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Tripe

This is a book of tripe. If you want to know what that is I will tell you, I mean specifically tell you. Webster's *New Twentieth Century Dictionary* (Unabridged; second edition— deluxe color, 1972) says, “**tripe**, n.... 1. the entrails generally; hence, the belly: generally used in the plural. [Obs] 2. part of the stomach of ruminating animals when dressed and prepared for food. ‘How say you to a fat tripe finely broiled?’ —Shak. 3. anything worthless, offensive, etc.; rubbish; trash. [Slang].” I also say this, though not as often or at such great length.

...Which brings up the point of what *kind* of tripe this book contains, or rather is. This really depends on whether you feel Obsy or Shaky or Slangy, which in turn depends on which of the above numbers you pick. Try flipping something with three sides.

...The immediately preceding has been less an explanation and more a demonstration of what kind of tripe this book, equaling these many many pages, is. And the number of pages, though perhaps meager when placed against, well, a larger number (or more precisely, a much larger number), is the first criterion. The tripe here is a voluminous one, to be sure. To be sure of this, heft this volume in one hand and something much less voluminous in the other and compare.

Tripe

...The second criterion, or attribute, of and most surely pertaining to this tripe, is its salability, or at least its intended salability. I want money, you see, and though I suppose there are a number of ways to get it, I regard most of these as immoral, or at least requiring actual effort. Instead, then, I will sell my tripe. Congratulations in your support of this most supremely moral, or at least leisurely, effort.

I sense a leisurely dissatisfaction in the room, so I will explain further to the reader (or perhaps crowd of listeners, should this tripe be read at storytime in a third grade class) the tripeness of the tripe in question. I regard myself as a ridiculously smart person, and so have the audacity to *think* on some occasions, and to pretend that these thoughts might actually matter or make some positive impact, or at least some sense, should someone spend the time, money, and energy necessary to make these thoughts accessible to at least some other people. I also think I am deluded in thinking this, and so do not hire someone to spend these things. Nonetheless, there is a distinct possibility that I am wise, and as a wise man once told me “A wise man can’t even keep his tripe clean, fer Gadssake,” so in the process of excreting this tripe, a profound wisdom may emerge that will shock the modern age into some receptacle vast enough for the modern age to be shocked into it. If this happens, it will be a freak one-in-a-jillion accident.

Spelling for me has always been hard, so I won’t attempt to relate to you my last name and the story behind it, but I will say this: I am someone other than yourself (probably), and you are basically alone, a lonely soul reading tripe. You may then see me as your friend, and may even see me as such when I say I hate you (which I might later say), but you will be in some small part wrong, for I think — and please take this in the most tentative way — I think that I hate you. Nonetheless, you are basically alone, even and especially in a third grade classroom during storytime, so you really have no choice but to be touched by the personal

Tripe

tone that I use here, as well as that tone used later in describing things that are personal, which is also a personal tone. You will thus not only continue reading, at least for another page, but appropriate me, not me as an actual person but me as a conduit for tripe, as another voice within your head, as an objectification of that part of you that, during a passionate kiss, makes you unable to divert your attention from the subject of hairballs — that part of you that, during the hairball competition, distracts your attention with thoughts of a passionate kiss. Most people fail to cultivate this part of themselves, but it never goes away, and if it does... well, it never does, but if it did, you would be much too boring and efficient and you would have to be hit by a bus just to put the universe back in balance.

To suggest a proof of the earlier claim about my intelligence, I will point out as a first, final, and in my mind already redundant disclaimer that the preceding was not in any sense I understand wise; the improbable has not yet occurred. This is Obsy, which makes it all the more frustrating, but you cannot resist, for your tripe secretion glands of all three types (use your remote-association powers to figure out what type of types are these types) are already being stimulated, and by reading just this far you either have been hooked, and so already internalized this book as an objectified element of your psyche, i.e. a companion tried and true, or you are a big fat freak. I like your visage nonetheless (speaking as a narrative persona of this text and not as an actual person). Someday, if you like, we shall be wed.

But that will come later, and this shall come now: What should you do with this book once you either finish it or give up in despair? It goes without saying that you should not in a loud and assuming voice demand your money back, unless in doing so you plan to refer not just to any money spent on this book, but to all the money you've ever spent on everything. For this to be effective, though, your voice must be very loud and assuming, and even then it will be less effective in getting cash than making you hoarse.

Tripe

One proper thing to do after finishing this book is to put it on your coffee table. This is proper, as this book is intended to be a coffee table book, meaning that by its very concept (as conveyed succinctly in its title) and attractive packaging, it is meant to raise eyebrows, conversation, and lowly coffee-drinking spirits, providing the owner of a table so adorned with a symbol of status or an extra support for a wobble-causing table leg. Admittedly, the packaging is not *that* attractive... lacking as it does the plentiful sparkling color photographs and 3' by 1' dimensions of most of your more popular coffee-table books, so you might want to draw in the margins or something.

Second Sitting

I have delineated a chapter break at this point for those of you that go for that sort of thing, but I warn you that the “break” in question is/was very short, and should you cease reading to sleep, or fetch a cheese sandwich, or whatnot, the text will probably have already started again by the time you return. I realize this information may be coming too late, as the “break” has already occurred, so I will by way of reparation encourage you to be disappointed and weep.

This weeping issue brings to mind questions of structure, and does so in such a way as to leave the mind ignorant as to the nature of the bringing agent, arming it only with a clue of a hunch of a notion that the agent is not very nice. To delineate a structure appropriate to the subject or essence of this tripe (i.e., tripe), one must know this essence or subject up close and personal (note the word “personal” as indicating the onset of a personal tone), which in turn

Tripe

can happen by looking closely at its corresponding appropriate structure. The opacity of my writing style at this point means I doan' like you. Deal.

Here's a hint: despite popular suggestion, this book is not a *Choose Your Own Adventure*[™], as you get too much of that in real life, which is scary (or so I have been told). If you would like this book to be a *Choose Your Own Adventure*[™], please turn to page 48 and read the passage about mucus. (Imaginative readers may wish to imagine that there is some mention of mucus on page 48.)

This book is also not a limerick, because it is too long, and the rhymes aren't in exactly the right places. It is at least not a limerick about anything that a limerick should properly be about, so it's not a proper limerick.

The reader should now be aching in anticipation of the resolution of this mystery, provided he/she can actually figure out what the mystery is, and provided he/she cares, which he/she, as pronounal hermaphrodite, should.

The sense of "should" here is not so much predictive, as in "it's 2:00 pm, so I predict Mr. Rogers should be sloshed by now," as normative, as in "It's a Saturday night, so by divine law Mr. Rogers should be sloshed." Caring about nifty knowledge (like, say, about structure) holds this status of law for the pronounal hermaphrodite because, well, hey, if I were a he/she I'd be saying "**What the hell? What sex am I?**" because we Americans must be gender conscious so as to know whether to carry a Y-chromosome carriers' card or not. This "must" is not so much a descriptive must as in "You must be Telly Savalos," but likewise a normative must as in "You simply must be Telly Savalos; it's all the rage."

The antiquated phrase "all the rage" is appropriate (or at least nifty) here because studies show that antiquated things are very old, and rage is about as old as the first muffin, though noticeably less stale. Also, antiquated things may occasionally and accidentally be

Tripe

wise. This is a secret, and to know it, you must have paid money for this book, or at least wasted time reading it. Thank you.

The preceding is not random tripe. Well, it *is*, but it is not *just* random tripe, in that it conveys some of the sense of the structure of random tripe. Remember what I said about free association? (Imaginative readers may wish to imagine that I have previously said something about free association.) Well, the structure has something to do with free association, with the apparently non-sequitur like say kisses and hairballs and profuse vomiting, because it is some feature of a nasty childhood experience or the universal unconscious (say an inherited memory of some nasty early species experience, probably about **you**) that these things are in fact sequitur, or at least groovy.

This is obviously a fairly specific kind of free association, as free association in general, unlike tripe, provides entirely the basis for all things artistic or humorous or otherwise creative. For instance, Charles G. Morris in *Psychology, an Introduction* (7th edition, 1990, p. 324) says that “*One of the most widely used creativity tests, Medick’s (1962) Remote Associations Test (RAT), asks the subject to produce a single verbal response that relates to a set of three apparently unrelated words. For example, the three stimulus words might be poke, go, and molasses. A desirable response — although not the only possible one — relates them through the word slow: slow-poke, go slow, slow as molasses. Arriving at such responses is not easy, especially since the stimulus words have no apparent connection to one another.*” I might also say this at some point, but only if it seems dramatically effective, or at least nifty. I certainly won’t say it using that font. What Charlie is saying is that creativity is slow in a rich variety of ways, and he should know, because he has written a very long book, comprised of 651 pages plus tripe. Elsewhere in that voluminous volume, on say page 286, is a discussion of schizophrenic language: “*Schizophrenic thought appears to be highly illogical, and it often goes off on unpredictable and disconnected tangents... e.g. I always liked geography. My last teacher in that subject was professor August A.*

Tripe

He was a man with black eyes, and other sorts too. I have heard it said that snakes have green eyes.' *Each sentence seems to lead to the next, but there is no overall structure to the line of thinking; one idea leads to another by means of loose associations, and the verbal expression reflects this disorder... An... more... is... apparently unconnected... with the... like infant babbling... others emphasize the fact that there is a structure... the words are connected to one another..., similar in many ways to normal slips of the tongue... the task... becomes one of explaining why... the person suffering from schizophrenia is unable (or **unwilling**) to censor these associations...."*

So being creative and being loony in a certain sort of way are bees in the same ballpark, ya? If I am to write a symphony that is not just an inane copy of some other symphony, I've got to pull together a lot of experiences of a lot of symphonies, figure out the ways in which they differ, abstract from these to figure the range of possibilities for musical material that can be considered symphonic and strategies for producing such material, and apply this to whatever theme or expression or whatever I want to use for this particular work.

So what I essentially do, or feel myself to be doing, is starting with a few notes and a fragment of an idea and "letting it flow" as I subconsciously combine and associate like freaking mad. If I am freaking mad, the same thing happens, except that I've neglected to set an actual artistic (or otherwise) task for myself.

No, my itty bitty children cohorts, don't you back away and pretend that there is any barrier keeping you from flipping off for any amount of time into loony land. It's true that mental illness is illness, i.e. the presence of some biological infirmity, but the brain is a silly and wily creature with the lumps to prove it... According to some film I (as writing person, not narrative persona) saw in a biological psychology class I once took, the brain patterns which show up in a clinically depressed person are exactly the same ones that show up when you think of your X and how happy you two used to be before things just got all weird... The difference is only that Mr. Nutcase stays that way and you (probably) don't.

