowers upon his head & before him they spread, strewed, & hung rows of all the various flowers, the most beautiful flowers, the threaded flowers

then flowers were offered to all the rest of the gods they were adorned with flowers; they were girt with garlands of flowers

flowers were placed upon their heads, there in the temples

& when midday came, they all sang & danced quietly, calmly, evenly they danced they kept going as they danced



I offer flowers. I sow flower seeds. I plant flowers. I assemble flowers. I pick flowers. I pick different flowers. I remove flowers. I seek flowers. I offer flowers. I arrange flowers. I thread a flower. I string flowers. I make flowers. I form them to be extending, uneven, rounded, round bouquets of flowers.

I make a flower necklace, a flower garland, a paper of flowers, a bouquet, a flower shield, hand flowers. I thread them. I string them. I provide them with grass. I provide them with leaves. I make a pendant of them. I smell something. I smell them. I cause one to smell something. I cause him to smell. I offer flowers to one. I offer him flowers. I provide him with flowers. I provide one with flowers. I provide one with a flower necklace. I provide him with a flower necklace. I place a garland on one. I provide him a garland. I clothe one in flowers. I clothe him in flowers. I cover one with flowers. I cover him with flowers. I destroy one with flowers. I destroy him with flowers. I injure one with flowers. I injure him with flowers.

*I destroy one with flowers; I destroy him with flowers; I injure one with flowers:* with drink, with food, with flowers, with tobacco, with capes, with gold. I beguile, I incite him with flowers, with words; I beguile him, I say, "I caress him with flowers. I seduce one. I extend one a lengthy discourse. I induce him with words."

I provide one with flowers. I make flowers, or I give them to one that someone will observe a feastday. Or I merely continue to give one flowers; I continue to place them in one's hand, I continue to offer them to one's hands. Or I provide one with a necklace, or I provide one with a garland of flowers.

“The poet Ariana Reines is brilliant, of course, but that isn’t all. I love her work for its incredible range and ranginess, and her *A Sand Book* [2019] is epic in scope. Reading her is like playing in a jungle gym of the mind. I love the way a single poem like *Dream House* can encapsulate so many moods and voices, and can comment on things aesthetic and existential, confessional, cosmetic, domestic, political, geographical, inspirational and banal, and how – as in all of her poems – you can feel a pulse or a heartbeat under the words, driving them on.”

## By Ariana Reines

The pavilion has walls of rug when I’m a knight with blood  
Foaming out my chainmail so I lie down on my cot in the cool  
Darkness and when I close my eyes the falcons alight on my page’s  
Glove. I’m fine to die in here, chill seeping into my bones, cold  
Spring like a Carpaccio painting.  
I fold my arms to compose myself like a coffinlid  
Knight, a crypto knight I mean a dreamer.  
I mean a man  
Who doesn’t exist with his rock hard sword standing up up forever.  
Since I was seventeen I’ve been dreaming  
I’m the maid in a house, a wide house in the mountains, and I’m  
A Victorian maid, a domestic, I’m asthmatic I mean Consumptive like Chopin or Proust and  
I’m honest  
And servile not artistic or cruel and not clumsily  
Dressed. I’m ugly in the simple way of having been made  
So by my servitude and not in the unsimple way of having  
Pursued what I pursued as a free woman.  
Do you remember  
The days of slavery. I do.  
I am wan and dowdy and I sleep on the floor.  
Once in the dream the house belonged to my father  
And a man said to me in his Schweizerdeutsch accent *And Now  
That You Have Entered the House of Your Father.*  
I remember the ice of a nearish glacier seeming to steam  
Against the blue sky. One’s eyes grow hard and gemlike  
In the Alps you know, not that I am from there  
Not even close. Still. In the Alps even (especially?) the dullwitted

Develop raptor eyes. My grandmother worked as the maid  
To a duchess in Warsaw while her husband was gassed at Treblinka.  
Then the duchess died and she my mother’s Mother had to find a new way to hide. *Hide life*  
Is a phrase I’ve read somewhere. In a poem maybe. I keep  
Wishing I were writing about tents, walls of rug, Walls of yak felt, yurts, lying awake in my friend’s mother’s  
Bed thinking THE TEETH IN MY HEAD THE TEETH IN MY HEAD  
While my heart flared BIOS BIOS BIOS I thought a woman could not bear  
The rhythm – what it takes to sustain biological life.  
I was naked except for culture like everybody else in my generation  
I come from a broken home like they do and I hide it, serene  
At the joystick in the command station of my so-called self  
Except I try openly to hide only badly whatever it is I think is wild that I’m  
Doing my best to reveal by not really hiding though hiding.  
A poet can be a permanent houseguest like Jimmy Schuyler.  
A woman can be homeless to escape her homeless mother.  
A white woman can get away with certain things.  
A woman who does not want her spare thoughts to be consumed  
By lip implant rippling butt implant wet tongue in the sushi  
Flatscreeny gangbangs in a suntan might for example choose  
homelessness  
In order to pursue with some serenity her for example let’s call them

Literary researches, surveilling aristocratically only her own pathetic  
Machinations, like one of the dogs  
Shaped like Nazis in a guard tower in *Maus*  
By Art Spiegelman while a countertenor  
And a sackbut bleat WikiLeaks WikiLeaks and naked men  
And men with hoods over their eyes and zappers on their peens  
Quiver in citadels in which we The United States hid them. Yves Klein knew  
That walls are sad: designed to immure misery.  
That is why he designed a house made of air.  
We only write  
Because we’re nudists but not the kind you think but also not necessarily  
Not that kind. Art gets  
Exhausted which is why a temple, the idea of a temple, I need to go to a temple  
Every now and again and in order to have a home I had to play a trick on myself which is that it’s a temple, this house.  
In a movie from the Eighties a man from California says  
*My body’s my temple.* Okay well now in my dreams of domestic  
Servitude I receive small pay. I get to go across the street  
And contemplate the toiletries in an Alpine 7-Eleven. Salon Selectives, Prell, Garnier, or Pert Plus.  
My hair will look like shit. I don’t buy anything.  
I go back to the kitchen to fish out of drawers three  
Iron candlesticks. The dark lady who rages over the family  
Near the high vaulted hearth where I slave over a hot stove  
In nothing but a dirty T-shirt like a child labourer in a National Geographic photograph all gorgeous in the mufti of my total deprivation  
The dark lady can only it seems be communicated with by me  
No longer the maid, but – progress – household witch  
Earning after all a salary however tiny, horse-whispering its deadest  
Most psycho old bitches, sweet-talking them down from the rafters, down  
Out of tantrums unthrown, unthrowable by nobody me, the inverted  
V of downward-facing liberty: when you have no choice but to try to have chosen  
What you never, never would choose. Sitting on a bench at the end of my exhausted

Term like a regular grownup I pictured myself shampooing my luxury  
Hair in some artsy shithole, mildew streaking the torn shower curtain  
Lurching across the second expanse of poverty  
My ruined imagination could manage: Well I guess I could join the Israeli  
Army. Why the fuck would you want to do that said  
Somebody else inside my dream head.  
Pretty much  
Dead by the time they were done needing me as their slave  
I started to feel kind of American I mean like an adult sitting uncomplaining  
Torso a plain physical fact over unquivering genitals,  
Just meat on a stick with the vague sense that somewhere between lavish femininity  
And state violence lay a mediocre thing called liberty.  
Still, to be able to sleep at all’s a procedure of waking. Everybody  
Has to live somewhere being that we are here where most  
Of us are not welcome. Did you know transcendental  
Homelessness was a thing. But I had that dream  
On a physical mattress. On an actual floor in a room with a door  
That I pay and pay for. If you write you can forge  
A substance that is other than the woman of substance  
You are. If you do it to such a point you can find Yourself declining substance altogether. It happens. It is a danger.  
But there will  
Always be the idea of a bath or a sleep in a bed or a dream  
In the head of a woman who is even beautiful visibly  
Or at least groomed, or somewhat fresh  
Or like that most domestic of bugs the cockroach  
Dragging his ponderous suit of armour across the floor  
Or clean sheets when it’s raining and I love you so much  
And I think Gimme Shelter, which is a movie I’ve never seen

“Chester Himes’ great prison novel, *Yesterday Will Make You Cry*, was first published in the 1950s, then years after he’d written it, in a completely bowdlerised form. His publisher changed Himes’ third person to first, changed the protagonist’s race from African American to white, and changed his homosexual relationship with Rico into a friendship. The novel wouldn’t be published as Himes had written it until 1998, 13 years after his death, in the Old School Books imprint. The whole book is great, but I especially love and remember the yearning and beauty contained in this chapter, when ‘Everything touched Jimmy that spring.’”

## By Chester Himes

EVERYTHING TOUCHED JIMMY that spring. He was too emotional; he had never been so emotional. Everything was soft inside of him and at the slightest touch he’d bubble over, like foam.

A single note on Rico’s ukulele touched him. A bar of melody. Thoughts of his mother. A bird flying in the window and flying out again. That touched him greatly. Clouds in the sky. A convict with a flop. And those golden spring twilights without any shadows, soft and diffused with a golden glow, tinting everything with vividness.

And the time they put *Honest to God* in the hole. He hadn’t done a thing. Rico had bought the toothbrush from a convict called Davis on the third floor. The toothbrush turned out to be stolen. Jimmy took the rap for buying it because he figured they might transfer Rico and he knew they wouldn’t transfer him. *Honest to God* was knocked off just because he sometimes peddled old toothbrush handles.

Davis told the inspector, who was holding court that day, that he had found the toothbrush and had sold it to Jimmy. Jimmy admitted buying it. The inspector said pompously that there had been a lot of stealing going on and it had to stop. So he put *Honest to God* in the hole. He didn’t put Davis in the hole because Davis was one of his rats; and he couldn’t put Jimmy in the hole without putting Davis in. Jimmy began to protest but the inspector got up and walked out.

All that afternoon he brooded over it.

“You did all you could, Puggy Wuggy,” Rico said.

“What I can’t see,” he contended, “is why the hell he didn’t put Davis in the hole since it was obvious that he stole it. And if not him, me, I bought it. Why put a poor goddamned nigger in the hole just because he is a poor goddamned nigger?”

It didn’t make sense to him. He had seen a lot of things happen in prison that hadn’t made sense, but they were just

beginning to touch him. It was as if he had been in a shell for all those years, or had been petrified or dried up and was just then coming to life.

Death Row was then in the L block, and on the afternoons the condemned men were taken across the yard to the death house, the convicts in the dormitory could stand in their windows and watch them pass. Watching them, Jimmy would always wonder what they were thinking; long into the night he would wonder. What could they be thinking? He could not tell from looking at them. Some walked with shoulders back, swaggering, contemptuous, and he’d think of Rico and wonder how he would walk that last bitter half mile, wonder if in the end his sneer and high and mighty contempt for everything and every one would fail him. Others walked erect and soberly, as if they were silently praying; some slouched indifferently with their hands in their pockets. The priest walked with some and they looked repentant; but how could he tell if they felt that way? Most appeared perfectly natural from where he looked down on them. They talked and laughed with the guards much the same as any convict going anywhere. But all the time he wondered what they were thinking.

On Easter Sunday he and Rico went to mass together and watched the candles burning. They saw Lively but it did not make any difference.

“If anything ever makes me religious, it’ll be burning candles on an altar,” Jimmy said.

“Why?” Rico asked curiously.

“Oh, I don’t know, I’ve never thought about it,” Jimmy replied. “I guess because they’re so soft and insistent and eternal, like a good woman’s love.”

A moment later he caught Rico’s stare on him.

And then they saw Helen Hayes in a picture called *A Farewell to Arms*. “Oh my God, she is magnificent,” Jimmy said. “She is so splendidly young and gallant. It’s wonderful

to feel that there are such young and gallant people in this grimy world.”

“It was perfect,” Rico choked, holding to his arm when the end came. “It had to end like that. It was like climbing up a mountain and then you’re at the top and that’s the end. It was tragedy, but glorious and exalted tragedy – and so is love, all love,” he sighed.

Back in the dormitory he said to Jimmy, “Let’s have ours that perfect, Puggy Wuggy, and then when it ends there won’t be any regrets.”

“We will,” he said.

“They were very courageous people,” Rico went on. “She didn’t care what anyone thought, did she?”

Jimmy didn’t reply.

“I don’t either,” Rico said. “I don’t care what anybody thinks of me but you. I know that they all know, anyway. But I don’t care; I feel exalted. You’re my God, Puggy Wuggy, I’d die for you. I’m going to die anyway when it’s over and I don’t care what anyone thinks.”

They were both very soft.

Sometime during the week following the magazine man brought around a new magazine called *Esquire* and Jimmy bought a copy. They liked it so well that he ordered several of the back issues, in one of which they came across a story called *All My Love*. Afterwards Rico said, his eyes smoky and his face like a liquid glow, “All my love, from me to you, Puggy Wuggy,” caressing each syllable. Just three trite words, but they touched Jimmy when Rico said them.

All of the stories in *Esquire* impressed them that spring. They thought it the swellest magazine ever published.

“They’re so real,” Jimmy said. “Most people seem to think that reality can only be achieved through vulgarity, but honestly, most of it is only very pathetic.”

Rico’s gaze jerked up. “That’s how I know you’re a genius,” he said.

Along about that time the evening paper began running a series of photographs from Laurence Stalling’s *Photographic History of the First World War*. Those pictures touched Jimmy that spring. There was one, a careless scatter of rotting corpses on a patch of utter desolation, captioned “No More Parades.” The death touched him, but the desolation touched him more. *No More Parades*. It made him think of the condemned men strolling across the yard at sunset. He never saw any of them make that stroll again without thinking, no more parades.

There was another, a twilight scene of death and desolation, captioned “... short days ago we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow ...” Beneath that picture, those ten words were a complete story of life and death, or war and heroism, indifference and finality.

“I’d like to know all of that verse,” he said.

Rico recited, “*We are the dead; short days ago we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, loved and were loved, and now we lie in Flanders fields.*”

“That’s something to think about,” Jimmy said, shuddering slightly as if a foot had stepped on his grave. “It makes you feel insecure, as if no tomorrow is promised.”

He could see those burnt-up convicts lying on the prison yard and those murderers death-house bound; he could see all those convicts dying and dead. And he could see himself dead and rotting in the oblivion of a grave, never having been anything but a number on a board in a prison, having in the end lived and died for nothing and left nothing and was nothing even in the end but worms in the ground.

For a time the meaning went out of everything and he filled with a raw sense of protest against something, he did not know what. Everything seemed wrong for a time. There was more to any man than just a number on a board, he thought. There was something inside of every man which could not be put on black painted numerals, or on a report card – a record of *right* and *wrong*. He was choked and filled and bitter, just from looking at those pictures. At nights Rico would play *Stardust* and sing it in his husky, emotion-filled voice “... *and now my consolation is in the memory of a song ...*” or words to that effect. It stirred poignant melancholy in the clogged confusion of his thoughts and when the thousand groping feelings, when all the protest and melancholy and mixed emotions got choked up in him, something began to sprout. But it was all feeling. It wouldn’t come out. He couldn’t find the words for it.

And then, shortly afterwards, he saw another photograph in the paper taken from the first world war. There was no death in this picture, no destruction, just a scraggly line of soldiers with rifles shoulder high, standing in a trench in the immense, eternal desolation, waiting for something. There was no other life visible; there was no war; there were no trees; snow was on the ground; and the soldiers with their tiny rifles standing there in the middle of eternity, like microscopic atoms in the universal scene, seemed so insignificant, so shockingly ridiculous. Waiting for the order to go out there and die, waiting for blindness or for a leg to be shot off, for some cold supper, for the war to end; waiting for some bullets which they couldn’t see, fired no doubt by an enemy which they didn’t hate; waiting for anything, but let it hurry.

Rico was turning the page, but he stopped him. “What’s familiar about that picture?” he asked. His voice was choked.

“What, Puggy Wuggy?”

“I don’t know,” he said hesitantly. And then he cried excitedly. “I know! It’s us! It’s every goddamned convict. It’s the waiting, the waiting! Waiting for what? Beans or freedom? Standing in the sleet waiting for a soup bowl haircut. For an ice cold shower. That’s what kills a convict. Waiting ten years for a six months flop. Waiting for the lights to go off at night and for them to come on in the morning. Waiting all morning for the noon day whistles to blow so they’ll know it’s 12 o’clock. I can understand that feeling.”

The picture was captioned “Ennui”.

The story was all inside of him. He wrote Ennui at the top of the page and looked about the dormitory and began

writing without knowing what the next word would be. All of his emotions and feelings and protests which he had suffered for all those years boiled out of him. When he got up from the typewriter he had a story. He knew it was a freak of literature. He knew it was impossible. But he had written it. And he knew that he had a million more inside of him which only needed a spark to set them off. But could he write them?

After that all he needed was for Rico to recite *Short days ago we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, loved and were loved* ... and he could see himself dead with all those stories inside of him unwritten and feel all rushed and filled. Or have him play Stardust in individual notes on his ukulele and sing in his husky, passionate voice ... *sometimes I wonder while I spend the lonely nights* ... only in his mind it went ... *why I spend the lonely nights* ... and the stories would boil out of him by the hundreds, none of which he ever wrote. At first he was unable to write them because all that blind, intense, not very clear protest which he felt so vividly was too real, and later because it was too futile.

Why that particular song stirred up so many protests within him, he never knew. But it did, and he developed an extreme sense of protest against everything. Against the prison and the officials and the indifference, the brutality and callousness; against the whole system of punishment as he saw it. It seemed so illogical to punish some poor criminal for doing something that civilisation taught him how to do so he could have something that civilisation taught him how to want. It seemed to him as wrong as if they had hung the gun that shot the man.

But out of all the things that touched him that spring, Rico touched him more than anything. Rico, with his morbid, brilliant, insane, unsteady mind and his frenzied beautiful mouth and kaleidoscopic moods and Mona Lisa smile and eyes of pure stardust. Rico, with his weaknesses and broodings and peaks of gaiety, sparkling one moment and surly the next, so close to him he could feel him in his heart, and then so remote he saw him as a stranger. Rico, whose anger inspired him to anguish and whose pitiful bravado reminded him of a scared little boy whistling in the dark, making him want to stand between him and all the world. Poor little kid, he thought, what a terrible mistake he was not a woman.

Ever since Rico had confessed to being in the insane asylum, Jimmy had thought of him as a little crazy; he could not help from thinking it. He realised how unstable Rico was and he felt that almost everything Rico did was posed. But in that place of scarred, distorted souls, of abnormality of both body and mind, he felt that there was something about their relationship which transcended the sordid aspects of homosexuality, and even attained a touch of sacredness. Because whatever else Rico might have felt, Jimmy knew that he always believed that they were right. And if the gods he worshipped were pagan gods, who could tell him better, Jimmy asked himself. No one in there.

But even then, after all those days and those nights, Jimmy realised that he did not know him. He was so unpredictable, unlike any person whom Jimmy had ever known. He would challenge the best poker player in the dormitory to play head and head, or want to fight the biggest, toughest heel. Jimmy thought always that he was a little crazy. Especially when he would go out to the poker game with a bar of soap to lose and quit and come back 17 dollars in debt, or when he would have a jealous rage over him talking to Candy or Signifier.

And at nights when Rico wanted to talk. He was extremely, abnormally affectionate at such times, but Jimmy never found him monotonous. Every moment with him had something all its own.

The fresh green sprouts of grass touched him, and the buds on the trees. And the robins when they came. The showers, and the rainbows afterwards. And the words which came back to him from somewhere in the past ... *God made hope to spring eternal from the human heart* ... There was the newness in the spring which touched him, and the oldness in the prison. There were the walls and the horizon, and in the distance the rooftops of the city, an etched skyscraper and the scattered church spires, which touched him. There were people there beyond the walls in love whom he could not see who touched him. And there were flowers blooming somewhere which he could not smell which touched him. There was laughter he'd never hear which touched him.

But the normal people in the normal world whom he had never seen since manhood, most of all.

“Colette was the first writer I thought of when the theme of nature emerged. Nature is everywhere in Colette’s writing – her love and knowledge of nature and plants is what separates her early heroine Claudine from all the other belle époque Parisian It-girls. Sido, Colette’s homage to her mother, was published much later, when her mother was no longer alive. It traces her sensitivity to the natural world back to the brilliant imagination and resourcefulness that her mother brought to her task of running a house and raising four children in a small village near Yonne.”

## By Colette

Always up at dawn and sometimes before day, my mother attached particular importance to the cardinal points of the compass, as much for the good as for the harm they might bring. It is because of her and my deep-rooted love for her that first thing every morning, and while I am still snug in bed, I always ask: “Where is the wind coming from?” only to be told in reply: “It’s a lovely day,” or “The Palais-Royal’s full of sparrows,” or “The weather’s vile” or “seasonable”. So nowadays I have to rely on myself for the answer, by watching which way a cloud is moving, listening for ocean rumblings in the chimney, and letting my skin enjoy the breath of the West wind, a breath as moist and vital and laden with portents as the twofold divergent snortings of some friendly monster. Or it may be that I shrink into myself with hatred before that fine-cold-dry enemy the East wind, and his cousin of the North. That was what my mother used to do, as she covered with paper cornets all the little plant creatures threatened by the russet moon. “It’s going to freeze,” she would say, “the cat’s dancing.”

Her hearing, which remained keen, kept her informed too, and she would intercept Æolian warnings.

“Listen over Moutiers!” she used to say, lifting her forefinger where she stood near the pump, between the hydrangeas and the group of rose bushes. That was her reception point for the information coming from the west over the lowest of the garden walls. “D’you hear? Take the garden chairs indoors, and your book and hat. It’s raining over Moutiers; in two or three minutes more it’ll be raining here.”

I strained my ears “over Moutiers”; from the horizon came a steady sound of beads plopping into water and the flat smell of the rain-pitted pond as it sluiced up against its slimy green banks. And I would wait for a second or two, so that the gentle drops of a summer shower, falling on my cheeks and lips, might bear witness to the infallibility of her whom only one person in the world – my father – called “Sido”.

Certain omens, dimmer since her death, haunt me still. One is concerned with the Zodiac, another is entirely botanical, and others again have to do with the winds, the phases of the moon, and subterranean waters. It was because those omens were only free to be effective and decisive in the wide air of our province that my mother found Paris irksome.

“I could live in Paris only if I had a beautiful garden,” she would confess to me. “And even then! I can’t imagine a Parisian garden where I could pick those big bearded oats I sew on a bit of cardboard for you because they make such sensitive barometers.” I chide myself for having lost the very last of those rustic barometers made of oat grains whose two awns, as long as shrimp’s feelers, crucified on a card, would turn to the left or the right according to whether it was going to be fine or wet.

No one could equal Sido, either, at separating and counting the talc-like skins of onions. “One ... two ... three coats, three coats on the onions!” And letting her spectacles or her lorgnette fall on her lap, she would add pensively: “That means a hard winter. I must have the pump wrapped in straw. Besides, the tortoise has dug itself in already, and the squirrels round about Guillemette have stolen quantities of walnuts and cob-nuts for their stores. Squirrels always know everything.”