Tripe

Here's a brain-law: if you use a portion a lot, it will get big and strong; if you don't, it does not (thus the psychiatric term "shrink"). So if you practice yo-yoing enough, that part of your motor cortex responsible for "walking the dog" gets buxom. This doesn't "just happen," of course; there are lots of chemicals and little gnomey guys and rubber bands moving and shaping everything, but there is a big link — causal and correlational — to what goes on in consciousness. This means that sometimes, if you act crazy enough, you become crazy... by the same process that makes people with the will to live more able to smash their cancers and makes folks with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to be healed on game shows until they die on the bus home as it hits someone who successfully killed off the voice of tripe within him and/or her, thus restoring the balance of nature on two counts.

If this subject actually interests you, I suggest you read something real... reading opens up a rainbow of fantabulous colorful ideas, okay? My point is merely that you're two steps from the edge at all times, and though you may never jump off, the force that keeps you from doing so is on par with whatever it is that makes some Kids just hate any food that is the least bit endowed with a bluish tint. No, we don't really understand any of it (and not because it is "beyond the limits of human comprehension," but merely because we, meaning those of us who know stuff, are sort of dim), but these distinctions between people are not the sorts of things to adequately provide the themes and criteria for elite social clubs. This means generally that if you have ever used the word "weird" to describe things you have no wish to understand, you are a sorely deluded and messed-up puppy.

...But I suspect you realize this, for you are, after all, still reading tripe, still listening to your internal tripery, or tripe-o-matic, which is wishing this text would return to being at least somewhat funny.

Tripe

And so here we are, consciously and willingly reading and writing tripe, because there is something sort of appealing in the trappings of what dummos call insanity, especially if it sounds to us like we're telling our chemicals what to do and not vice versa.

Third Sitting

...And of course control is something we know even less about than we think, and we think we know very little, insofar as we think, which is very little, and when we do we are less than little and not in control. The needlessly convoluted style means I am hiding something, or rather that you think I am hiding something when I am not hiding something except insofar as it is hiding itself and I may or may not be in control, but of course I don't know.

The thing that I am not hiding is that this is a bad book, thus violating pretty much any standard of goodness you could want. Fortunately, we don't always want what fits our standards of goodness, we don't usually even *have* these standards, and we mostly don't have a clue what we really want, let alone what we *could* want. So the badness of this book could be kind of cool, in that, should it be sitting on your coffee table and some coffee-drenched guest open it at random, he/she may be dumbfounded and perhaps start a conversation with you, the profoundly-alone host, with a comment like "What the hell? This is such a bad book. Its, like, 'style' (Your guest will makes little quotation thingies with her/his voluptuous hands. This will overwhelm you.) is so needlessly opaque, and there's *no*_structure... I can't *believe* someone actually published it... yet... I admire you for actually reading the whole voluminous thing... you don't have, like, any diseases or anything do you?"

Tripe

Here is the problem with good books; I mean very good books, the kind that make you stop and stare at nothing every few pages because your mind has been assaulted so intensely: **you don't understand them.** I'm not saying **people** don't understand them; this is a commonplace: every time someone thinks up something really neat, it gets simplified and consequently butchered for public consumption, so you get Nazis saying "Nietzsche's our dude" and silly American businessmen thinking they're acting in actualization of the ideas of Locke. I'm not stating my version of this myth, 'cause I think it's a crock, and I don't need to state versions of other people's crocks because I can think of my own. What I'm saying instead is that **you** don't understand them, and if and when you mistakenly think that you do, you will go to a party and try to talk about Dostoevsky and people will laugh and give you a swirlie. And you will thank them for giving you that much attention and return to reading tripe. I know this because I have checked.

So you don't really want a good book anyway. On the other hand, when you get a book like **Everything I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten** by "Little Stupid Freak" Bobby Fulgrum, which encourages **you** to be stupid, **you understand every word**, hurt you though they might, so there ya go.

There is of course much more to be said about the badness of this book: it's short attention span, its inability to either argue a point or be consistently funny, that time it blew up every toilet in town with just a ball of wax, three paper clips, and a thumb nail, etc., but the text will meander elsewhere, should it choose to do so.

Tripe

So what the heck is the structure of this book? Well, here is a table of contents: I know it's a bit late, but we are still fairly near the beginning, my dear, so like it or lump it.

- I. Tripe, Chapter II
- II. Tripe, the Final Chapter
- III. For the Love of Tripe
- IV. Nancy Drew and the Haunted Tripe
- V. In which little Artie gets a very special gift and the gang learns a new song
- VI. Absolute Freedom and Terror
- V. Signs, Signs, Everywhere signs, Part V, a New Beginning
- VI. Purple Mountains, my Butt!
- VII. Vocabulary commonly useful for the tourist, plus words describing my Butt!
- VIII. Tripe!
- IX. Tripe!!
- X. Table of Contents, part II (page numbers)

Now that that's settled, you can stop aching in anticipation, which I suppose by now you have been doing for some time, including during the break, so I am really sorry if I kept you awake weeping, but it does build character, and if it doesn't you can use one of the many other defense mechanisms that any well-heeled hooligan like yourself has to constantly deploy just to keep his/her lunch down.

I was talking about free/remote/random association, and I did have a point, believe it or not, about tripe. I have recently been informed that in Mexico, tripe is a totally normal

Tripe

food. One could order a sandwich, or as they say in Mexico an sandwich, with beef, turkey, provolone, lettuce, mayo, and tripe on it without giggling. This scares me, because I am culturally biased, because my culture is always right. If my culture told me to jump off a bridge, I'd do it.

...Which is causing me to have an itching burning sensation that I will pass off as a thought, about enemies. Not specific enemies, like Hitler and Savoir Faire (who incidentally is everywhere), but general big stupid enemies like “the government” or “those lazy vagrants who can't stomach the humiliation of selling off their lives doin' some completely worthless and unquestionably boring job so as to be respectable like my miserable self” or “people who eat lemons.” Just as I chided you for probably defining yourself in sharp opposition to the mass of crazy people (yes, I was doing this, in case you were unaware, which I suppose would make my attempt a poor excuse for a chide, but oh well sigh), the paragraph before this one was hinting at ripping at both “my culture” and lots of sociologists who make more money than I did until you paid for this book (and if you didn't I am now pale and starving in a pile of my own half-eaten excrement, thank you). One could now make many comments about the place these only-vaguely-defined, probably non-existent-as-we-now-so-negatively-define-them, and certainly totally misunderstood by the individual that uses them as an opposition and thus an orientation within the field of values, thus defining his/her moral/cultural orientation on basically stupid and fallacious grounds, but I will instead say that all of my enemies should be killed, and I want **you** to do it.

The preceding was included for publicity, so some psycho who was about to flip out and kill people anyway could do so at the behest of this book, thus increasing its sales. Oh, and also, my only enemy is you. See, now I can be blamed for mass-suicides, too.

Tripe

Now you see how random yet underlyingly patterned this is? Das' tripe. To successfully create an artwork within a given genre, being creative is like the RAT (yes, you **do** remember what that stands for.) — finding the perfect word in one's vocabulary to finish the sonnet or limerick, say, but when there is no genre, or the genre is an ill-defined one like “overpriced gift book” which refuses to put upon itself any further strictures beforehand, then you get tripe. So if you have any avant-garde streak in you — if free form poetry and pop songs that only repeat the chorus twice instead of nine times excite you — if you thirst for the cutting edge, well, then, this is what you've been asking for, isn't it? I am so happy you can't answer me (though you may try, sending a letter if you must via Santa Claus, who knows where I live).

Fourth Sitting

The last sitting was somewhat shorter than those previous to give you some time to test out the tricks you've learned thus far: Did the “swirlie” hurt? Did your “walk the dog” brain area grow? Did the other third-graders giggle at the “Butt” jokes? Were the pictures you drew pretty? (...If you understand the nature and pattern of the rehash going on here, please feel free to continue it, either aloud or writing in the margins (between the pictures), or perhaps writing via tattoo.)

Due to that exciting news about sandwiches in Mexico (i.e. the fact that they may contain provolone and/or tripe), I would like to start a Mexican translation of this work, in hope that it, too, can be sold on sandwiches. This translation will be for Mexico only; the

Tripe

handwriting and/or font will be such that actual Spaniards or Southern hemispherdites will mistakenly think that it is a book about how everything they really needed to know they learned in Kindergarten, and so toss it up through their collective esophagus. After another few microseconds of hard consideration, and, well (because my brain hurts when I think), screaming, I got the groovy idea that I should include it under the same cover to make this volume thicker. The problem is that after many years of Spanish class, I remember only the word “agua,” meaning water, so I could only translate this work roughly, as, well basically: “Agua Agua Agua. ¿Agua? ¡Agua!” This would be not quite as much fun as continuing in English (tr: Inglés) as I have been doing.

Something in the last paragraph was a fib. I also remember “cebo de cabra,” which means “goat suet.” I always knew it would come in handy, and this is the day, for I think that word (or rather phrase) can serve as a rough translation for tripe, at least better than agua. When I was in Mexico (imaginative readers may wish to imagine that I have been to Mexico), and I asked for agua on my sandwich, I did not get tripe, and instead provolone.

I spoke of random general enemies, and now I speak of foreign tongues. The two are related, I know, for I took as a lad quite a few Spanish classes in which we learned not only vocabulary generally useful for the tourist, but also Spanish art, Spanish geography, Spanish origami, and the word for “goat suet.” Why, we *even* leaned about regional-specific holidays in Spain, like the one I invented for Extremadura (“the Montana of Spain”) for the purposes of a presentation I had to give. I called my holiday **San Juan de la Cruz Day**, and it was included on the final exam. After reading my thirtieth story by Ana Maria Matute, who I am convinced is the only author in Spain, I decided that I hated all Spanish-speakers everywhere, especially those that I did not know, which included pretty much all of them. If only that mass didn’t exist, I wouldn’t have to endure the bitter suffering that I was getting easy A

Tripe

Yeah, well, I saw it 20 times. And also snakes have green eyes, and other things. Relate the following three words: die, death, dead.

The connection, of course, is Spanish, which has words for all three, though I don't actually know them. Speaking of death, well heck, how can I help but say something profound about so profound and deep and overwhelming...

No. stop. In an effort to make this effort mildly readable, I have gradually and subconsciously decided to either be amusing or mildly thoughtful at any given moment. Despite the fact that I have not succeeded in doing this, I got a wave of apprehension during the last paragraph that I was obliged to, well, write something good, as in funny, when in fact I shouldn't be trying to write in any particular way, and I shouldn't be scolding myself for setting demands on myself; in fact, the word "should" shouldn't enter into this endeavor at all.

I see my cover is blown. I tear off all guises and shields and expose my bodkin for what it is:

See?

Ah, well, I guess you can't actually see, this being a book, and I being too lazy to draw a picture at this point. I was trying to reveal some darkly things about my motivation for being a tripe conduit, a mere part of your mind, an appendage or an itch in an appendage for another person, but it's really too complicated just to blurt out, and as it is, well, okay, maybe it might be an actually interesting topic compared to those so far discussed (I use the word "discussed" very loosely here — phonetically, even.), but I have psychological bogeys about

Tripe

it, and you might dump me later or something. And besides, I am just a narrative persona, so in describing myself I'd only be describing you, or... something cool-sounding-in-a-surprising-table-turning-way like that.

Well, heck, my confidence is back. Why, just reading some of the last pages and seeing poorly-phrased passages like "I got a wave of apprehension," I am touched by my success in not applying the wealth of writing and grammar skills I possess.

...Which is what it all comes down to really: (note: I will use phrases like the preceding often and with little or no justification) I/we was/were taught in school the correct way to construct a paragraph. For instance, this kind of paragraph was taught to be correct:

Zoos are beneficial for many reasons. Firstly, they provide protection and shelter for animals. Secondly, they allow people to learn about unfamiliar species. Finally, they are good places for dates; they are especially good in suggesting sex to one's partner through the observation of animal behavior. In conclusion, zoos are beneficial for many reasons.

...While this was deemed inferior:

Zoos are beneficial for many reasons. Firstly, they provide things. I went to the zoo once, and monkeys ate my brother. It was cool, and suggested sex to my partner, who wanted to learn about the unfamiliar male species. Zoos are cool. I like them. In conclusion, zoos are beneficial for many reasons.

Tripe

Now you know and I know that the latter paragraph is much better, that it says a whole hell of a lot about its author and the psychological forces shaping him, and in turn about humanity and general, especially youth, what with their sexual confusions and ambivalence about loved ones (including brothers) that all we adults are so surely free of... But still the first paragraph with its skillfully-constructed argument and its **glue words** always-received the better grade. What does that teach kids? Why, it teaches them to be just like you, or more precisely, **you**.

Fifth Sitting

For the sole purpose of linking up some topics that have breezed by so as to create the illusion of unity in this manuscript, the lack of appropriate standards of judgment for this book (due to the fact that the genre I've posited doesn't supply any) makes it a lot like a person, no? ...And just like most people that are hard to understand or "weird"-seeming, this book is likely to be ridiculed — by people who have use only for "comedies" or "philosophy" or "books with actual *content*," but *they* will miss the experience of really getting to know an autonomous entity, peering into its inner chambers, getting to know its idiosyncratic rules of self-determination, pouring over its most secret secrets, and *then* ridiculing it... much like most mentally healthy folks treat themselves.

But enough of my prescriptions for health, I who eats 89¢ pizzas and screams in Braille. Let us talk of death, you and I, you with your sultry smile and your hydrogenated vegetable oil and I with my cold stare and stark white palpy sweat. I'm talkin' sex, now pa'dner, and, well, as narrative persona, you may now think of my voice as any sex, as emanating from a

Tripe

big burly tycoon or a small snaky chicken, as is your preference. There are similarities between sex and death, you may have noticed, besides their equivalent translation in my foreign idelect as agua de cabra. For one thing, they are both things that we are almost doing right now, along with being insane, and for another, they are both cool. Someday I will make a necrophelia movie, but it won't be as gross because both parties will be dead, and none of this zombie stuff either, but merely quiet joy. Then we will be as one.

The problem with saying cool things about sex and death is not that everything's been said, because **you** haven't heard it even if it has. The problem is that you won't believe me, unless you are a twelve-year-old Catholic or a demonic son-of-a-bootch. (A bootch is like a jackal, except instead of being a jackal it is a bootch.) For the former, sex and death are big receptacles of all of our random fantasies, especially those about some random subject of the type that would spawn fantasies, like a biscuit, because a biscuit could be very good in the world of fantasy. For the latter (meaning the bootch's spawn, not the very good biscuit) it's the same schmere because the height of eroticism is an almost-passing into nothingness, a whinnying of the soul to the point of exit. Now *real* perverts, which are worse than demons, who are okay if you get to know them though they may be kind of shy, well, heck, I just about define myself in opposition to 'em, because they take this imagery pretty much literally, and so play with sharp objects (*besides* intelligent women ho ha) and scary ninja masks and other things with and through and against which one can stand close to the edge, standing on the press-a-piss of the afterall and breathe the warm stench of *very* hot gravy, food of the dead. Believe you me, such people disgust me just enough to make me curious.

I am to cry now, for in me the unconscious memory of multiple ages is upon me and I realize that as mouthpiece of the cosmos, most entities I have been intimate with are now

Tripe

dead. “Remember me,” I shout to them, “remember me, and I will never truly be alive, but will die on in your hearts for as long as you rotting thingies fail to speak my name.”

‘Tis beside the point. I say to you now that the Urge, with a capital “U” (and all the connotations and benefits that entails) is not just the tantalization of a frosty frolic, not for those who have nothing else, who have for whatever reason gotten themselves removed from the society-inflicted values of wealth, power, and groceries. It’s the difference between going to sleep with the bodily intention of a brief respite before another day and sleeping to die, sleeping heavy and hard so as to sink well into one’s mattress, to cast off the burdens of life and the daily residue of dreams. Only with sex it is the soul, even and especially for the unbelievers in soul. To close into and beyond another human being, to dissolve into one and primarily to dissolve...

Again, and for the first time, hear me out. I don’t know death, Obviously... Unless in some past life I was a slug and deserved to die and so did, but I don’t remember and don’t care... but the Urge is the Urge and you know it, damn it.

The previous meditation was for the hearing impaired, what with the obvious sign-language connotations and the closed-minded captioning. We must talk for a moment about the difference between Our Titular Subject Tripe and random nonsense. This is nonsense: Esse es ein EisKoream Cohn, ¿ja? It is a matter of positioning in space. (pause) And (pause) time (pause) “.” Randomness displays no association, while repetition of randomness means consciousness, at least where speech is concerned. The coincidental repetition of a random result is, well, bloody unlikely, at least where speech is concerned. And bloody unlikely means quality where I come from. Bleed me baby.

It is thus in your power and control to sift through randomness to find tripe, to create tripe out of chaos, to “play God,” if you will. Playing God is much like playing a video game,

Tripe

in that you often have three to four lives at the outset. Do not abuse this power, or soon you'll be staring at clouds going (not *saying*; *going*). "I see a Duckie. I see Gerald Ford."

Do not yell bingo in a crowded schoolyard, or ye shall be tromelled. Do not yell "Death come to me" during sex, lest your partner get suspicious and/or lie very still. Be ye wary in conceiving the narrative voice as female, for the "i's" are not dotted with circles and the handwriting is too perfect and square (at least in typed versions of this manuscript). [Randomly untrue sexist handwriting analysis inserted by the editor, who will die someday and so deserves a little leeway.] ...And remember kids, die responsibly.

Sixth Sitting

The sittings are getting shorter to obtain more of them, and to keep pace with your attention span. Feel free to enter deathlike sleep during the breaks, as such will thicken the manuscript, at least subjectively. Why, the three page brochure "What the Department of Motor Vehicles can do for you" is as far as I'm concerned the longest read in history, due to its sketchy pictures and lack of picturesque sketches. Remember: always dilute anything that looks like a joke with an afterthought of inane wordplay.

Reader test: You might be confused by now, but you don't know just how confused. Use the last sentence of the previous paragraph as a test of this: What is it referring to? What is wrong with this picture? Always inexplicably switch topics randomly, and then justify it afterwards by pretending to illustrate a point made just previously.

The form and shape of the supposedly humorous is predictable, though the content is not. Unfortunately, form is part of content, as such:

Tripe

“Knock Knock.”

“And knock knock to you.”

...Violates the form of said joke, and so is not funny, but unfortunately inevitable. Let me explain: It is a point of sociology that whenever you point out to people that they perform in some lawlike manner, always sitting in a public room according to certain arrangements and such, they immediately break whatever “law” that you (you being the high-paid sociologist) thought up just to be obnoxious. Now we know from our imagination about evolutionary history that over the years, the mass of people achieve greater self-consciousness, and so, for instance, get tired of asinine knock knock jokes (a redundant term) and will break the form and not be funny out of this desire to be obnoxious, to leap out, to freak out, to die and have sex simultaneously.

Sixth 1/2 Sitting

I liked the previous sentence as an ending, but wanted to keep you sitting, or rather half-sitting or squatting, as this is good for the circulation, or so I have been told by people who possess blood. I have during this half-break discovered in my possession a book by Georges Bataille, who appears to be French, called *EROTISM: Death & Sensuality*. This is a very famous book, largely because **you** have not read it (Things work out this way. They do.) ...Or if you did read it, it was in sixth grade for a book report and you don't remember anything more than the number of pages, which is 276. Says this most famous and voluminous text (p.11): “Eroticism, unlike simple sexual activity, is a psychological quest independent of the natural goal [of] reproduction,” and, “Eroticism... is assenting to life up to the point of death,” and, quoting Mr. de Sade, ““There is no better way to know death than to

Tripe

link it with some licentious image.’” So there you go — all that on the first page of the introduction. Read the whole book and tell me what happens, will you?

But all this is just so much distraction, it is, from the more important topic, ja? ...This topic being both tripe and self-consciousness, these being the same in the case of this book for obvious reasons. Despite what you may think, it is very hard for people to really think upon themselves, and very easy to get sucked into other things, especially things which are strangely distant yet obviously close like sex and death. So this book is kind of like a person, as I said, and not a particular person, but *an abstraction and objectification of the common tripe that patterns us all*. (...Which means it does not eat. ...As much.) A large amount of what’s gone on so far is an attempted self-definition: What is Tripe? What am I? says the book, says you/me (together and free). And just like when you or I as an actual, whole person inevitably asks this question, we have no idea how to answer and so inevitably start naming random stuff around us, references to country, religious culture, and whatnot, or to the color of one’s pupae or the expanse of one’s lincoln logs. And, just as we define ourselves using these marks in opposition to all the invisible enemies and others, while at the same time inadvertently demonstrating at least part of what we *actually are*, to reveal tripe is to...

No, no... I will not tell that secret, as you can figure it out anyway (call it “The Obvious Secret;” It will respond to this name with a perky “Good morning; can I help you?)

Where were we? Ah, sexy death. Now, we know that death is usually bad, right; I mean with the survival instinct and the need for stability in relationships and what to do with the dead fellow’s mail and all... but there are obviously exceptions, at least from some points of view, times when it seems the thing to do. And I’m not talking about when you’re miserable and alone and wishing you’d vomit so you could choke on it. No, no, no. This is what most people (or at least the intelligent, post-modern ones) feel like most of the time, and

Tripe

your friends will be mad so just deal. I'm talking about the times when, a) you have been told by an individual from the future that your inevitable future actions or progeny or whatever will make everyone turn to gnarled, sickly mutants (I include this option because I just saw a movie recently where this failed to happen). The other time is all the time. Let me explain, please; do not think that I would say something irrational: We're asking when death is good, right? Well, why do we care? What good are judgments of good? Certainly not just to have a list of "good things," or to give out little ribbons of merit, or to define ourselves in opposition to whatever we define ourselves in opposition to (though this is getting warmer). No! We rate things to figure out what to do — how to be, where to set the thermostat, etc. No since there's nothing we can do about being dead, the whole rating system is pointless, except insofar as having a positive attitude about things keeps one revved and energetic and insofar as it's fun to bitch.