◀ If the newspapers foretold a thaw my mother would shrug her shoulders and laugh scornfully. “A thaw? Those Paris meteorologists can’t teach me anything about that! Look at the cat’s paws!” Feeling chilly, the cat had indeed folded her paws out of sight beneath her, and shut her eyes tight. “When there’s only going to be a short spell of cold,” went on Sido, “the cat rolls herself into a turban with her nose against the root of her tail. But when it’s going to be really bitter, she tucks in the pads of her front paws and rolls them up like a muff.”

All the year round she kept racks full of plants in pots standing on green-painted wooden steps. There were rare geraniums, dwarf rose-bushes, spiræas with misty white and pink plumes, a few “succulents”, hairy and squat as crabs, and murderous cacti. Two warm walls formed an angle which kept the harsh winds from her trial-ground, which consisted of some red earthenware bowls in which I could see nothing but loose, dormant earth.

“Don’t touch!”

“But nothing’s coming up!”

“And what do you know about it? Is it for you to decide? Read what’s written on the labels stuck in the pots! These are seeds of blue lupin; that’s a narcissus bulb from Holland; those are seeds of winter-cherry; that’s a cutting of hibiscus – no, of course it isn’t a dead twig! – and those are some seeds of sweet-peas whose flowers have ears like little hares. And that ... and that ... ”

“Yes, and that?”

My mother pushed her hat back, nibbled the chain of her lorgnette, and put the problem frankly to me:

“I’m really very worried. I can’t remember whether it was a family of crocus bulbs I planted there, or the chrysalis of an emperor moth.”

“We’ve only got to scratch to find out.”

A swift hand stopped mine. Why did no one ever model or paint or carve that hand of Sido’s, tanned and wrinkled early by household tasks, gardening, cold water and the sun, with its long, finely-tapering fingers and its beautiful, convex, oval nails?

“Not on your life! If it’s the chrysalis, it’ll die as soon as the air touches it, and if it’s the crocus, the light will shrivel its little white shoot and we’ll have to begin all over again. Are you taking in what I say? You won’t touch it?”

“No, mother.”

As she spoke her face, alight with faith and an all-embracing curiosity, was hidden by another, older face, resigned and gentle. She knew that I should not be able to resist, any more than she could, the desire to know, and that like herself I should ferret in the earth of that flower pot until it had given up its secret. I never thought of our resemblance, but she knew I was her own daughter and that, child though I was, I was already seeking for that sense of shock, the quickened heart-beat, and the sudden stoppage of the breath – symptoms of the private ecstasy of the treasure-seeker. A treasure is not merely something hidden under the earth, or the rocks, or the sea. The vision of gold and gems is but a blurred mirage. To me the important thing is to lay bare and bring to light something that no human eye before mine has gazed upon.

She knew then that I was going to scratch on the sly in her trial-ground until I came upon the upward-climbing claw of the cotyledon, the sturdy sprout urged out of its sheath by the spring. I thwarted the blind purpose of the bilious-looking, black-brown chrysalis, and hurled it from its temporary death into a final nothingness.

“You don’t understand ... you can’t understand. You’re nothing but a little eight-year-old murderess ... or is it ten? You just can’t understand something that wants to live.” That was the only punishment I got for my misdeeds; but that was hard enough for me to bear.

Sido loathed flowers to be sacrificed. Although her one idea was to give, I have seen her refuse a request for flowers to adorn a hearse or a grave. She would harden her heart, frown, and answer “No” with a vindictive look.

“But it’s for poor Monsieur Enfert who died last night! Poor Madame Enfert’s so pathetic, she says if she could see her husband depart covered with flowers, it would console her! And you’ve got such lovely moss-roses, Madame Colette.”

“My moss-roses on a corpse! What an outrage!”

It was an involuntary cry, but even after she had pulled herself together she still said: “No. My roses have not been condemned to die at the same time as Monsieur Enfert.”

But she gladly sacrificed a very beautiful flower to a very small child, a child not yet able to speak, like the little boy whom a neighbour to the East proudly brought into the garden one day, to show him off to her. My mother found fault with the infant’s swaddling clothes, for being too tight, untied his three-piece bonnet and his unnecessary woollen shawl, and then gazed to her heart’s content on his bronze ringlets, his cheeks, and the enormous, stern black eyes of a ten months’ old baby boy, really so much more beautiful than any other boy of ten months! She gave him a *cuisse-de-nymphe-émue* rose, and he accepted it with delight, put it in his mouth, and sucked it; then he kneaded it with his powerful little hands and tore off the petals, as curved and carmine as his own lips.

“Stop it, you naughty boy!” cried his young mother.

But mine, with looks and words, applauded his massacre of the rose, and in my jealousy I said nothing.

She also regularly refused to lend double geraniums, pelargoniums, lobelias, dwarf rose-bushes and spiræa for the wayside altars on Corpus Christi Day, for although she was baptised and married in church, she always held aloof from Catholic trivialities and pageantries. But she gave me permission, when I was between 11 and 12, to attend catechism classes and to join in the hymns at the Evening Service.

On the 1st of May, with my comrades of the catechism class, I laid lilac, camomile and roses before the altar of the Virgin, and returned full of pride to show my “blessed posy”. My mother laughed her irreverent laugh and, looking at my bunch of flowers, which was bringing the may-bugs into the sitting-room right under the lamp, she said: “D’you suppose it wasn’t already blessed before?”

I do not know where she got her aloofness from any form of worship. I ought to have tried to find out. My biographers, who get little information from me, sometimes depict her as a simple farmer’s wife and sometimes make her out to be “whimsical Bohemian”. One of them, to my astonishment,

goes so far as to accuse her of having written short literary works for young persons!

In reality, this Frenchwoman spent her childhood in the Yonne, her adolescence among painters, journalists and musicians in Belgium, where her two elder brothers had settled, and then returned to the Yonne, where she married twice. But whence, or from whom, she got her sensitive understanding of country matters and her discriminating appreciation of the provinces I am unable to say. I sing her praises as best I may, and celebrate the native lucidity which, in her, dimmed and often extinguished the lesser lights painfully lit through the contact of what she called “the common run of mankind”.

I once saw her hang up a scarecrow in a cherry-tree to frighten the blackbirds, because our kindly neighbour of the West, who always had a cold and was shaken with bouts of sneezing, never failed to disguise his cherry-trees as old tramps, and crown his currant-bushes with battered opera-hats. A few days later I found my mother beneath the tree, motionless with excitement, her head turned towards the heavens in which she would allow human religions no place.

“Sssh! Look!”

A blackbird, with a green and violet sheen on his dark plumage, was pecking at the cherries, drinking their juice and lacerating their rosy pulp.

“How beautiful he is!” whispered my mother. “D’you see how he uses his claw? And the movements of his head, and that arrogance of his? See how he twists his beak to dig out the stone! And you notice that he only goes for the ripest ones.”

“But, mother, the scarecrow!”

“Sssh! The scarecrow doesn’t worry him!”

“But, mother, the cherries!”

My mother brought the glance of her rain-coloured eyes back to earth: “The cherries? Yes, of course, the cherries.”

In those eyes there flickered a sort of wild gaiety, a contempt for the whole world, a light-hearted disdain which cheerfully spurned me along with everything else. It was only momentary, and it was not the first time I had seen it. Now that I know her better I can interpret those sudden gleams in her face. They were, I feel, kindled by an urge to escape from everyone and everything, to soar to some high place where only her own writ ran. If I am mistaken, leave me to my delusion.

But there, under the cherry-tree, she returned to earth once more among us, weighed down with anxieties, and love, and a husband and children who clung to her. Faced with the common round of life, she became good and comforting and humble again.

“Yes of course, the cherries ... you must have cherries too.”

The blackbird, gorged, had flown off, and the scarecrow waggled his empty opera-hat in the breeze.

“Cut is a short fragment from Fanny Howe’s Night Philosophy, a powerful short book about childhood, in which she reconsiders ideas, feelings and phenomena that have animated her work for at least 50 years. A convert to Catholicism, Howe writes about racial justice, poverty, border issues, nature, childhood and mysticism. But, as Dan Chiasson recently wrote in The New Yorker, she ‘prefers the clarity of misunderstanding to the blur of certainty’. At almost 80, Howe is perhaps the most under-recognised writer of her generation, although she has won the fierce devotion of younger writers such as Fiona Duncan and Janique Vigier, who recently founded the Fanny Howe Fan Club in New York.”

## By Fanny Howe

A poem picked me up at 11 from drive across Ireland – 3 hours, it filled me in while mist dripped over everything outside. As ever startling + breakthrough things to me – about “church is dead”. A virtual community of Johannine believers. The spirit moving it all in + thru odd places. The movability, coming from everywhere, to be open – to assent

Exitus et reditus

Aquinas kind of thought  
 God dealing with God –  
 The leaving of Mass to find the Poem.

Rhododendrons in full wet \_\_\_\_\_ ? Splendour yellow grouse in bloom.  
 Clouds lying on ground.

June 8

June 9

Walked last night up with the poem thru the seventeenth-century gardens – lavender + herbs + roses, then a Bible garden of all herbs mentioned, fruit trees pinned to the walls, red Chinese lanterns, an orchard outside – apples, plums, pears – pressed into juice (service) – the view to the Galtee Mountains – behind there was a steep path through a ferny, green bower muddy path – a brook beside – enchanted – up steps + over + down. Now the poem is gone.

“I edited Mark von Schlegell’s *Venusia* for *Semiotext[e]* in 2005. A novel about enlightened totalitarianism in the 23rd century, the novel feels prescient, 15 years later, in all kinds of ways. Pongs punctuate everyone’s days and literacy is an act of rebellion. Von Schlegell is one of my favourite writers. Like Philip K Dick’s, his sci-fi novels not only predict new forms of technology, they anticipate how these forms of technology will alter human behaviour, emotion and thought.”

## By Mark von Schlegell

### CHAPTER I

Rogers Collectibles felt cut away from himself. But the part of him that was still here got him from the chamber to the den without falling back into the invitingly purring bed. It found the proper m-suit, an appropriate tie and prepared his anti-matter travelling pak. It took him from den to doorway and through doorway onto the very hot sand. It took him to where he didn’t really want to go. It took him to Feed.

The rails had unloaded fat green blossoms into trenches cut fresh into the dunes. Rogers lit an LP, stood with the others lined up under the old morning sun. Already glutted, the children held hands in circles. Wild-eyed, they chanted their sound-churning songs.

*Love, love, love. Love and flowers.  
 Love, love, love. Love and flowers.  
 The sun makes life, gives me power.  
 Love. Love, love and flowers.  
 Hands, hands, bands in flowers.*

A motion of a g-op’s needle-rifles by the trucks initiated the crush. Pressed into the crowd, Rogers was forced towards the trenches. Adults were already falling in before him, scooping handfuls of the pale green petals into their faces. Elders and the weak ones scuttled at the edge on hands and knees, scrounging for discarded refuse.

He remembered suddenly that he hadn’t intended to take flowers at all. A small businessman must retain his poise, no matter how topsy-turvy the times. Spitting out his LP, clutching his hat to his head, Rogers Collectibles tunneled down through the crowd. Down into the unperceived, but already opening dimension, the place below where – when he found it – everything changed.

A pristine hallway interior, seemingly infinite, gave way to mysterious rooms and corridors. Porcelain walls gleamed in a soft, artificial light. Rogers walked quickly along one of the hallways. His limbs were stiff and wooden, as if

he were a doll. He came to a halt at the corridor’s dead end. There was no doorway, nowhere to go. He turned around.