Maybe "fun" isn't the right word. Some people obviously like to suffer (or they wouldn't work at [fill in your place of employment here]), and feel the need to hate and exteriorize and fear the sacred, the terrible, etc., but I hate those people, deny any influence of their thought on myself, and fear their gods.

...Note the form of the preceding "joke." Note that this form has been used before. Expect future violations of this form, and engage in them yourself.

...Note the form of this reflective observation, this attempt to in some way rise above the preceding material through self-mockery. Note that this is done in just as formulaic a manner. Note that this form has been used before... ee tee see.

...Note the attempt to rise beyond the whole cycle by an infinite regress of reflexivity and a phonetic spelling of the appropriate abbreviation. Note that this attempt fails (not the innovative spelling, which not only thought-provoking and clever but also Daar-ling!),

Tripe

leaving the author locked within his little circle of ideas and excretions. Kinda pathetic, no? It's like having evil intentions towards someone, and being very conscious about this, and on some level not wanting these intentions, and so explaining them to the person at which they are aimed without actually repudiating them. This leaves the impression not of a nice person, but of someone twice as evil as some unreflective shmuck who has his evil intentions and just acts.

But, as both of the pathetic regress and the intentions in question seem inevitable, the rating system of pathetic vs. swell (in Spanish: “non-pathetico”) is irrelevant, right? Right? RIGHT??!

Seventh Sitting

I have bribed a few people to read earlier chapters of this book, and am alarmed to find out that this may not be a bad book after all, as they seem to find it mildly amusing, but they will be hurting by page 35, I bet, Oh yes yes yes they will. This does prove, though, that maybe this book can actually sell, at least to my friends, who I bribe with delicious *Circus Peanuts*[™] candy. I would like to say, though, to anyone in that position, or moreover, any editor who is paid to read this, and to my high school English teachers (except the one that is dead): do not correct the grammar, okay? Especially the run-on sentences. I got a 34 on my ACT and am smarter than you.

Something has changed here; I feel it. The last sentence of the last paragraph was really just a nicer version of the “I doan’ like you” I calculatedly spake earlier, but it was harder to say — more personal. This is due to the unfortunate and inevitable infusion of the author’s

Tripe

actual human persona into his work, and cannot be reversed or reverted even by speaking of him in the third person.

There is no author any more; there is only DEVO.

...I'm sorry, what was I saying? Or rather, what was that secret part of your brain cock-and-bull mythological entity I made up earlier saying? Ah, I recall. If this is, in fact, a good book, then it has violated its genre-entailed obligation to be a bad book, and therefore *is* a bad book. Draw out the paradoxes yourself and play with them like Lite Brite (or insert your own meaningful toy reference... don't you appreciate this audience-participation "humor?"). The **truth** is (besides the ACT score of 34, which I really did get) that it doesn't matter because this book = the appropriate part of your brain = Tripe is/are inevitable. Duh.

Let me cap off some earlier stuff about self-consciousness, as exemplified as the attempts by this book to comment on itself, getting beyond itself, etc., all of which end in a pathetic vicious regress (I use the word "pathetic" because I like to bitch). There's always gonna be some part of the butt that's doin the seeing, and I guarantee it will be the ugliest, most disgusting part. So you're an ass either way, right? That is the motivation for the style of this book, why I refuse to edit (well, edit very much, except for those parts that the reader, **you**, don't know have been edited, which may be quite a lot), and refuse to change references in the text to things that were supposed to happen but didn't. For all I know at this point, this volume may be, despite my best efforts at using superfluous dependent clauses, pretty thin, and there may be pictures on every other page. I won't change the references, and I invite you, oh gracious and humble reader, to enjoy the dramatic irony (i.e., you know something the characters don't) that these glaring errors may bring, without there having to be any actual characters, except you, a way-beyond-obviously-totally-bored-and-lonely soul reading

Tripe

tripe. My theory is that I will appear no more the ass than any other book-writing ass, but I'm not wearing anything to cover it/me up.

Oh, in retrospect, feel free to insert your favorite pop elemental force that threatens yet underlies the human programme in place of the DEVO reference above.

This whole “justification” for writing like this should not be taken on par with such pessimistic truisms as “don't try, 'cause you'll just fail anyway” or such cool and flippant things to say to your Mother as “Why should I clean it? It'll just get dirty again.” It's just a simple fact about how little we know about ourselves because “self-consciousness” just doesn't let you see very much.

This is also not a blast against thinking in general; Pelvis knows, **you** certainly need a lot more of that. To illustrate, I will tell you a story about you, and *you* will smile as you say “that is **so** true” and in doing so, swallow tears of shame.

...One day You were out gaining penance when out of the sky came a large thing, which was mostly indescribable, except insofar as it was large and most assuredly thinglike. Due to years of TV conditioning, you instantly raised one arm and let out a point. Directed along the asymptote of this point was ejected a dialogue bubble saying “It's a bird!”

This comment of YyOoUuRrSs was of course not only completely wrong and stupid, but also inexplicable from the standpoint of any *normal* human intellect. If the thing *had* been a bird, such an exclamation would have been totally pointless, and passers-by, to humor you, would just say “Yes. It is a bird. There are many birds in this area.” Then they would hit you. Luckily, no one else was around, but I guarantee that had there been, none of them would have shouted “It's a plane.” Unluckily, the large thing *was* around, and so hit you.

Wait, I have another story about how dumb you are... But first I would be pleased to tell you of a defense mechanism you can teach to your children. First, take one cup of sugar

Tripe

(preferably a small cup) and three bunches of large strawberries. Now mash them into a gooey paste and give the result to your child as a Child's Day present, with accompanying directions saying "Build your own private fantasy land." Now when your child has built from the paste tall, water-resistant towers, large bridges that he can charge a toll to cross, and working bumper cars, she will have gained confidence and poise and a more toned body. Because of his accomplishments, she (Can you tell your child is at an age where he is confused about sexuality? Show her a dead hamster. This will help set him in the right direction.) will think itself to be much smarter than the other children, and so can use this as a defense mechanism while being pounded.

I think I've shown here that it's not how smart you are; it's how high your ACT score is. Joke, Joke, chortle, Joke. Seriously, kids, to make generalizations about when and how much to think is to cease to think. To make generalizations about where and how much to engage in sex/death is to cease to refrain from an endless dredging up of old, poorly-discussed topics in hope of bringing the world to a premature end. (Imaginative readers may wish to imagine something.)

There is a very important topic that I have refrained from mentioning so far due to its sheer evilness. The topic is crud, or anti-tripe. We are presumably Americans, and so were raised on this substance. It is in our blood (in the ribosomes of white blood cells to be exact) and in our bowels. It has genetically mutated us beyond all recognition (Our ancestors all looked kind of like the puppet Lamb Chop, except on fire.). Crud makes up and is made up by *Three's Company* episodes, bacos, phone sex, *Family Circle*, and Cheez Whiz. As a point of definition, none of these things have in themselves anything to do with tripe. On the contrary, they are the things that diminish Man's capacity to produce and enjoy tripe. This may seem puzzling. After all, according to the *Random House College Dictionary Revised*

Tripe

Edition, 1988 (without deluxe color, mind you), crud is defined as “2. a deposit or coating of refuse or of an impure or alien substance. 3. a filthy, repulsive, or contemptible person, 4. *Slang*. anything that is worthless, objectionable, or repugnant.”
(definition 1. was deleted for copyright reasons.)

It’s interesting how [rest of paragraph deleted for copyright reasons]...

Here’s the bloody difference between “worthless” and “worthless.” The production of Three’s Company, or Saved by the Bell, or Let’s Have the Wedding in our Scummy Apartment, for Chrissake!! is all too sensible, according to the immutable physical laws of target marketing and the advancement of the careers of “actors” and such stuff. The product, however, this combination of in themselves sensible and coherent but insanely incompatible sets of considerations, is, well... crud. Tripe, however, and when I say however I mean however, flows from seeming disarray but in fact contains most of the secrets of the universe and many hilarious puns like “4-Q.” Are you enlightened YET???

You know, that crud discussion was much shorter than I thought it would be, so I will have to fabricate an illustrative story to take up space:

Once upon a time there was a very small child who was very sleepy. Yes, she was a lot like you, and boy, did he ever want to sleep (with her). [No. No more silly-ass pronoun gender references, despite its hotness as a political topic.] [Who’s ass is silly?] [No ass is silly in itself, but only in the purposes for which it may be used].

Escaping the bracketed insertions, the little boy who is much like you no matter what sex you are so ha!... had a long hard day at the factory and was just plain tired. I mean beat. Dead-gone in golden slumbers. Move your eyes along this line: -----.
Right, left, right, left, etc. Light as a feather; stiff as a board. Now go the hell to sleep, sweetie.

Tripe

Eighth Sitting

During your slumber some a-maze-ing things happened. Firstly, all of your belongings were stolen and replaced with exact duplicates, including your spleen. Secondly, the world became that much more loveless and awful, and it is your task to make up for that loss. Start by watering your plants and/or pets. Finally, they are good places for dates; especially in suggesting sex to one's partner through the observation of animal behavior. Thank you. (Insert curt bow here.)

Love is a most funny thing, you know. 'Nuff said on that skanky horrible drooling disguttriment of a topic.

I think I have made some pretty swell strides in ripping down that "good book" reputation, no? Where was I? Ah, love, I mean, er, crud. I have just now made a startling revelation, which means I haven't really thought about it and it may be terribly wrong, but I might as well harp on it anyway. Love, my pretty, is the closest thing we possess in our mind/body-connexions (this is a technical term; do not try using it without a weapon) to crud, and I say this not because I am vengeful and **properly pissily negative (PPN)** about the whole thing, though I am, but because I feel like it.

Love arises by sensible means: the evolutionary necessity of procreation, the expression of our basic animality, the ancient religious need for a total encompassing experience, the acquired tastes of the species of comfort, communality, and security, the existential desire to merge with another consciousness brought about by our unique form of self-consciousness, as well as a similar tendency to let the intellect be overpowered, eclipsed, and buried. All this is

Tripe

quite understandable, no? Unfortunately, these very sensibiles all end up conflicting and eating eachother, and when you actually bring in *another person*, Ahhh!

It should be pretty darn obvious that this pattern is generalizable, that everywhere there is a system that generates purposes according to its own inner logic (that's a teleological system, for you smart people), there will be 17 jillion other independently operating systems that don't connect up to it even enough to sneer and make derisive comments. This is much like the connection between the technological innovation of television and the social purposes of its inventors, the demands of the marketplace, the history and practices of the entertainment industry, and Satan.

This is obviously as much a book about humor as a book of humor, so I'd like to make some insightful comments about the set-up of the last two obviously cheezy punch lines (yes, "Ahhh!" does in fact count as a full line, and not just a line segment) within the poorly argued yet sloppily-written mass of pretentious bullshit. I'd like to do this, but (the author's eyes seize up in a comical fashion here) **I'm too de-pressed**.

Okay, that was an attempt at a sort of *I Love Lucy* kind of "joke." This does bring back some of that bit on the impossibility of complete self-consciousness. Was the last paragraph a parody of humor or humor itself (crummy and ineffective as it may be)? Do the apologies of style produce a delightfully self-insightful work transcending the standards it fails to meet, or just grow increasingly more annoying? Does the repetition of such themes provide any actual educational benefit, or serve only to induce more sleep? Are you in pain now? Come on, you can tell me. Where does it hurt? Your heart is aching against the inhumanity of mankind toward itself? Well, let me introduce you to a friend of mine who can break that sucker into tiny pieces.

Tripe

Technically, a jilted lover does not suffer from any kind of coronary difficulty, but actually is affected through his lymphatic system, which is strewn all about the body performing valuable tasks whose names I don't quite recall. Heartbreak occurs when the lymph system scrunches up with in a person, withdrawing its nodules to the central trunk area and squeezing them tightly into itself. This connects up lots of passageways meant for waste, which is, rather by definition, not supposed to be shuttled around in a circular fashion. Thus does toxin build-up occur, and near-by structures register this as intense pain that makes *you* want to be dead.

You might want to copy down the above paragraph and learn it word for word, even though I made it up, because I think it sounds pretty neat. It would also be a swell picture to use in any kind of yogic self-manipulation you might engage in to relieve heartache, and when that fails you can blame this book for all the problems of your miserable little life. You're welcome.

Well, we've seen how crud lives in us, springs from us, blocks up our lymphatic system, and expresses itself through the production of bad TV, as well as pretty much any of your typical consumer goods, especially those for which a market must be *created* in some devious manner. The most obnoxious of these is a thing called the full-time job. Two hundred years of Western society have conspired to make us think that there is some system of producing goods and/or services (same sludge) that actually requires us to have jobs, whereas in fact any people who actually *controlled* their economic system rather than letting themselves be controlled by it would have long since automated the bejesus out of everything, letting the machinery (aided by easy and fulfilling part-time work) feed and provide for everyone, and gone off instead to write coffee-table books, or engage in wild orgiastic funeral rites lasting six

Tripe

weeks, or play beach volleyball. Silly, silly, silly are we, especially you, with yer regular sleeping schedule and your messed-up lymph.

But the whole thing is more insidious than I've laid out. It's not just that crud is insane, is filled with inner conflicts and conflicts with the inner purposes of its perceiver. This would be harmless in itself, like clouds or an inkblot, ready to be harnessed into Tripe. The most horrible evil thing is that crud masquerades as sensible, because its parts are sensibly produced. This is how one could be sucked into, say, happily working for an advertising firm or writing stuff for *Who's the Boss* for years and years without actually puking. "Just play the game," goes the ancient proverb, despite the fact that the dementia in question is undoubtedly not a game for the sole reason that games tend to end when one gets bored, whereas these things live on in reruns and give out only occasional vacation days until one is fifty and deranged beyond recognition.

The key difference between worthless and worthless (well, the *other* key difference) is a matter of self-consciousness. If one knowingly watches and/or produces bad TV, especially bad TV one has already been raised on as a child, this sort of assimilation of one's primal crud into one's self-aware, adult, or at least older repertoire of consciously-available images, one can have great fun in a field of self-mockery/attempted transcendence, and leave the crud with the right sort of pseudo-insanity and pseudo-control to be a pretty darn creative and interesting person.

But as I've droned on and on about, self-consciousness is not an all or nothing deal; every look within leaves a looking part that's not looked upon. We don't really know how much we actually control our actions, or what does if we don't, or what the words and images we use to characterize ourselves really mean to us, et Petercetera. This means if you watch *Saved By the Bell*, even if you have some extensive justification for your actions like you're

Tripe

training yourself in stoic steadfastness to refrain from yelling “Oh my Jesus I am in pain,” a reaction perfectly appropriate to any given moment of the “show,” you mustn’t be so sure of your mastery over the beast. We are Crud and Crud courses within us; to touch Crud is to tap a bit of the primal essence, and this cannot be done lightly or with milk on one’s hands (so says the wise man Plastic man and his son Baby Plaz). Are you increasing your creativity or making the Crud-enjoyment center of your brain plump as you cook it?

Q: Can one fool’s tripe be another fool’s crud?

A: What? I don’t even understand that question?

Q: I mean, can one creature’s connection of disparate elements into an organic whole (i.e. an entity existing outside criteria of classification and hence judgment) either form in actuality or appear to form for some other observer the kind of conflicting mess that may act as crud upon that observer?

A: I have very little idea what you’re talking about. You’re obviously taking this silly-ass bullpucky imagery too seriously. Now stop trying to be wise and stand up, or lie down, or sit in a new way: The Ninth Way.

Ninth Sitting

—or—

Sitting in the Ninth Way, in accordance with the appropriate signs and signals, following the custom of the **Wise Folks of Ages Past (WFAP)**, especially the ones with cool tattoos.

Tripe

I swear, if I should at any point think of anything actually intelligent to say about sex and death, I'll say it. I still feel bad about that chapter, as it was lame, but then again, I am my own worst critic (worst meaning “least qualified” as well as “harshest”), and I did recommend a good book by a French person.

...I must admit, this tripe business has gotten pretty darn confusing. Perhaps an orderly and precise discussion of the terms involved and their connexions (<—this technical term originated in a Rolling Stones song) would do us good. Perhaps there is a use for the orderly and logical methodology of analytic philosophy after all. Nah. Pain in da butt.

...The preceding, along with the aforementioned “I Love Lucy”-style punch line, is one of the classic forms of American humor. Learn it well, my children, and teach it to your pets and/or plants as your pets and/or plants once taught it to you, and *their* pets and/or plants taught it to you, etc.

...The comment on analytic philosophy, the predominant and painstaking tradition in England and the Colonies, is also an example of the classic “funny grapes” syndrome, as exemplified by the story of some animal trying to reach some grapes, failing, and proceeding to humorize his inadequacy using funny card tricks, fish riddles (i.e. riddles about fish), and jumpin’ around saying “I’m cool; I’m cool.” You may feel sorry for this author, but your pity will only engender my resentment (making it either male or female or the sex responsible for idiotic and extra-redundant descriptions of puns as idiotic (a trait they posses by definition [definition omitted for copyright reasons; reference to the recycling of the pathetic yet significant self-reflection of the text omitted for copyright reasons; reference to bunnies omitted on grounds of obscenity; reference to something very exciting and important omitted on a whim.])). (Imaginative readers may again wish to imagine something, like perhaps bunnies, bunnies swaying back and forth along this line: -----, lulling you to sleep

Tripe

sleep... and also sleep. <<Snap>> Oh... nothing happened; I mean, I didn't really hypnotize you... again. Oh, I see you are considering buying four more copies of this book. Ah, good, you have fallen for my red herring and know not what you are/were really hypnotized about/concerning/of/bacos/ah, not bacos, dammit!/yes, I think SO.

...breakdown has occurred. Auxiliary author engaged.

...Ah, that is mucho bettero, agua?

Language readjustment occurring. No more potty-mouth. Tackiness leaving text (slowly) as the author, and his race that we call Man(Wo), learn about life, love, and themselves, all within $1/2$ hour with commercial breaks and a laugh track.

Okay, I admit it. I *am* your god and elder and wise creature, okay? Are you satisfied now? My mother was a jackal and my father was Peru. I am Finnish yet barely Begun (Pretend the latter is the adjectival form of a country in order to find this to be a "joke.") (Imaginative readers may wish to run screaming naked through the Louvre, singing "I am Art" in a Tom Jonesish voice. They may wish to mean this merely as a pun on the name Arthur, too, but I really don't know why they would wish this, especially when they could be wishing for my body, which frankly wouldn't do me much good unless they tried to hire me out as a personal Soloflex™ and/or full-contact masseuse, depending upon their taste. Just quote me a price and I will consider... consider you one of those people who has to use money to relate to others due to a lack of good credit. End parentheses, please.).

I was thinking about advertising blurbs for the inside front cover of this book, and it occurred to me that in order to get through this text, one will pretty much have to end up thinking a lot like me — in form, that is (though I have hinted time and again that in the case of Tripe, form *is* content and *Vice Versa* (a fine movie in the tradition of *Freaky Friday*. Please,

Tripe

Hollywood my love, make more)). Then it occurred to me that most readers are just skimming for “butt” jokes.

I have just skimmed the previous page and found only three butt “jokes,” so I will make another: **My Butt!!** No, thank **you**, and you’re quite welcome.

If you look back a few paragraphs, you’ll see I was admitting to being the Messiah, but I warn you of the boy who cried Messiah, as exemplified in the famous parable by Opie in which a small boy who was very sleepy cried “Messiah” until a hot dog vendor [Editor’s note: “Messiah” means “hot dog vendor” in Yiddish. Probably.] showed up and killed him. Because of this, I may just refrain from that awful crime of hubris, or excessive pride, for that matter, so as to be the last man alive on earth. And I don’t mean the sex-neutral (wo)man, I mean man; many women shall survive Armageddon.

There again the hormones speak, as they did before in discussing the subjects of love, sex, and “Saved by the Bell.” Can you hear the hormones screaming? Can you hear — them — screaming (something about Hervez Villachez)?

Witness the degradation of humor from the pure play of form (like in the smash Broadway hit **First Sitting**) to references from **pop culture (CRUD)**. We have been tainted together **you** and I, and I think the ichorous ooze shall ne’er leave without trace from your skin and parched breath. You have been so sucked in; I am so thrilled that you are still reading!

This leads me to an important question. I’m quite sure that as you’ve been reading this, you’ve been wanting to keep it under your pillow so as to let its wisdom seep into your head as you sleep, but what with this volume being so voluminous and all, this might be uncomfortable and cause brain tumors. If you are concerned about this question, write to your Congressperson and tell it that dammit, there’s a problem and somebody better solve it,

Tripe

but do not refer them to me, the author, as I'm just a voice in your head, you demented loony freak... I mean that in a nice way though.