Distant enough so that it seemed toy-like, a man-lizard peered at him through the telescopic sight of a long-range needle rifle. The green beam of its optical mechanism flashed as it stretched directly to the pupil of Rogers’ left eye.

A gentle and erotic perfume, the distant scent of flowers, blew through the open air for some time before he realised he was off Venus Beach. Rogers swallowed, moved his limbs. He brushed the sand off his legs.

He hadn’t taken flowers. He was still standing. Beside a concession stand, in fact. He tipped the vendor and made his way homeward to his ad-apt through the dissipating crowd.

By an older time, the Venusian colony was more than two centuries old. But on its own terms it was 201 days young. If Venusia were to set its calendar by the planet’s slow rotation, a single Venusian day (a “v-day” the humans called it) would prove very long indeed, consisting of more than 243 Terran, 24-hour days. To counteract the unfortunate situation, the colony’s robot factories manufactured Terran Standard Time by blowing a hole in the eternal cloudcover every 12 Terran hours. The regularity established an illusion very like time. Indeed, when the hot sun shone down through the Hole and flowers gleamed in the gold light, it was easy to believe a t-day was altogether different from the perpetual fog of Venusian evening. It wasn’t, of course. Though it was a t-day morning right now, it was in fact very late in the v-day. But for a pregnant redness in the sun, one would never know a year-long night was coming.

Of all the rituals with which Venusians marked their curious situation, no one was more central to their culture than Feed. Like a castaway’s calendar carved on a piece of driftwood, Feed was a communal marking away of days. Feed was what made the awkward time-scheme feel real. Feed organised the day. Feed spread out and into everything, and in the process did away with all other public rites.

When the sun wasn't shining, when the cold year's v-night had descended and time was all upside down, Feed was life itself. V-nights' t-days were lit by a weak ionisation of the local atmosphere, and at night the Hole to the stars opened up a huge and infinite darkness. One stayed indoors, except for Feed.

Take flowers, brother. Princeps Crittendon says we hang by the merest thread over savage gulfs of interplanetary death. Whatever can keep us here, living, breeding, marking our time, must be the end product of civilisation. We must make Feed our religion, said the regime. We must dedicate ourselves to its observance. Nay though we walk in the valley of the shadow of death. Since Crittendon's industrialisation of flower production and massed distribution, Feed had grown ugly and wild. Feed hung on to the sky with teeth.

It seemed to Rogers Collectibles that Feed hadn't always been so central to Venusian culture. In the first years, people had gotten by rather happily with a future to build; a grand, shared project. They seemed to have had many possible things to accomplish. He couldn't quite remember what. When the flowers had first appeared, he seemed to recall, they had not been made publicly available except on holidays: Princeps' birthday, Sunrise, Sunset, Founding Day.

Rogers had quit Feed three or four t-days ago. He wasn't sure how many. It was why he could remember all these things, why he could reflect at all. The new memories had the unfortunate effect of reminding him of how many other things he had forgotten. He expected that soon things would get easier. He hoped soon to remember everything.

There were only the side effects of quitting flowers to get beyond. The sleeplessness, the short-term memory blanks, the hallucinations. And the lizards.

The lizards were unfortunate.

Looking at his face in the mirror, Rogers saw that abstinence seemed to have caused rapid ageing. Longevity lines gripped his forehead down and around his increasingly prominent nose. At this rate, Martha would have a hard time recognising him when she came back.

It hadn't cheered him, coming into the ad-apt, to glance over what was left of the inventory. Lamps, radios and oddities of every sort lay strewn about. There was no market for these things. The truth was that antiques, as a business, had little viability. Corporation Rogers Collectibles contained a single shareholder, himself. When he'd had to let Mandy go, his last working helper, Rogers had told her it was a temporary thing.

"No it's not," Mandy had said, chewing. "But I don't mind. I was wondering why we were working at all."

With a snap of her gum, she wandered out onto the beach. There was no farewell, no sorry it didn't work out. He'd expected at least to have maintained some social contact with Mandy. He'd enjoyed telling her things she didn't know, however disinterested she eventually became.

But she'd disappeared, as if they'd never shared a moment together. He had never seen her again.

The future growth of CRC meant little to anyone in the general scheme of things. There were fewer and fewer clients and most of the old contacts no longer returned pongs. But Rogers was determined to keep the business alive. He had the feeling, for one thing, that Martha expected him to. It was his project and he happened to think it was a good idea. Just as there was still a past to be gleaned from evidence everywhere, there was still a future. Trends could suddenly turn. Things could change.

Rogers happened to have in his possession a key to a better future. A chance at enough K to bring in all that he'd lost and more. When Martha came back, she just might find a comfortable home and a living partner. Rogers Collectibles intended to make good on these possibilities.

The key was an old blue, paperback book. There was even one old, rich and rather distasteful man to whom Rogers might well be able to sell it.

The population was only in the tens of thousands – and going down, it was said, every day. So you would have figured they'd have come across one another before. Yet in all his days in the business, Rogers had never met or even heard of Frank P Hogart.

Yet long ago, he'd apparently found the old man's business card. He could no longer remember where or how. But he'd saved it, filed it away under Collectors: Books.

The card was actually printed; it had to be read to be understood.

FRANK P HOGART  
BOOKS RARE AND OUT OF PRINT  
BOUGHT AND SOLD  
22A VENUSIA

Hogart was not listed, though a pong number was printed on the back of the card. The old man had received Rogers' pong as if he didn't quite understand the technology. Not only was Frank P Hogart a fool, but he was also impolite and nearly savage in manners.

"You disturb me for this? Melton's Brane World is hardly a rarity. Not only the most widely published book in Venusia – "

"Actually," Rogers objected, "that's Crittendon's Reflections. And this is a Terran copy of Brane World, Mr Hogart. A 23rd-century printing of the true story of Melton told in his own words, with a preface by Ruby Greene."

The old man closed his eyes. He must have been very old, Rogers realised, to show so much age. "There's no such edition."

Rogers produced the book, suddenly, as if out from a hat. An object's sudden appearance often helped fix the collector's interest. "Look for yourself. This copy of Brane World

has particular value, Mr Hogart. The original Terran owners have pencilled notes in on the first page."

"Eh?"

Rogers pointed to a handwritten phrase beneath the book's subtitle ("A Stay on the Paphos Loop"). He read it aloud. "Is one 'grand lie.'"

"There's more," he said, shifting the book. "Beneath this someone else, a later owner, has written: 'But it's a good one.'"

"Yes, yes. Well I've never seen the edition before. You're claiming that this volume was printed on Terra?"

"New Caledonia, 2204, in fact. It's a first edition. Not the very first edition, but it's the first edition of a second printing. And the second printing is importantly different from the first.

"How so?"

"Because of Ruby Greene's preface."

At the name, the old man's eyes hardened, black and dry like seeds. "I'll want to see this book for myself."

"I'm asking for 300 Klugers, Mr Hogart."

"How soon can you bring it to me?"

Even with his lack of proficiency, Rogers had known right away what the book might mean to the right collector. People these days tended to forget the specifics of their history. But the name Ruby Greene still carried weight. Girls were still named Ruby by the state, and important landmarks bore her name. In Rogers' own lifetime, Melton himself, Venusia's founder, had been more than famous. He had been like a god. Getting his start in the antique business, Rogers had first dealt in small likenesses of Melton and Morituri. But there was little interest in such things now. Crittendon's temp-process forbade public ritual except on holidays and Melton had consequently fallen away. Reduced to abstraction, he'd been forgotten. Still, for someone who remembered, a Terran edition of Melton's first book would have a powerful resonance.

Since the day he'd picked Brane World up off a heap of a dead person's effects, Rogers himself had been possessed by a desire to read it. Which was why, in fact, he'd first forgotten to take the flowers. Struggling through the preface, he just hadn't bothered.

Young Peter Melton was poor and without connections. Melton was scientifically minded, dreaming of planets and interplanetary flight while other boys dreamed of girls and celebrity. He had signed up for the Merchant Marines because it was the only way for him to get into space. It was during the Fall of Nations, when the chaos in space matched Earth's lethal brutality, that Melton's cruiser, Barstow, was docked on a Lunar orbit. As a non-military craft, the merchant cruiser found itself waiting for transport home that never arrived. When the United Collectives authorised its commander to raid the Danish Expansion's lunar domes, Melton and others rebelled.

This mutiny was led by scientist Ruby Greene, Melton's lover and superior officer. Ruby was both inspiration and

mentor to the young officer. When she and the mutineers took command, they steered the damaged freighter towards Mars to join the libertarians. They never got there. The captain and the crew who had stayed loyal had managed to damage the ship's long-range engines. Barstow made an emergency landing on the asteroid Paphos, then passing near Luna. Ruby decided to set up temporary shelter on its surface, and she set about organising necessary repairs.

Melton loved to spacewalk. He'd even made a temporary lab on the surface of the asteroid. One day when he was there alone, the ship lifted off without him. There was no answer on the radio bands they had decided upon in case of emergency. No explanation whatsoever. He was simply abandoned.

Peter Melton found himself cast away on the surface of the rapidly travelling, inter-system asteroid. He was determined to survive. On the rock, with the materials pre-selected by himself and Greene for just such an emergency, he managed to erect "Tee-Pee", the legendary life-support shelter and rudimentary greenhouse. He kept a log of his days, if only to keep a semblance of sanity, and broadcast his experience on Ruby Greene's private bands. Most of the time he speculated on what had happened on board the Barstow. The inconclusiveness of Ruby's abandonment drove him mad. As his messages back were met with only silence, and the east asteroid took him further and further from Earth, he began to believe she had left him there purposefully.

Sixteen Terran-years later, when he was received by a collective refugee ship on a return pass from Venus, Melton had forgotten how to speak.

Earth healed him. He brought himself back to human language, he said, by writing Brane World.

The book made him briefly famous and quite fabulously rich. Its early chapters, describing the corruption of the UC Navies, and contextualising Terran politics from a spacer's perspective, caused a sensation. Spacers then were in vogue. Movies were made; interviews held. Strangers approached him with paranormal plans and ready funds.

"Gravity," the book's first lines read, "is the weakest of the known forces. But it is also the strangest." The book contained rudiments of an astrophysical revolution. Much scepticism was put forth by the scientific community in denial of Melton's astronomical claims. Latter portions of the text were described as the ravings of a man who'd flown solitary too fast, too long and too far.

Engulfed in rapidly degrading global eco-politics, faced with the total and complete moral failure of science, people couldn't muster the imagination necessary to believe in inter-dimensional travellers, atmospheric oddities, or talking plants. And because Brane World challenged one of astronomy's most sacred totems – the uninhabitability of Venus, second planet from the Sun – Melton was held, for a time, up to ridicule.

Then he was mostly forgotten.

But certain of his observations chimed with possibilities that Hugo Morituri, the celebrated “super-mind of nano-engineering”, was brooding upon in the South Seas. At Morituri’s invitation, Peter Melton came to Tahiti. They embarked on a year-long study of all known data concerning Venus. At year’s end, the scientist was convinced. The Melton & Morituri Corporation, M&M, was forged for the purpose of settling that planet. Venusia was born. From their South Pacific base, the Founders began preparations for emigration, gathering preselected followers from the dispossessed of all the System.

According to the Preface, Ruby Greene surfaced in Canada around the same time Melton first returned to Earth. The controversy concerning the first edition caught her attention and she wrote the preface as soon as she read it. This edition of Brane World was privately printed by a Revolutionary Communiard in Canada after the Fall. The so-called ORD, the “Order of Dawn” published an expanded edition with Ruby’s corroborating Preface, one year after the first ships set out in 2204.

It was Ruby Greene’s presence in the text that made the edition particularly valuable. Ruby had slipped out of history when the Barstow had first left Paphos. There was no mention of what had become of her in any records Rogers could find.

The old man snorted. “You’re not even human. You’re a fucking flower. You know nothing of history.”

“I’m learning to read. I’ve read the Preface myself. There are a number of antique Vs and sound recordings I’ve come across about the legend of Melton, the Founder. They helped

me along, of course. I’ve picked up enough scraps of information here and there that I can safely say I know as much as anyone of my generation about these matters.”

“Hogwash,” growled Hogart. “You’ve convinced me your ‘first second edition’ is a damned fake. Ruby died. She died in space, on the Barstow. Do you hear me?”

“I hear you quite well. But you’re wrong. Ruby Greene didn’t die. The officers the mutineers had captured persuaded the guards to set them free while Melton was off-ship. Ruby and her crew were jumped, imprisoned and taken to a Lunar prison. It was there she claimed to have received radio signals from Melton on the wavelength pre-selected in their original plans. She was unable, of course, to respond.”

The old man’s eyes closed amid a cluster of the softest, wrinkled skin.

Rogers continued. “He sent out radio letters to her on their old channel, you see. Every day, like a diary. Ruby Greene had taught him everything he’d known of science, of life and more. He was young and clearly in love with her. Even though he believed her dead, he spoke to her. Sent her messages, accusations, descriptions of what he perceived. The thing was, she received them all. And, unless he saw this edition, and it’s doubtful he did, he never knew.”

Hogart leaned back away from the Iye. His image was somewhat distorted.

“Do you understand what you’re saying?”

Rogers noted a tall, twin-pointed cap fixed tight on the old man’s head. It was as if he had horns.

“I believe I do,” Rogers said.

“I need to see the book, to prove with my own eyes you’re lying. Block 22a 11PAM your time tomorrow.”

“Jennifer Kabat’s *The White Deer* is part of a longer site study that she undertook in conjunction with a Marlene McCarty exhibition at the State University of New York [SUNY] at Buffalo, which ran until the beginning of this month. A fiction writer and art critic, Kabat is also an inspired psychogeographer. She’s written about the traces of an 18th-century Shaker site alongside the highway in Albany, NY. She’s written about a 19th-century radical uprising that took place in the town where she lives now, Margaretville, NY.”

## By Jennifer Kabat

That night at the bend in the river, the white deer ambled off. Josh, an ecologist who works with the land here, gestured to the ground. He said slag from the Bethlehem Steel Mill made up most of the soil. It was also heaped with broken dishes, and he explained that it had served as an ad hoc dump. He’d found shoe leather and patent medicine bottles. Now mugwort and Japanese knotweed have taken over with their rhizomatic roots. Josh said he was just grateful anything grows here.

He touched the soil gently, like he was stroking it, and moved a piece of china. He’d dug a hole in the slag to see how deep it went. I thought that this place was part of the steel works and also part of the people’s lives who’d thrown their trash here more than a century ago. The pit had filled with water, and the water reflected the sky. There were Daumal’s ghosts and holes, with their morals. Robin Hood Flour had been made here too: *steal from the rich*. One Lenape legend I read online said that seeing two white deer together is a sign for the people to come together.<sup>1</sup>

Now, though, the deer was gone, and the shadows deepened. It was the same time of day that Mendelsohn had visited, but that activity he’d seen had long since ceased. After his visit, he went on to build a factory in the new Soviet Union, excited by their experiments in socialism.

The grain elevators did have one key influence on modernism. They revolutionised reinforced concrete with a slip-form method of pouring cement. It became the technique used for brutalism, modernism’s late last phase constructed all in concrete.

The word ‘brutalism’ was coined by Reyner Banham – Banham who later moved to Buffalo and wrote about the silos as Roman ruins. Brutalism too was a mistranslation. It was derived from *béton brut*, or ‘raw concrete’ in French. It was 1955, and he conflated the terms hoping brutalism would be true to its materials. When he came up with the name, only a couple of buildings fit his definition, one by Le Corbusier. Yet, Banham conjured an entire movement by

will of the written word, and brutalism was married to buildings that embodied social progress: public housing, courts, government services and schools – even parking garages when people still believed cars were the future. ‘Brutalism’ damned those buildings and their goals. It made them easier to ridicule and dismiss. The power of language to shape our experiences amazes me. In Buffalo people work to protect the old grain elevators, but are losing the city’s brutalist monuments with their expansive social aims.

Banham moved here in the 1970s when brutalist buildings were erected across the city. Their moment waned by the decade’s end, done in by rising gas prices and the start of the neoliberal era. One drove up the cost of cement; the other brought Reagan’s and Thatcher’s elections, ending brutalism’s dreams with the reclaiming of the ‘individual’.

In the age of the socialist utopias during the 1840s, ‘individualism’ had been a pejorative that meant ‘selfish’.

That night with mugwort under my pillow, I dreamt of forced migrations. Red Jacket’s foot edged into my world, and I packed a blue backpack to cross a border.

The next day under an unrelenting sun, I stood downtown and stared at jagged chasms torn into ribbed concrete. The ground glittered with broken glass. This was all that remained of the brutalist Shoreline Apartments. They were designed by Paul Rudolph. English ivy climbed the walls. It makes its own cement from its roots, as if to keep this structure standing. English ivy is alien. Quilts dangled from shattered windows and dead houseplants sat in pots on the

balconies. People had left in a hurry, not even that long ago, in 2018.

Head of Yale’s architecture school, Rudolph had planned an entire neighbourhood here with a community centre, shops, school and housing stretching to the river. It was going to be economically diverse, but only the low-income apartments were built. They were stunning with large windows, so everyone had natural light and a view.

Orange construction netting blocked off holes in the structure but wouldn’t really keep anyone out. The buildings were porous. Into this abyss go the dreams of a better world. I kicked at the dirt and took photos. My breath caught. Mugwort with its silvery undersides grew into a cyclone fence surrounding the site.

The hopes that led to Shoreline lasted not even 50 years. Now it was being replaced by quasi-colonial condos. There won’t be as many units, and some will be market rate, which translates into far less affordable housing. What did Daumal say about intentions, sensibility and morals?

Just before he was evicted last year, final resident John Schmidt said, “They’re getting rid of perfectly sturdy, well-designed Paul Rudolph structures and replacing them with plywood firetraps.” He refused to leave until the marshals took him out.

A housing advocate who stood by his side added: “This could have been here forever, you could shoot a missile at it and it would still be standing.”

Instead of achieving Rudolph’s dream, a 3D kiosk, a sculpture, will be made from some of the last ribbed concrete. It will contain an etched image of his original plans. A small-scale simulation will be all that’s left of Rudolph’s vision.

“I have no idea where I’m going,” Schmidt said just before he was forced out.<sup>2</sup>



Later that day I visited the steel mill to see where the soil came from and to connect it to the grain elevators. A truck dumped concrete chunks of waste, and I couldn’t help but think it was from the Shoreline Apartments.

A woman in a red sedan stopped me. She wore a reflective safety vest. I was trespassing. “You can’t just be here. This is the airport,” she told me. She meant it was now the Port of Buffalo, and like the airport, the same TSA rules applied, but she skipped that. I told her I liked the analogy. What I liked was that the port was the airport and the ways her words had slipped to transform them into equivalents.

She gave me a look that was a question about the word “analogy”, but instead asked what I was doing. I said working on an essay, that I was interested in the city’s industrial history. She suggested someone who might let me onto the site.<sup>3</sup>

On the phone he said, “I wish you good luck,” which was no luck. The airport was a port, the luck was no luck. The grain elevators were storage but they were also capitalism.

Throughout the city, language fails. There was brutality that was meant to build a better world and built of mistranslations. Downtown Buffalo is a city with no centre; the centre has been lost to highway overpasses. The casino is sovereign land. Paul Rudolph’s work to build a better world will be reduced to a plaque and kiosk.

In his essay on marriage and the family and the state, Engels quoted Marx talking about names.

Man’s innate casuistry! To change things by changing their names! And to find loopholes for violating tradition while maintaining tradition, when direct interest supplied sufficient impulse.

He was confused by people’s changing names to try and change what those names represented. I don’t fully get the quote. It’s in the context of Native American peoples moving from matrilineal descent to patrilineal and having children take their fathers’ surnames. Somehow the quote doesn’t fit. I see in it instead that confusion Marx had over language in *Das Kapital* with the word and its transformation to something else. In his writing here too the words slip and something opens up.

The Kanien’kehá:ka scholar Taiaiake Alfred writes about language, names and nouns in his book *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*, where he considers places of resistance to colonial settler culture today. He’s paraphrasing Leroy Little Bear and says, “European languages centre on nouns and are concerned with naming things.” Essentially nouns express ownership and possession, and, he adds, “making judgments. Onkwehonwe [that is, First People’s] languages are structured on verbs [...] through description of movement and activity.”

Language shapes how we frame the world, and our worldview shapes how we make language. I’m limited in what I can say about the Haudenosaunee because of the language that forms me, and the ideas that language can express. I want to slow down on the things I can’t explain, instead of making them easier to understand. I value the places where language fails, where sentences don’t unspool easily into the future, and we stumble and fall into holes. I see possibility if we can step into the unknown, the dissimilar and sit with the questions that open up.

In his introduction to Alfred’s book, Leroy Little Bear writes about how Native Americans believe that place holds history and that time is not progress. Place is not empty, not abstract, not waiting for whoever moves onto it next. It holds its past; it holds events; the land contains the memory and its power. If time is not linear, then the past is not over. It can instead be present and alive.

Here at this bend in the river, tall grasses wave and invasive species grow. One form of toxic capitalism is component in another, married together in the soil. Modernism was teleological and found its antecedents here. Capitalism was inscribed with ‘progress’ and requires ongoing systemic

inequality. Here too is a ‘prehistory’ of greater equality and democracy and collectivism. Any way you examine it, that prehistory is not over, not past, not gone. All of that exists here, so too does Marlene’s garden with its plants and power and the white deer.

<sup>1</sup> Other myths recorded by white Europeans say that to kill a white deer brings death and destruction. In one set during the French and Indian War, a French officer craved the hide of a white doe and convinced a man to help him kill it. Overcome with grief, that man, Native American, confessed and was killed. With that came death and destruction for his tribe: wars, blight and forced migrations.

A corollary is about the deer’s fawn, now an adult white doe. An English hunter goes to shoot the doe. His dog howls; the deer flees, and the hunter beats the dog, convinced it was possessed by a witch. He goes to her home; she’s called a “hag”. (“Witch” is synonymous with “hag”, with an older woman.) He was sure that in hitting the dog, he’d beaten her. There’s a strange conflation of the two, witch and dog, where one stands in for the other. She grabbed her broom, “the implement that served for her horse at night”. She attacked the man with the broomstick, and he was unsure if the beating was “prompted by indignation or vengeance”. This was recorded in Charles M Skinner’s *Myths and Legends of Our Own Land*, 1896. Skinner had been the editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* – which published Walt Whitman and Skinner’s “myths” often about Native Americans not attributed to a tribe or nation – so ripped from context. I prefer the idea of people coming together with the white deer.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Byrnes, *The Last Man Standing in a Doomed Buffalo Housing Complex*, CityLab, accessed, 12 January, 2018, accessed 13/8/19 [www.citylab.com/equity/2018/01/the-last-man-standing-in-a-doomed-buffalo-housing-complex/550343/](http://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/01/the-last-man-standing-in-a-doomed-buffalo-housing-complex/550343/)

<sup>3</sup> Viper’s bugloss grows on the Bethlehem-Steel-Plant-as-Port-of Buffalo. In his 1597 treatise *Herball*, John Gerard records that bugloss is “of force and vertue to drive away sorrow and pensiveness of the minde, and to comfort and strengthen the heart”. A century later another doctor writes, “It is a most gallant herb of the Sun; it is a pity it is no more in use than it is ... The root ... is most effectual to comfort the heart, and expel sadness, or causeless melancholy.” And, King James I’s apothecary suggests bugloss for “swoonings, sadness and melancholy”. More recently in Iran in 2007 medical authorities have found that it works as an antidepressant.