If you are not concerned about this question, you have fallen into the Cebo de Cabra and Died. **THE END.**

Let it be known that this document was originally written on scrolls: old dot-matrix computer paper with the little holes in the sides. This should make the original much more viable as a religious text, and make it more comfortable under your pillow as well. So, I invite future generations to search the ruins of my tiny life for the original scroll. It shall be a race, which is so much like a game that it shall be fun for you, and I will not have to watch, for I shall be dead, which shall be so much like a game that it shall be fun for you.

Unfortunately, starting with the last paragraph before this, I ran out of scroll and had to move to boring old notebook paper bound by a yellow spiral, so there goes the cool gifty gift to you archaic religious-collector's-item-mentality people out the friggin' window... Just so you know.

For fear that my writing style may have begun to grate upon the reader (I mean more than I had intended it to), I think I shall have to quote something. Later. It will give you something to thirst for, aside from my bile.

Still the Ninth Sitting, but in Some Sense part of the Tenth, so as to distort your perception Of time And make the Sittings closer To The Same length

It's come to my attention that I have stated what seems to be a contradiction. First, I said that since total and accurate self-consciousness (or anything close) is impossible, the form and style of tripe is rambling and unconscious of structure and clarity (actually, I didn't say

Tripe

precisely this, but it adds to the drama of the seeming contradiction that I will proceed to resolve with a breathtaking feat of mastery over word thingies and arguments and stuff). Later (see Table of Contents for the chapter on Later) I said the characteristic distinguishing tripe from crud is self-consciousness. Yes, this does show that tripe and crud are two nostrils of the same nose, but this may be not enough of an answer for you swarthy types who wear Swatches and like their steaks medium rare. One answer says tripe is a conscious and active attempt to relinquish control, but this is a contradiction in terms (you can't *try* not to try). That bit about the "organic unity," the personlike character of tripe mayn't do either, as I've said that the human driven by unseen forces within, like habit or the physical *need* for the laugh track, to view horrors is acting on crud. The personhood thing needs explanation, then, and I'm just the Lad ta give it.

...What is unique about us folks, I do declare, is our capacity to abstract away from any particular set of purposes, and hence self-definitions. I'm not recommending that anyone abstract themselves away from/go against **all** of them, as this is not only impossible (trying not to try again), and leaves one at the mercy of less conscious, profoundly more imbecilic drives, but also not very fun to witness. But the fact is, we can resist hunger and be Ghandi (Well, we can't *all* be Ghandi; we wouldn't *fit.*), can become ascetic, turn away from god and country, deny our own emotions, eventually get over any repulsion to some other human being no matter how gross and slimy it may be, order only the volumes we wish, and cancel our membership at any time. We have the capacity to adopt a system of values in which only contribution to group efforts is important, in which it's only effort that counts and not natural talent, or vice versa. The big premise that I will not bother to argue is that apart from these purposes we may adopt, or be born with, or be laid into the structure of our systems of action (whatever that means), ethics is pretty darn groundless, pointless, and worthless. So the

Tripe

concept of a “good person” is either some theological error or a very short shorthand for lots of individual talents/attributes that usually come in handy.

Crud is about getting stuck within a system of purposes and judgments, about getting sucked in and controlled, and being deluded by the apparent sense (as in reasonableness) of the purposes in question even though these conflict with the larger scheme and the structure of human self-actualization (No, I don't know what that word means either. Make a list and quiz your “friends,” telling them when they look at you blankly that they will surely fail the GRE or other appropriate standardized test.) which connects up even the most randomly conflicting systems of purpose-generation (a.k.a. “teleology.” Remember, Wonder Twin?). Crud is artificial self-definition of the type I discussed (sorry: “discussed”) in the random enemies section (see table of contents, but do not let it see you). Because we are human, we are not “merely” any particular thing, not American, not electrician, not Jew, and certainly not zoo, and as soon as we pretend to be we start killing off parts of our own brains. Tripe is... well, you know: the expression of this basic open-endedness, the capacity for *thought* as opposed to *calculation*, and is both the easiest thing in the world and the most difficult.

Seethe in that spit o' profundity, will ya?

Tenth Sitting, for real This time

I must say something about self-contradiction. The Eastern wise folk (a division of **WFAP**) have a different attitude towards this than the White Male philosophy-types unlike myself, I being your dura and/or pia matter and of a sickly grayish color, at least after extensive time on the lab shelf. Those way-foreign peoples don't mind stating what seem to

Tripe

be blatant contradictions, because to them wisdom is therapy; philosophy is giving directions in a crowded airport where Krishnas abound and the Universal Oneness screws up weather conditions so the planes don't leave on time. If someone has very precise and entrained habits involving constant repression and virtual self-flagellation, maybe that person needs to loosen up. I, on the other hand, possessing virtually no sense of responsibility, need guidance in the other direction. Granted, this methodology entails that the teaching is valuable only insofar as the teacher knows the needs and tendencies of the student, which pretty much insures that public speeches, like, say, in a thick or may I say voluminous book, will be off the mark quite a bit.

Okay, so the real reason Eastern philosophers use blatant contradictions (known in Eastern, which is like a language but not a language at all, as "contractions," such as "can't" which pairs the positive "can" with the negative "not" in a dialectical "whoop-de-whoop") like "The soul is all the myriad of things but yet only itself, which is surely not the myriad of things; don't be silly." is because they want to be cool and so get Chix (this is an Eastern technical term for the nexus of desire which the Eastern wise folk are both beyond, being spiritual essences, and which they also support with monetary donations and occasional carnal "experiments," most of which lack a control group and so are worthless. The term can be subdivided into the subdivisions of Corn, Rice, etc., or combined in a flavorful Party Mix: yeow!).

...Okay, so I'm obsessed, try to hide it though I might, I hormonal creature I, I palindrome I. I admit it. I'm obsessed... with fighting tough stains. I see a stain and its "I'm so tough" swagger, and it makes me spit (for I am mad, you see), and spit far and crazy at that, and... with... verve... and... oh, it's no use. I am caught and revealed once again.

Tripe

Did you know that many people use humor as a mask, as a way to broach touchy subjects while keeping a certain distance and thereby protection, as a way to fill time and conversation because they can't think of anything else to say and feel uneasy about revealing themselves, even to the ones they pretend to love and have bought touching Hallmark cards for? So then they describe these aspects of themselves in the third person (who resents being used in such a way in addition to being delegated by definition always the Bronze, never the Gold or Gold-alloy), hide them in a sea (or paragraph, or paragraph of or containing a sea or reference to a sea) of Tripe, then inevitably denounce the class of persons of which this third person is a member, saying for example "But people like that are so to speak boogers and I doan' like 'em," but they do this very often, and the evolution of humor, communication systems, and hiding within a text being what it is, these people have to figure out a more creative solution which may still count as a "joke," despite the fact that the writing form in question doesn't have to have "jokes," and if it does feature them, they may be long, drawn-out, and produce an itching, burning sensation just behind the post office. How will such a person solve this dilemma and resolve the tension set up in expectation of this "punch line?"

...I'm sorry, what was I talking about? Ah, yes, Eastern Philosophy. Having personally heard of well over three countries in the Far East (or "The Center" as the Asiocentrics call it), I feel qualified to, when pressed very hard, cry out in pain. Eastern philosophy is very big on the synthesis of opposites, like day and night, good and evil, baco and non-baco. With a wide enough understanding, these oppositions dissolve, revealing themselves as different aspects of the same thing (as in day and night), as dependent upon the various and changeable purposes of the observer (as in good and evil) or as equally tasty.

I would like to warn the reader not to confuse my references to bacos with references to Bacos™, which I will make as soon as I am paid to make them. As an audition piece:

Tripe

“Bacos™! Yum!” Please address all inquiries through the publisher, who is a wonderful, warm faceless corporation whom I love, and please do not sue. (Even if this means that the book should not have distribution in the heavily populated (by coffee tables) Baco™ Belt.)

So a lot of what looks contradictory, in this text and elsewhere, really isn't, but is just addressing different situations, or different people, or was written when I was in a different mood. I realize that for this to be of any use in dispelling confusion, I need to get more specific, but I will leave the spell going for the time being, it being rare for me to make magic anyway, aside of course from the occasions where I get out my recorder, my little wooden \$6 flute-like beauty, sleek and smooth like god's finest ferret yet strong and pure in tone like the busy signal. When a melody flows from God through me and my recorder, it is as if the heavens open up for a giant yard sale, especially if this melody involves at least one of the six notes I can actually consistently play.

Frankly, I don't know if this whole extended mentioning of Eastern religion (according to the present text, there is only one Eastern religion. I mean no disrespect by this blatant over-simplification to the point of lying to anyone except myself) will really help explain matters much, but maybe it'll get this book a swell write-up in a Newage fanzine.

“Sure, I liked the early chapters,” I hear you say, “But then Mr. Author sold out and got poppy.” I assure you, this kind of reaction just means that we're going through a bad time right now. Once I get a job and get some money, and you start on your medicine, I'm sure we'll be able to sort through things, and we do love each other, right? Wait... don't leave me, I... I didn't want to put pressure on you, I mean **of course** commitments are silly given our situation, what with you doing that foreign-exchange thing to Belgium and I planning my own death and all... Yes... I know... I *will* go out looking sexy... am I wearing too much makeup?

Tripe

Eleventh Sitting

...So we said before that Crud and Tripe, the primeval forces, are two flanks of the same yam, or rather I said this and you skimmed, nodded absent-mindedly, and thought about sex some more. But I also clearly set up the picture so that Crud did appear as a nastiness to be avoided and Tripe was swell, which seems pretty contradictory and so cool (and obtaining of Chix, please?) when placed against all that talk of people being essentially beyond purposes and so Beyond Nasty and Swell.

...This looks to be a contradiction in the same way that your average mystic, harping on some experience he had in the desert on LSD about the mystical unity of all the myriad things (“Like, I was **one** with the cosmos, man, like I was all the things everywhere, and they were **one**, and it was, like, **so** cool.” —famous saying of the Buddha, or perhaps his cousin Ned; the legends conflict.), is still faced with the distinction between his vision of wholeness and the everyday incompleteness (e.g. people get hit by busses = people are not busses, because people don’t get hit by themselves, unless they deserve it).

To see why this form of seeming contradiction is in fact not a contradiction, but still as cool as one, think about some of the age-old White-Boy attitudes towards the Good. (Danger: briefly brief historical overview approaching.) Mr. Plato thought (or at least said that he thought, though he may have just been having us on) that folks naturally gravitate towards the good, that evil comes from delusion or mistake. But ha! We moderns know better; we know that we often desire what we believe to be evil, sometimes even *because* it is evil (like

Tripe

people who have their basements redone with that paneling that's supposed to look like wood right off the tree and so has little knot-holes factory-carved in it).