“I’ve known Daniel Mendel-Black as an artist for about 15 years, so I was stunned when he recently sent me his beautifully written sci-fi novel *Neural*. The story takes place in a mirror world, where information is harvested like Monsanto corn. ‘Values were assigned to each scenario depending on how it played out ... It did not matter if you were awake or asleep, dollar signs raced across screens.’ *Neural* gives such a vivid impression of prosaically dystopian present-day LA it seems as if the book was always there.”

## By Daniel Mendel-Black

### PROLOGUE

There were carved white ivory pistol grips, one-of-a-kind collector sets with finely filigreed steel muzzles in red velvet-lined walnut and pearl cases that contained matching gold and silver bullets, an aggressive display of 21st-century automatic weapons. There was fluorescent, flocked five-clawed dragon wallpaper that glowed in the blacklight, highly detailed ink paintings of Day of the Dead skulls etched with flower patterns with spirals for eyes, upturned archetypal Chinese artichoke leaf roofs rimmed all around with searing crimson pinstripe neon tubes. Emblems of death crowded in on everything vital. There were beautiful exotic women, and masculine men, fast muscle cars jacked up or chopped and channelled, and fiery explosions. It was hard to say what made it all hang together. At any point the excess of decorative elements could fall away, recede into the darkness that was momentarily filled with brightly coloured lights – red and blue that frantically blinked on and off in quick succession, as if a police cruiser pulled up on your street after dark. There was death and murder and betrayal, yellow crime-scene tape collaged together with dripping golden sunsets and palm trees – glimpsed gothic art deco towers that rose over brick warehouses tagged with graffiti flashed between pink and purple swaths of big desert sky, and then there were the azure waves that crashed along the Pacific coastline. Rolls of paper cash wrapped in rubber bands and casino playing cards and numbered dice were scattered in tent cities among the sleeping bodies laid out on the sidewalks that one had to step over to get into the seedy Russian nightclubs, tossed out the window of a passing Silverado as a gesture of atonement.

If there was any logic to it all, it was not readily apparent. Metal teeth studded with gems, gold rings and thick gold chains on their hands and necks, bandanas under baseball

caps, and plaid shirts buttoned to the top provided the goods for VIPs in linen blazers and khakis, or lipsticked bleached blondes in light summer dresses and open-toed heels. If there was a consciousness at work behind it all, it was not flesh and blood. Such an indifferent rationale felt like it had hard metal edges strong enough to grind bones, the electric taste of charged metal wires placed under the tongue, the thick smell of burnt hair suspended in the air. The continuity of it all, if there was any, existed on an abstract aesthetic level based on some irrational faith in the unknown, a set of asymmetrical proportions that made everything come to life with the kind of shaky imbalance that requires one to stop and pay close attention because the whole mess could collapse around you at any moment. You never knew when the plot could blow up in your face.

Housed in massive underground temperature-controlled silos, cooled to hundreds of degrees below zero to keep millions of miles of thick wire cables from overheating, was the exact copy of this world. The people who lived there were phantasmagoric characters made of light that looked just like us. They flexed when we did, did everything we did in direct parallel to ourselves. When we danced, they danced. When we laughed, so did they. Our Hollywood strip selfies taken through the sunroofs of rented limos were their selfies. Your copy did what you did in exactly the same way you did it, at exactly the same time you did, but they also did it with the memory of every other time you and everyone else had ever done so before. Aglow, your mirror image was the animated version of your accumulated data history, a repository of all your conscious actions and decisions and all the poor choices you ever made hung on a make-believe wall in a highly elaborate glittering frame carved with baroque geometries. The other world was a perfect copy of ours, except we did not exist in their airless, pixelated environment in exactly the same way we did in our own.

In the dense circuitry of theirs, we were trillions of data points, a matrix of patterns compiled and cross-referenced into larger and larger informational giga-structures until the ethereal hierarchy of layers formed into an infinitely sided, nebular whole that swirled and ebbed and raged on the scale of atmospheric rivers and vast ocean tides. Information that was subsequently harvested and mapped in the same way one mapped global weather patterns or the migration routes of those dispossessed by war or famine or despotic rulers, and then after that it was all fed into simulators that acted out all the various scenarios of behaviour and consumption conceivable in order to recognise and predict market trends, to have a real-time, scaled-up model of the swarm mind, all calculated so your double could expose your secret weaknesses to market exploitation.

Sure as fists were wrapped in chains to bust brown lips and smash mouths bloody in alleyways and schoolyards – as boot heels were ground into noses in full public view at bus stops, in the stalls of car mechanics, in front of liquor stores – sure as there were high-speed chases on the freeways and suicides-by-cop on TV – sure as guns were levelled on lovers in living rooms and bedrooms – as pleas for mercy went unheard at carwashes, and shots rang out behind deserted sheds off old canyon roads, or inside the bathrooms of fast-food restaurants – as sure as someone’s scream of fear and agony pierced the silence – as helicopters hovered over swimming pools with SWAT snipers that hung out the sides with their AR-15s pointed at your head,

the exact same stuff went on down there. Sure as any one of us stood here, there was another one of us down there dressed in the same clothes with the same dumb hang-ups, a graph for every punch thrown, for every kick taken, every blow blocked – a map of every step made during the attempted escape, of every streetlight blown during the getaway – every aspect of the whole miserable routine rated – a measurement of every time we raised or lowered our voices to each other during the argument, a record of every time we didn’t take the bad news seriously when we should have, the time we watched a young couple make out in a semi-private alcove in the park when we shouldn’t have, of all the drugs we smoked or snorted during the planning stages, and anything else about the affair that one could infinitely analyse and calibrate for a reasonable profit. Values were assigned to each scenario depending on how it played out. For every action and corresponding reaction there was a possibility to create vast new digital wealth horizons, entire economies, legitimate and criminal, that existed based on the speed of calculations, virtual sums derived from the number of exchanges possible per second. Sure as there was one of you up here, there was one of you down there breaking its back to make somebody else rich. It did not matter if you were awake or asleep, dollar signs raced across screens. For the autonomous sensors, given the optimum conditions of anxiety and fear, your dream-time was just as profitable a trade.

“If a consideration of nature applies to human nature as well, who better to look to than Dostoyevsky? In *Crime and Punishment*, the impoverished student Raskolnikov kills two women for practically no reason, and for the rest of the book, it’s a race as to whether he’ll be committed first by the police investigation or by his own mind. In Chapter 3, Part 2, Raskolnikov emerges from a delirium terrified he might have spoken of the crime while he was unconscious ... ”

## By Fyodor Dostoyevsky

He was not completely unconscious all the time; he was sick, but rather delirious, in a feverish state of half consciousness. He could recall a good deal later. Once his room seemed full of people, and they wanted to carry him off somewhere, and they fussed and argued a lot about him. Another time he found himself suddenly alone in the room. They had all gone out. They were afraid of him ... Yet every so often they would open the door a little to take a look at him. They would threaten him, and talk something over among themselves. They laughed and made fun of him. He remembered Nastasia frequently beside him, and he could make out another man who seemed extremely familiar, but he could not guess who it was, and this bothered him and even made him cry. Still another time he felt as though he had been lying there for a month; and another time as though it were only a day that had passed. About *that*, however – about *that*, he had completely forgotten. Yet he kept having the feeling that he had forgotten something, something he could not afford to forget. He suffered pangs and torments as it nagged at him. He moaned, flew into a rage, or into a terrifying, insufferable panic-fear. Then he would tear himself away and want to run, but somebody always stopped him by force, and he would drop again into impotence and unconsciousness. At long last he recovered.

It happened at ten o’clock in the morning. At this morning hour on bright days a bright sun stripe always passed along the right wall of his room and lit up the corner near the doorway. Nastasia was standing at his bedside with a man he didn’t know at all, who was looking at him with a great deal of curiosity. He was a young fellow in a caftan; he wore a goatee and looked like some kind of tradesman. The landlady was peeping through the half-open door. Raskolnikov lifted himself up.

He pointed at the fellow. “Who’s that, Nastasia?” he asked.

“Well, it looks like he’s come to,” she said.

“He’s come to,” the tradesman echoed. Realising that he had come to, the landlady, who had been peeping in, closed the door and withdrew. She had always been shy, and managed to endure explanations and conversations with difficulty at best. She was about 40, heavyset, a little on the fat side, dark-eyed, dark-browed and good-natured, with a kind of lazy fatness. She was actually rather attractive. She had no reason to be so shy.

“Who ... are you?” Raskolnikov asked, addressing the tradesman. At that moment, however, the door was flung wide open and Razumikhin came in, stooping a little because he was so tall.

“It’s called an apartment,” he cried out as he came in, “but it’s a ship’s cabin! Dop, my head! So you’ve come to, old pal? Pashenka just told me.”

“He just came to,” Nastasia said.

“He just came to,” echoed the tradesman, smiling.

“And who, if you don’t mind, may you be?” Razumikhin asked, addressing him. “Vrazumikhin at your service. Not, as they keep calling me, Razumikhin, but – Vrazumikhin, student, son of a gentleman. And this is my friend. Well. And who are you?”

“I work in the office at the merchant Shelopaev’s. I’m here on business.”

“Sit down in this chair, if you will.” Razumikhin sat down himself on the other, on the opposite side of the small table. “Well, old pal, you did a good job, coming to,” he went on, addressing Raskolnikov. “You’ve scarcely had a bite or a drink for four days. They gave you some tea with a spoon, it’s true. I brought Zosimov here twice to have a look at you. Remember Zosimov? He looked you over carefully and he said right away nothing was wrong – all in the head; something somehow just struck you – nervous nonsense of some kind or other. Doesn’t get enough to eat, he says, doesn’t get enough beer and horseradish, so he’s sick. But it’s nothing. It’ll ease off and go away. Quite a guy, Zosimov! A damn good doctor! Well,”

he addressed the tradesman again, “I don’t want to keep you. Why don’t you tell us your business? Mind you, Rodia, this is the second time that office sent somebody. He isn’t the one who came last time. It was somebody else. We had a talk. Who was the guy who came here before you?”

“The day before yesterday? Must have been Alexei Semionovich. He works in our office, too.”

“He’s a little brighter than you are, though, wouldn’t you say?”

“Ye-e-es. You might say so. He has more weight.”

“Nicely put. Well, go on.”

“Well, at your mother’s request, you see,” he began, addressing Raskolnikov directly, “Afanasy Ivanovich Vakhrushin, whom I think you know, sent you a remittance through our office, which we’re supposed to hand over to you, provided you’re in your right mind. Thirty-five roubles. Semion Semionovich received authorisation for said amount from Afanasy Ivanovich at your mother’s request in the same way as before. You know about it, don’t you?”

“Yes ... I remember ... Vakhrushin,” said Raskolnikov pensively.

“You hear! He does know the merchant Vakhrushin!” Razumikhin shouted. “How can you say he’s not in his right mind? Anyway, it’s now clear that you’re a bright fellow, too. Well, well! It’s always fun listening to clever speeches.”

“Oh, yes, it is Mr Vakhrushin, Afanasy Ivanovich, and at your mother’s request, who once had money sent to you the same way before. Nor has she been refused this time. The other day Semion Semionovich deigned to let it be known that 35 roubles were to be turned over to you in the hope of better things to come.”