But we can see why Mr. Palatohead liked his theory (besides the fact that he had a good deal of money invested in it). If The Good is what each of us would ultimately want were we to know what from what, then The Ethicist need only argue over facts, which isn't so bad, in order to rout The Beast. But it doesn't work. Too Bad. (The "Too Bad" constitutes my argument for this claim.)

It doesn't work because people are perverts, and they like it. At least originally (meaning "a long time ago during that period of human history that you don't know a damn thing about except for bone and tooth structures"), Good and Evil were sacred terms tossed around and periodically and regularly transgressed (e.g., killing is bad except on Human Sacrifice Day (tr.: "San Juan de la Cruz Day"); sexual conduct will be controlled except on the Second Thursday of every month, which is Orgy Day). Our notions of right and wrong, stemming at least partly from these sorts of considerations (which have little to do with individual motivation), don't have the kind of fix on us that Master Play Toe would like, which is why many of us not-all-that-very-religious-at-least-in-any-traditional-sense moderns have pretty much stopped obsessing about them in favor of more concrete considerations, references to purposes that we as individuals actually do have at that point and are likely to continue having (e.g., "healthy," or "mean," or "really tacky").

Now with Tripe and Crud, *my* favorite primal essences, we don't really have that problem. It's very hard to desire crud because of its crudiness, because desiring crud means being dominated and fixed by certain purposes or aesthetics that pretend to be you in your fullness (no, I am not calling you a big fat freak at *this* point). To actively *want* to narrow oneself back into these purposes, to *try* to return to the narrow view of good and bad you had

Tripe

when you were a child, is trying not to try again. It's fruitless (tr.: "without fruit") because it means you've acknowledged that these aren't really your purposes (if they were, you wouldn't have grown out of them). Crud sneaks up on you; it has you primordially, and you inevitably (insofar as you think, i.e. abstract from your immediate surroundings, as we somewhat self-conscious humans with our system of language and time on our hands invariably do) move to Tripeness. I don't have to convince you to excrete Tripe, because look! Insofar as you've actually understood what I've been saying at all, or moreover internalized the writing style, you're already excreting away, though you might not cash in on this by writing a book. Perhaps instead you should sing a free association song like the late Jim Morrison, who once on stage sang something like:

"I have a little grasshopper; he was very hungry. I protected him. Fire on, little grasshopper! Also, zoos are good for suggesting sex to one's partner through the observation of animal behavior." I pretty much guarantee your song will be better, as you are smarter and take less drugs.

It has dawned upon me that this book may be condemned as hideously self-indulgent. I really don't know what this word means, but along with "pretentious," it's a pretty common criticism that critics make of things they don't understand. To be sure, my voice is locked within this text, a mere spectacle hearing only the echo of itself and none of the voices of the six or seven people who will read this book, most of whom I know and so would enjoy hearing from (Call me), and to be sure, one of the purposes of this book is to show the reader around the gaping expanse of past thought of mine, especially the cool infinite regresses and the pool hall, even though this is not territory that the reader may actually care about in the slightest, given that you and I may never actually date or mind meld or even become pen-pals, but my hope is... well, I have no hope. But if I did have hope, it would be that I'm not

Tripe

really that much of a freak, but merely think in patterns that other people do or would think in should they be forced to at gun point, which is essentially what is happening here, so many people will become like myself and not have jobs and clog the coffee-table book market while I am granted an honorary Popeship for my efforts. My other hope is to get Chix, so it really doesn't matter *what* the critics say, does it, except insofar as they are Chix or own some that they can send me.

So this effort is not really self-indulgent, particularly — just completely base, shallow, and ultimately pointless in a historical sense (sense as in the definition besides reasonableness). This is okay.

It just occurred to me how rude I've been . Here you've been reading this book for so long, and I haven't even offered you anything to eat. Here, then, are some suspicious-looking brownies that you may taste before spinning (spinning because you are mad) into a coma...

The Half-Time Show

I don't actually know if this book is half over or not. There may only be another page or so. The reasoning behind this section is that technically we are now during the break between sittings, but somehow the drugs in the brownies permitted you to dream-witness-the-festivities this time, as that is one permutation of the whole "break" concept that I had not yet abused. As per usual, I will most likely realize in about four lines after half-heartedly describing the fantasy parade of ghosts and goblins with the huge Scooby Doo balloon floats and the seas turning to blood and all, and how it must be a harbinger of your future and if

Tripe

only you had read something on dream interpretation that wasn't total Crap you might be able to understand it... after a bit of this nonsense I will realize that the whole half-time show is a stupid idea and so say it's all a farce and we're really still in the Eleventh Sitting (which we are), so if you took a break you fouled, but I was testing your gullibility and spider-sense.

Ah, that was refreshing. So is this “humor” / “philosophy” alternation structure doing okay with you? I mean seriously, I am a hospitable host, or would like to be one, and seeing how you've been so patient as to reach this point in the text, I'd really like to make your stay more comfortable, so in the left margin of the next page there should be little handy-wipes for your comfort, unless the printers think that this is a bad idea (granted, I will **require** that they think this), and you may nibble on the back cover at your leisure; **Eating paper is not such a bad thing.** If there's one point you should remember after reading this book, that is it.

It occurs to me (as so many things have been doing this day) that the best way to make you enjoy this book is to pretend to enjoy it myself, perhaps by inserting little smiley faces like this :-)) all over. What's more, these can signify that a joke has been told, and so can inform you of the appropriate moments to laugh tee hee.

Twelfth Sitting

...Jesus, what a scary dream. Really, folks, that *was* the Apocalyptic half-time show through which only the strong survived. It was not present in the text, but rather only in your imagination and the Mind of Minolta (product endorsement = happiness). This should have

Tripe

been grossly apparent as I do not laugh tee hee, for that is a most ninnylike noise fit only for mewling puking babes, and I have my standards and purposes, arbitrarily chosen though they may be. My ambition, I think, is to get arrested for corrupting the minds of young'uns. This is very hard to pull off these days, and even though I have talked about sex a lot (very graphically, in fact, as you would remember if you had been paying attention), so I think radical measures must be taken. This is fine, as my alternate strategy for thickening the book was to reprint random pages. I doubt you'd notice, would you, even with the plot discontinuity this would bring, for you are still reeling from brownie goo in your head.

I think the time has almost come to reveal what happened when I hypnotized you a few chapters back and which occurs periodically in the margins, and I will reveal this secret as soon as I think of some clever (or at least leisurely) explanation.

I shall also have to analyze the dream that you just had, concluding, of course, that you are a freak.

I shall also have to push you and call you names. Again.

It's good, you know, to have a list of things to do, to lay some order over this chaotic existence, and then to ignore this list and stay in bed writing Book all day. To avoid this happening, and to avoid running out of ideas about how to push the envelope of your now vastly-developed sensibilities, I will take a break here, but you may not, as the Chapter is not even close to being over. The discontinuities in our time frames will heighten the alienation, making me seem more distant and hence possibly more interesting. Besides, by the time I return (shortly after dinner, I suspect), I may have forgotten what I was talking about and instead teach you some simple tricks like "fetch," "come," and "bend over."

I am back and well rested. I should like to make a connection 'twixt a large theme that has built itself up in recent textual history and a small but important point from chapter sicks.

Tripe

I have heard it said (while I spoke it) that the gradual movement from Crudness to Tripeness, from Crap to Crap, is the mission of history, the essence of what it is to be human, and a passage during which it is okay to eat paper. It's what we do, and noticing that we do makes it happen faster. But in Japtre zechs I said that when you point out to people that they do something, they change just to foil you, you and your little explanation, thinking that you are like Mister Einstein, or Plato, or the professor from Gilligan's Island. Do not even try to fool yourself, you with your metric system and your Pyraminx. Man(Wo) he is a wily creature and will evade your narrow inquiries as if they were rubber bands shot off the biggest finger in the world. (The bigness of the finger makes them slow, get it? It's a torque thing, I think.)

To answer this connection or objection that I have raised, to probe its coincidences, and the incidence of its probes, it is necessary that I first say that whatever drug I was on in that evil devil's chapter, it obviously made me stupid if I thought my little law was supposed to apply to anything beyond sociology, which is a totally inane "science" anyway. If I describe humans as inevitably prone to eat, they will not starve just to spite me, but rather starve me, leaving me choking in my own spite. But mayhaps this tripe bit is a different matter.

Sartre, a French person, believes that self-deception is common, and is caused not by unseen Freudian mechanisms, but by consciously and willingly (though maybe very quickly) made decisions. To deceive oneself, to try not to try, just involves sort of catching oneself off guard, like trying to go to sleep... it's just a matter of letting it happen. Now I know I've made some comments here that would make some folks pretty uncomfortable (besides the stuff about necrophelia, mysticism, homosexuality, feminism, death as a good thing, the job system, religion, Eastern thought, the Marquis de Sade, and eating paper), people who pride themselves on having such a strong sense of purpose, of identity. These people don't like being told that they're just behaving like sheep, and pointing this out to them, pointing out

Tripe

that as a very basis of their humanity they don't really want to act this way, is enough to make them obnoxious, to make them try to totally denounce whatever freedom of mind they may have had. I know this because I have dated some of these people.

Add to this apparent difficulty another difficulty. Go ahead. This difficulty, likewise apparent, has to do with things I've said (or at least implied) recently about Tripe as a self-conscious effort. The previous paragraph makes Tripe production sound like a conscious effort to be open to new ideas, and while granted, success in this effort tends to breed (and I mean breed in a very powerful, direct, sexy yet demoralizing manner) more of the effort, it's possible (easy even) to get lax and revert to being a narrow-minded slug. This picture of Tripe-production, though, is just wrong, as I know from writing (or attempting to write, and eventually just pushing random keys and/or drooling) this book. The book, or shall I be let to say, *Ze Buch*, flows out most beautifully to the ear and eye when simply let to roam, I mean I say I intend to be saying ya gotta be leisurely, ya see? Just flow it 'n fly it. Now that sure don't sound like no constant effort, but rather a mode, a getting oneself within a certain purpose (that being to babble and connect and babble without purpose), and of course it'll end up interesting, and psychologically revealing, and pretty darn occasionally funny (maybe), because these things are features of pseudo-random association like I said. So this is again trying not to try in the same way as trying to fall asleep and trying to revert to being a merely narrow-minded phony.

So whatever I said about it being impossible to try not to try was, while literally correct (as these scenarios don't involve simultaneous effort to try and not to try, but rather self-conditioning for future lack of effort), was just plain dumb. Oops.

Religious texts really should say oops more often. I mean there is that bit in the Bible with lots of pigs and birds and stuff flying about in a dream of Paul's (Paul is my Cousin)

Tripe

with a voice booming “**Oops, sorry, I must say these things are okay to eat after all, much like paper,**” but that did become a point of dissension, what with Jews denying the New Testament, and many of them consequently refraining to eat paper (their loss). I suppose when this book is a smash best-seller revolution-causing object of worship, sects will emerge and split over self-contradictions like these, with some believing only the parts before the half-time show and the product endorsement attempts and that “auxiliary author engaged” nonsense, whatever the hell that was.