“That’s very good. ‘In the hope of better things to come!’ That’s very good. There’s a phrase for you. ‘Your mother’s request’ – that isn’t bad, either. Well, what do you say? Is he in his right mind or isn’t he, ah?”

“It is perfectly all right as far as I am concerned, sir. I merely stand in need of his signature.”

“He’ll scribble it for you! You got a book for him to sign or what?”

“Here is the book, sir. Yes, sir.”

“Let’s have it. Well, Rodia, up a little. Let me give you a hand. Come on, now. Take the pen and sign – Raskolnikov – because, old pal, money’s the best medicine we’ve got right now.”

Raskolnikov pushed away the pen. “Don’t need ... ”

“What do you mean, ‘don’t need?’”

“I won’t sign.”

“For God’s sake! How can we get the money if you don’t sign?”

“I don’t need ... the money ... ”

“So money isn’t needed, ah? Well, old pal, you’re lying. I can testify to that! Please don’t be alarmed. It’s just that he’s ... wandering again. He does that sometimes even when he’s awake ... You are a man of sense, and we will just have to help him along, to put it simply. We’ll take him by the hand and he’ll sign. Come on, now ... ”

“If you wish I can come back some other time, sir.”

“No, no, why go out of your way? You are a man of sense ... Come on, now, Rodia, let’s not detain your visitor ... look, he’s waiting ... ” And in all seriousness he was about to guide Raskolnikov’s hand.

“Wait, I’ll do it myself ... ” the latter said, took the pen and signed the book. The visitor counted out the money and departed.

“Bravo! And now, my friend, how about eating something?”

“Yes,” answered Raskolnikov.

“Do you have any soup?”

“Yesterday’s,” Nastasia answered. She had been standing there all this time.

“With potato and rice in it?”

“With potato and rice.”

“I know it by heart. Bring the soup. And let’s have some tea.”

“I’ll bring it.”

Raskolnikov looked at everything with profound amazement and a vacant, mindless panic. He decided to wait quietly and see what happened next. “Apparently I’m not delirious,” he thought, “apparently this is really going on ... ” In a couple of minutes Nastasia came back with the soup and said there would soon be some tea, too. With the soup appeared two spoons, two plates and a whole setting: salt, pepper, mustard for the beef. This had not happened for quite a long time. And the tablecloth was clean.

“It might not be a bad idea, Nastasia dear, if Praskovia Pavlovna could send us up a couple of bottles of beer. I don’t think we’d have any trouble putting them away.”

“Well, I’ve sure got to hand it to you!” Nastasia muttered, and left to carry out the order.

Raskolnikov went on looking about him wildly yet with strained attention. Meanwhile Razumikhin sat down on the couch beside him and, clumsy as a bear, put his left arm around Raskolnikov’s head, although the latter was quite able to sit up by himself; with his right hand he lifted a spoonful of soup to Raskolnikov’s mouth. He did this several times, blowing on the soup first so Raskolnikov would not burn himself, although the soup was barely warm. Raskolnikov greedily swallowed one spoonful, then another, then a third. After several spoonfuls, however, Razumikhin suddenly stopped and said there would have to be a consultation with Zosimov before he could have more.

Nastasia entered carrying two bottles of beer.

“Want some tea?”

“Yes.”

“Hop to it and bring some tea, Nastasia. I think we can have some tea without consulting the medical school. But here’s some beer!” He sat down again in his chair, pulled the soup over, and fell to as though he hadn’t eaten in three days.

“Rodia, old pal, I’ve been eating like this every day at your place,” he muttered as best he could through a mouth full of boiled beef, “and it’s your dear landlady Pashenka who’s

responsible. She does me proud, I must say. I don't insist, of course, but I don't say no, either. Well, here's Nastasia with the tea. Nimble, isn't she! How about some beer, Nastenka?"

"Go on with you!"

"A little tea, then?"

"A little tea, if you like."

"Pour. No, wait a minute. I will pour for you myself. You sit down at the table."

He prepared everything with dispatch, poured one cup, then another, left his lunch and sat down on the couch again. As before, he put his left arm around the sick man's head, braced him, and started feeding him tea with a spoon, blowing incessantly and with a special zeal, as though the patient's recovery depended on this very process. Raskolnikov was silent. He offered no resistance, although he now felt quite strong enough to sit up by himself on the couch without help, and not only could he control himself sufficiently to handle a spoon or cup, but he thought he could even get up and walk. Because of some strange, almost animal cunning, however, he chose to conceal his strength for the time being, lie low, and pretend he still did not quite know what was going on. Meanwhile, he would listen, and try to figure out what was going on. Yet he could not fully control his feeling of disgust. When he had sipped about ten spoonfuls of tea, he suddenly freed his head, pushed away the spoon capriciously, and dropped down on his pillow again. And there were real pillows under his head now, with clean pillowcases, and stuffed with down. He made note of that, too, and took it into account.

"Pashenka's got to send up some raspberry jam, and he can have it in his tea," Razumikhin said. He went back to his seat and took up his soup and beer again.

"Where's she going to get raspberries?" Nastasia asked, balancing her saucer on outspread fingers and sipping tea in the Russian manner, through a lump of sugar she held in her teeth.

"She can get them in the store, old pal. You see, Rodia, there was a lot going on around here while you were conked out. When you left my place in that uncivilised way without giving me your address, I was so damn mad I thought I'd hunt you up and fix you but good. So that very day I started. Well, I walked around and walked around, asked here, asked there. I'd forgotten about this apartment of yours. Though I don't really see how I could possibly have remembered, because I never knew it. Well, this place you had before, I remembered where it was, at Five Corners, Kharlamov's house. Well, I looked and I looked for this Kharlamov's house, and it turned out not to be Kharlamov's house at all, but Buch's – like sometimes you get the sounds mixed up! Well, then I got mad. I got mad and I thought to hell with it and I went to the address bureau at the police station, and just think – they found you for me in two minutes. They've got you listed."

"Listed!"

"Right. And yet they were looking for some General Kobelev, and all the time I was there they couldn't locate

him. But to make a long story short. I got to know all about your affairs almost as soon as I dropped in there. Everything, old pal, everything. I know all about it. If you don't believe me, ask Nastasia. I got to know Nikodim Fomich, and I was introduced to Ilia Petrovich and the janitor and Mr Zamiotov who's chief clerk in the office there. And finally, Pashenka, too – that was to top it all off. Nastasia knows about it ..."

"The way he made up to her, sugar wouldn't melt in his mouth," Nastasia murmured, smiling roguishly.

"Why don't you put the sugar in your tea, Nastasia Nikiforovna."

"You sure are some dog!" Nastasia burst out laughing. "My patronymic's Petrovna, though, not Nikiforovna," she added suddenly, after she stopped laughing.

"We will make a note of it, madame. Well, I'll tell you, old pal, to make a long story short, I wanted to distribute a few lightning bolts around here at first, to get rid of everybody's prejudices right away. But Pashenka won out. Old pal, I didn't expect she'd be so ... so, well ... so sort of *avenante* ... ah? What do you say?"

Raskolnikov remained silent but did not for a moment drop his alarmed gaze, and went on staring at him intently.

"And very much so," continued Razumikhin, unembarrassed by his friend's silence, and as though confirming an answer he had received, "very nice, really, in all her details."

"What a creature!" Nastasia burst out again. This conversation seemed to provide her with some inexplicable joy.

"It's too bad, old pal, that you didn't catch on earlier in the game. You should have handled her differently. Because she's quite a character, really! Well, about her character we'll talk later ... How can you explain the fact that she wouldn't send up your dinner, for example? Or, for example, that IOU? I must say, you really were off your rocker when you signed that IOU! Or, for example, that marriage you proposed when her daughter, Natalia Egorovna, was still alive ... I know all about it! What's more, I can see it's a delicate string, and I'm a jackass. You must excuse me. While we're on the subject of stupidity, though – you know, Praskovia Pavlovna isn't at all as dumb as you might at first think, ah?"

"Yes," mumbled Raskolnikov, looking away, but feeling it was better to keep up the conversation.

"That's the truth, though, isn't it?" Razumikhin cried, apparently delighted he had received an answer. "On the other hand, she's not bright, either, ah? Quite an unusual character, really! Sometimes I can't figure her out, old pal, I assure you ... She's 40 at least. She says 36, and I guess she has her rights. I assure you I judge her more in an intellectual sense, according to a certain metaphysic, you might say. You see, old pal, there's a kind of symbolic relation between us, like algebra! I don't understand any of it! Well, this is all nonsense, of course. She saw you weren't a student any more, you weren't giving any lessons, and you had no clothes. When the girl died, there wasn't much reason to treat you as an in-law any more, and suddenly she panicked.

As for you, you just went into your corner and didn't even try to keep up your former relations. Well, so she started thinking about getting you out of that apartment. She'd been brooding about that a long time, but it seemed too bad to let all the money you owed her go. What's more, you told her yourself your mother would pay –"

"In my baseness I told her that ... My mother is practically forced to beg alms ... And I lied so I could keep my room and get fed," Raskolnikov proclaimed loudly and distinctly.

"Well, that made sense. But here's the point. This is where Mr Chebarov comes in – court councillor and businessman. Without him, Pashenka could never have thought of it. She'd have been embarrassed. Well, a businessman doesn't embarrass easily, and right off he naturally poses the question. Is there any chance of collecting on the IOU? Answer: Yes, there is. Because he's got the kind of mama would come to her boy's rescue with her 125-rouble pension, though she went hungry herself. He's got the kind of sister would sell herself into slavery for her brother. So he made up his mind – Why do you jump like that? I got to know all your little ins and outs, old pal. It's not for nothing you unburdened yourself to Pashenka when you were still on a family basis with her. Mind you, what I say now I say out of love ... That's the way it goes, you know. A sensitive, honest man unburdens himself, but a smart businessman listens and goes on eating. And then he eats you up. So she turns over this IOU as a kind of payment to this Chebarov, and he calls it in officially without feeling any embarrassment at all. When I heard about it, I wanted at first to expose him to a bit of the old lightning treatment, just to clear up everybody's conscience, but then Pashenka and I got to understand each other, and I told her to stop the whole thing at its source, and I gave her my word you'd pay. I vouched for you, old pal, you hear? We called Chebarov, stuffed ten roubles in his teeth, and got back the document. Which I now have the honour of presenting you. They'll take your word for it now. Here, take it. I've torn it in half like you're supposed to."

Razumikhin put the note on the table. Raskolnikov looked at it, but without saying a word, he turned to the wall. This response jarred even on Razumikhin.

"I see, old pal," he said a moment later, "that I've made a fool of myself again. I thought I'd cheer you up and entertain you with my chattering, and all I've done is stir your bile."

After a moment's silence, Raskolnikov asked without turning his head: "Was it you I didn't recognise when I was delirious?"

"It was me, all right. You worked yourself into quite a tizzy over it. Especially when I brought Zamiotov along once."

"Zamiotov? The chief clerk? Why?" Raskolnikov turned swiftly and fixed his eyes on Razumikhin.

"What's wrong? What are you getting so excited about? He wanted to make your acquaintance. Because I'd been telling him so much about you. And he told me a few things – how else could I have found out what I did about you?

He's quite a fellow, old pal, really most remarkable ... in his own way, of course. We're friends now, and see each other almost every day. I moved over to this part of town. Did you know that? Moved a little while ago. We've been to Luisa's together a couple of times. Do you remember that Luisa, Luisa Ivanovna?"

"Did I say something when I was delirious?"

"Did you ever! You certainly were not yourself."

"What did I say when I was delirious?"

"Good Lord, what did he say when he was delirious? It's well known what people say when ... Well, old pal, mustn't lose any more time. Back to work."

He rose from the chair and reached for his cap.

"What did I say when I was delirious?"

"My, my, how he carries on! Afraid you let some secret out or what? Don't worry. You didn't say a word about the countess. Something about a bulldog of some kind, and about earrings, and some sort of chains, and about Krestovsky Island and some janitor or other, and you said a lot about Nikodim Fomich and Ilia Petrovich, the assistant superintendent. You also seemed to be terribly interested in your own sock, just terribly! You kept begging for it. Give it to me, please. Just like that. Over and over. Zamiotov himself looked for your socks in all the corners and handed you that garbage with his own scented and bejewelled hands. That's what it took to calm you down, and you kept clutching this garbage to you for hours on end. It was impossible to tear it away. Must be somewhere under your blanket even now. Then you kept asking for some frayed ends of trousers, oh, so pitifully! We tried to figure out what kind of frayed ends you might have had in mind, but we couldn't ... Well, now, to work! Here are 35 roubles. I'm going to take ten of them; and in an hour or so I'll give you an account of what I did with them. I'm going to get ahold of Zosimov, too. He should have been here long ago, anyway. It's past 11. And you, Nastasia dear, while I'm not here, do see to it that you drop in as often as you can. In case he wants something to drink, or anything like that ... As for Pashenka, I'll go down myself right now and tell her what's needed. So long!"

"Pashenka, he calls her! My, is he an operator!" Nastasia called after him. Then she opened the door and tried to eavesdrop from there, but lost patience and ran downstairs herself. She seemed terribly interested in finding out exactly what he was saying to the landlady down there. It seemed clear that she was altogether charmed with Razumikhin.

The door had scarcely closed behind her when the sick man threw off his blanket and leaped out of bed as though he were insane. He had been waiting for them to leave, with a burning, convulsive impatience, so that he might get to work as soon as they were gone. Get to work doing what? As though deliberately, he seemed to have forgotten. "Good God, tell me one thing only! Do they know everything, or do they still not know? And what if they do know and are only pretending, mocking, sounding me out – and then all of a sudden they'll come in and say they knew it all long

ago and they were only ... What was I going to do now? I've forgotten, as though deliberately. Forgotten suddenly what I just remembered!"

He stood in the middle of the room and looked about him in anguished perplexity. He went up to the door, opened it, and listened. That wasn't it, though. Suddenly he rushed as though he remembered to the corner where the hole in the wallpaper was. He put his hand in the hole, rummaged about, started examining everything. But that wasn't it, either. He walked over to the stove, opened it, and started poking about in the ashes. The bits of frayed edges of his trousers and the shreds of his torn pocket were still lying where he had thrown them – which meant that nobody had seen them! Then he remembered the sock that Razumikhin had just been talking about. Sure enough, there it was, under the blanket on the couch; but it was so crumpled and dirty that Zamiatov had certainly not been able to notice anything.

"Zamiatov, damn! ... The station! ... Why are they summoning me to the station, though? Where's the summons? Bah! ... I got mixed up. The other time was when they sent for me! I was examining my sock then, too. Now, though ... I've been sick. But why did Zamiatov come? Why did Razumikhin bring him here?" he was muttering weakly, and sat down again on the couch. "What's wrong? Am I still delirious, or is it real? Seems to be real. Ah, now I remember! Got to run! Got to run away quick. Got to run away quick! Yes ... but where? And where are my clothes? No shoes. They took them away! They've hidden them! I understand! There's my coat, though – they overlooked it! And there's the money on the table, thank God! And there's the IOU. I'll take the money and go, I'll rent another apartment, I won't be found! But what about the address bureau? They'd find me, all right. Razumikhin would find me. Best of all run ... far away ... to America – and to hell with them! Take the IOU, too ... might come in handy there. What else should I take? They think I'm sick! They don't know I can walk, ha ha ha! ... I could tell by their eyes that they know it all! If only I could get down the stairs! What if they've got a police guard there? What's this? Tea? And there's some beer left. Half a bottle. Cold, too!"

He grabbed the bottle, which still contained a whole glass of beer, and drank it pleurably in one gulp, as though he were putting out a fire inside him. Scarcely a minute passed before the beer started going to his head, and a slight, even rather pleasant shudder ran along his back. He lay down and pulled the blanket over him. His thoughts, sick and disconnected enough before, became increasingly confused, and soon a light and pleasant drowsiness overcame him. Pleasurably he burrowed his head into the pillow, wrapped more securely about him the soft cotton blanket that had replaced his ragged greatcoat, breathed peacefully, and fell into a deep, sound, powerful sleep.

He woke up when he heard someone come into his room. He saw Razumikhin, who had opened the door wide and was standing on the threshold, hesitating as to whether to go in

or not. Quickly Raskolnikov raised himself up on the couch and looked at him, as though he were trying to remember something.

"So you're not asleep ... Well, here I am! Nastasia, bring that bundle up!" Razumikhin shouted. "Now you'll have an accounting – "

"What time is it?" Raskolnikov asked, looking around in alarm.

"You slept like a soldier, old pal. It's evening. Soon be six. You slept six hours, and a little over."

"Good God! I did that!"

"And why not? It's good for you! Where is there to hurry off to? A tryst, or what? We have all the time in the world. I've been waiting for you three hours now. I came in a couple of times, but you were asleep. Twice I went down to Zosimov's. He's not home, and that's all there is to it! Well, it doesn't matter, he'll come! ... I've also been off on my own little matters. I moved today, you know. Moved over lock, stock and barrel to my uncle's. I have an uncle now, you know ... Well, to hell with all that, down to brass tacks! ... Hand that bundle over, Nastenka. That's the girl! ... And how are you feeling, old pal?"

"I'm all right. I'm not sick ... Razumikhin, have you been here long?"

"I told you. I've been waiting three hours."

"No, but before?"

"What do you mean, before?"

"How long is it you've been coming here?"

"But I told you all about it not long ago. Don't you remember?"

Raskolnikov pondered. Something from not long ago flashed in his mind as in a dream. He could not fasten on any one thing, though, and he looked inquiringly at Razumikhin.

"Hmm!" said the latter, "forgotten! I thought some time ago you were not quite yourself ... That sleep seems to have done you some good, though ... It's true. You look a hell of a lot better. That's the boy! Well, then, to brass tacks! It'll all come back to you any minute now. Just look over here, my dear fellow."

He began to unbundle the package, which apparently interested him very much. "Believe it or not, old pal, I had a soft spot in my heart for this job. Because we've got to make a man out of you. So, here we go. We start at the top. Do you see this li'l ole hat?" he began, taking out of the bundle a fairly nice-looking yet quite ordinary cheap cap. "Mind trying it on?"

"Later. In a while," Raskolnikov said, querulously waving him away.

"Oh, come on, Rodia old pal, don't say no. Later it'll be late. And I won't get any sleep, because I took a flyer buying it. I didn't know your size. Ah! Right on the button!" he exclaimed triumphantly, trying it for size. "Fits like a glove! The warbonnet, old pal, that's the most important item in your attire. It's a ticket in itself. There's a friend of mine, now – Tolstiakov, maybe you know him – he feels

obliged to take his lid off whenever he's anyplace where everybody's standing around in hats and caps. And it's not servility, mind you. He does it because that bird's nest of his embarrasses him. That's how bashful he is. What do you say, Nastenka. Now just compare these two lids, would you. This Palmerston" – he picked up Raskolnikov's battered top hat from the corner; for some unknown reason he called it a Palmerston – "or this jewel of a hat? How much do you think I paid for it, Rodia? Guess. Nastasia dear?" Since Raskolnikov remained silent, he turned to her.

"I bet he gave 20 kopecks for it," Nastasia said.

"Twenty kopecks, now you're being silly," he said, taking offence. "One can't even buy the likes of you for 20 kopecks nowadays. It was 80 kopecks. And only because it was second-hand. True, it's got a guarantee. If you wear it out in a year they'll give you another one free. How about that! Well, now, let's move on to the United States of America, as we used to call them in school. I warn you beforehand, I'm proud of these trousers!" And he displayed before Raskolnikov a pair of grey trousers made of a light summer woollen material. "No holes, no stains. Just as good as new. Even though they're not. And there's a jacket to match. The same colour, just as fashion requires. As for being second-hand – speaking frankly, that makes it better, softer, more delicate. You see, Rodia, it's my considered opinion that all you have to do to make your way in the world is the right thing at the right time. If you can do without asparagus in January, that puts roubles in your purse. And the same principle applies to this little item. It's summer now, so I bought a summer item; because towards autumn you need warmer material anyhow. You'd have to throw these away whether you wanted to or not ... especially since they'd probably have disintegrated by then anyhow. From inner inadequacies if not from your increased standard of luxury. Take a good look. Guess how much? Two roubles 25 kopecks! With the same guarantee. Wear these out, they'll give you another pair next year, free! That's the way they do business at Fediaev's. Once you pay for anything it's got to last you a lifetime, otherwise you won't go back there again. Well, then, let's be getting on to the boots. How do you like them? Of course, you can see they're second-hand, but they'll do for a month or two. Imported labour and imported material, mind you. A secretary from the English embassy sold them on the flea market last week. He'd only worn them six days. He needed the money badly. Price: one rouble 50 kopecks. Bargain?"

"Maybe they won't fit," said Nastasia.

"Not fit! What do you mean, not fit!" He pulled Raskolnikov's old shoe out of his pocket – full of holes, cracked, caked with dried mud. "I took the old veteran along, and we managed to reconstruct the regular size from this old dinosaur. I might add that the whole transaction was conducted in the proper spirit. As for the linen situation, that was discussed with your landlady. To begin with, here are three shirts: The cloth's a bit coarse, but they've got fashionable fronts ... Well, sir, there it is. Eighty kopecks the cap; two roubles 25 the rest of the haberdashery, and that makes three roubles five kopecks; a rouble 50 the shoes – they're very good, after all – and that makes four roubles 55 kopecks; then, five roubles for underwear – got that wholesale – makes exactly nine roubles 55 kopecks. Forty-five kopecks change in copper coins – here you are, sir, please take them – and in this way, Rodia, as far as clothes are concerned, you are back in full bloom. Because in my opinion your coat is not only good yet, it even has a certain special look of gentility about it – that's what it means to buy your clothes at Charmeur's! As for socks and things like that – I leave it to you. You have 25 roubles left. As for Pashenka, paying the rent, and all that – don't worry about it. I spoke to her. Your credit is most unlimited. Now, old pal, let's change your linen, because if you ask me your illness resides in that shirt, and in that shirt alone – "

"Let me alone! I don't want to!" Raskolnikov waved him away. He had listened with disgust to Razumikhin's tensely playful account of his purchases. "That won't do, old pal," Razumikhin insisted. "What do you think I've been wearing my shoes out for! Nastasia dear, don't be bashful, give us a hand, that's the girl." Raskolnikov's linen was changed in spite of his resistance. He threw himself back on his pillow and for a couple of minutes said not a word. "It'll be a long time before I get rid of them," he thought. "What money did you buy all this with?" he asked finally, staring at the wall.

"Money? Say, what about that! Your own, of course. Not long ago there was a messenger here from Vakhrushin, your mother had him sent. Or have you forgotten?"

"Now I remember ... " Raskolnikov said after long and gloomy reflection. Razumikhin frowned, looking at him with some alarm.

The door opened and a tall, solid-looking man came in, who also looked somewhat familiar to Raskolnikov. "Zosimov! At long last!" Razumikhin cried out, cheering up.