Now the Talmud, that’s a cool text, what with all that internal bickering and proof-reading by sixty different editors. There are just too many things to bitch over in that text to make a sect for each. I recommend the Talmud, yes I do, with a side order of pork rinds (The preceding remark was not meant to be offensive, but it was meant to *seem* offensive in some inexplicable way, for no reason whatsoever) ...only whenever I and the Talmud disagree, flip a coin or use a magic 8-ball to determine the truth, or simply fail to care.

Returning to something that has to do with something, for she is my home, it seems that if my “Tripe as the natural and inevitable cool thing to do” doctrine is to stay viable (or pronounceable in a quick manner), then I must reinterpret, re-explain, or make up some stuff about Crud and Tripe so as to make them not look like two different directions towards which we may try to fall asleep. This is a task I should be simply delighted to perform, if only you would dim your lights. Go ahead. Do it.

...Don’t read in the dark, freaky-person, for you will hurt your eyes!

Ho, I have had one on you. I’m sorry; I love doing that. Turn your lights back up now. The tears of mirth are dripping off me about **you**, and though I know it’s no way to treat a guest, you are just as mean to me in not even pausing in your reading a few lines back to see if

Tripe

your lights *have* a dimmer. You are heartless, and I resent it, and so will be heartless to you at some point in the next twenty pages, see if I don't. It'll be like that muck about your lymphatic system, only I won't admit my lie right then and there, and you'll be all worried and toss and turn during nights of sleepless torment.

And you're going to spite me by not doing that either, aren't you? Just to spite me! You are mean mean mean.

...But watch as I prove my saintliness and turn my other cheek, choosing to continue in my brilliant exposargumentation instead of tromelling you (what with you ordering all those pizzas to my house, you wacky person you). My point before (in the good old days when I had a point, say, a few pages back) was that Tripe is your destiny, Baby, and don't even try to dodge it 'cause you dodgin'll just make it less dodged, ya dig? So that description of letting oneself become a narrow-minded ninny, that "objection" I raised, is obviously bunk or inapplicable (this is in fact the *nature* of objections to things that I say). But how so? Firstly, gangrene, being a cosmically-conscious individual is not the same as having a swelling, throbbing, huge Tripe weapon in yer brain, so people like my aforementioned X-girlfriend who decide to be as small-minded as possible aren't necessarily inhibiting Tripe; they may still let their mind wander in a random fashion and see Duckie Ford in the Sybarrus Clouds above; they just won't attach any actual importance to this activity and continue to define themselves and their purposed very narrowly. This involves setting up distinctions between the wanderings of the mind and the wanderings of one's character, which may or may not be totally hypocritically full of Gunk. Let's look further, shall we?

To me and my ilk, everything is funny, or at least can be made fun of. This is what freedom of mind is: letting the free association of humor/psychoanalysis wander without limits, and if this means constructing jokes about Jesus, my mother, several sheep, and a big

Tripe

bottle of Vaseline, so be it. Offending oneself is all just part of the fun. This extreme attitude is obviously not essential to humor though, as many or most “people” have senses of humor, but will not let them touch certain subjects. This is what distinguishes humor, for them, from the rest of the world, which is “serious.” Obviously I hold no such distinction, which is why some of the “jokes” here end up being artsy-fartsy conceptual conundrums, and not actually funny like a good Butt joke. For Tripe, the humor that claims all as its victim (especially itself), to be “inevitable;” it’s got to be seen as the natural tendency inherent in the rest of humor, the next logical step that folks inevitably make, and should they draw back that stepping foot in cowardice, well, they’ll die off eventually and their descendants will be such wussies.

My goodness, is it that late? You kids should be getting to bed, or to your real lives (I realize for most of you these are the same thing, or at least designations having equivalent extensions (If you don’t know some of these philosophy terms, feel free to write to me via the publisher and ask what the hell I’m talking about)).

Thirteenth Sitting

[Insert “amusing” comments about “unlucky 13” and his unfortunate accident in the old coal mine here, should you please.]

I was in a kind of a quandary in the last sentence of the last sitting, because for artistic purposes I really wanted to use the word “fuck,” but considerations of publisher-approval and Mom reading this got in the way. To overcome these primal Wussinesses of mine I will utter this net of profanity:

Tripe

[Paragraph deleted for copyright reasons.]

That felt, well, dirty and cheap, but good. You know, my Crazy Monkey, the thing wrong with cursing is not the word, which is so cute and lilting on the palate, but the curse, the getting angry at pots and pans or your car or God that bastard and exclaiming. I don't care if you say "fudge" or "fiddlesticks," or what have you, it's still a dirty sin and ya gonna burn in hell. Maybe.

...Which brings up the question of "Is there a hell?" which is a simple yes, being [insert a reference to a TV show or movie you really don't like (or pretend not to), "dinner with" some person whose company you find unpleasant (finding it so at dinner most especially), or a description of ultimate torture from your favorite religion. The last of these options is sure to be the most funny.].

But enough evidence; we are on a mission of inquiry, are we not? Exploring the limits of human understanding? Probing the natures of the concepts we use in everyday discourse? Pandering? (<-not a typo) Here we are as Tripe with a purpose, our purpose being to write/read for many pages, and our strategy (for the moment) to actually follow through on a particular topic, namely T-R-I-etc.

Unfortunately I don't remember what I was talking about, as I have taken another alienating and time-dilating break.

...And another, this one lasting several parsecs or weeks, if these still count as proper units of time what with the metric system and all. I know that the previous section was leading up to some big cool synthesis of philosophic wit and expert sophistry, but the hell with it, I say. Ye reader shall have to hang in suspense, letting its own mind wander over the problem until I get around to getting around to it.

Tripe

I come back to you a changed figment of your imagination, which means your imagination is changed. This is not because I am wearing a tie (though I am, due to an unfortunate dressing accident), but because I have met the demon of death and laughed. So he hit me. This means I fell in love, or would have were I to have a) existed, b) met someone to fall in love with, and c) fell in love, but I did not (exist, that is).

Ah, dread! To heck with the folding of words upon words in which personality disappears and later winds up on some celebrity game show. (I am using the words “game,” “show,” and “celebrity” very loosely here). I must confront you as me, so that we may pass into and beyond each other and you will buy me lunch. So I will relate to you some recent bits of my past so that you may reel in terror... and also so that you may have background upon which my musings will be based.

This is new, you must realize, as in the past (throughout the whole of most of history, in fact) the musings have been our musings, but I believe this will not create a deathly sense of alienation greater than that which is already there but rather heighten the intimacy that we have achieved.

But first, before treating you to this treat (which come to think of it chances are you didn't pay for, as I've been giving out a lot of free copies of this book), I will recant on what I just said one mouthful ago and fulfill my promise of old: I will try to finish the damn argument, or “exploration” rather, that was building up in the last chapter. How is Tripe the inevitable destiny of **you**? Here are two possible answers, the first of which is more nearly incorrect than the second.

1. This is not a **Choose Your Own Adventure**TM (or not much of one), and you have read a lot of this (or you just opened randomly to this page and started reading; in this case I advise shuffling the deck and trying again, as this is a lame rehash section), and you know as

Tripe

well as I do that when you hang around someone long enough you start to pick up their mannerisms, which is why I would advise against jobs in the penal system or business, so...

This obviously doesn't cover the crabbie, as you may be an angry critic or my X-girlfriend and I was trying to be more pretentious in my claim, You being the archetype for Humanity, dressed as you are and all, so...

2. It's a whole lot like what Jolly Socks Mill said about competent judges. This is a standard philosophy reference, so let me misreport it for your use at celebrity lunches and intimate peat-groomings. Mr. Mill (the powerful English seventeenth century philosopher who preached liberty and Your responsibility to off the Queen if she gets sassy as long as it brings the most happiness to the most happy people) was talking about various sorts of pleasures, like those gained by rolling one's engorged bits in mud vs. reading Mr. Mill's books. The idea was that sure, the beasts of the field *look* all happy and all, but were they to properly get into some intellectualizing, they would surely prefer that (even though it would make them neurotic). So the competent judges are the ones who've been everywhere and felt everything; what they pick as coolest *is* coolest. Now it doesn't matter if you think this is baloney for any of the 63 reasons you could reasonably employ in thinking this is baloney, because I'm just drawing an analogy. Once you get Tripe, I allege, you can't turn back (partially because you would have no idea where to turn back to, what with the "useful" table of contents and all), and if you don't feel this at this point, then you don't get it. This means that Tripe is not actually inevitable, as all the analogously-competent judges could die and then teaching could die, to be discovered again only at the birth of the next Buddha. Nonetheless, in certain ways it has Ma Nature on its side (in what looks like a tattoo but was actually a completely unintentional flesh wound), that part of Her that spits upon Herself, considers auto-cannibalism as a substitute for grooming, and instead directs the author (via

Tripe

the Red Phone) to take far too long to get to an anticlimactic end of a pretty unsatisfactory and ultimately self-indulgent argument, lend continuity to a whole section though it might, notwithstanding the three-week vacation to a land of jobs and unrequited love.

[3. Here is a third answer added months later during an “editing” session, so it might actually be true, though irrelevant... This book will soon get better... or worse... or... well... (George)... different. Just so you know.]

Fourteenth Sitting

I have, of course, chickened out at the prospect of relating my personal experiences directly, as I am not [Should you still have the power to insert, insert some popular author that tells about his/her experiences a lot, especially in the form of whimsical childhood anecdotes; I fear any choice of mine will be lost on most people, and besides, they are all interchangeable. In the future, however, I will refer to this reference of your choice as “Shaggy.”], but I will discuss some topics that directly relate to my recent experience; I hope this may convince you that I kind of know what I’m talking about maybe, if and when you need be convinced of this, like if you were going to use me as source literature for a paper entitled “My Butt.” (yes, the quota is fulfilled. Future Butt references will be replaced by Partridge Family references).

Now it may be hard for me to be properly cheery in discussing these thingies because I am a gloomy gus. This is ‘cause (get ready to quote me) truth is what screws you over, whether by chance or definition I’m not sure.

Tripe

But why, Markie (You have grown familiar enough with me what with this newfound intimacy to construct annoying and degrading diminutives. Stop it, Lil' Cute Reading Person, or you will bake. Like a bean.), why be so pissily negative in an annoying and reductionist way? What dread tragedy has occurred to make you sing so blue?

I will not tell you that straight off, as I am trying to adopt the covert game-playing not-telling habits many of you seem to have and I am trying to learn so as to fit in because all the kids laugh at me when I just come out and say that while, yes, I do find them all very attractive, I just can't take it any farther what with my existential angst and all. Instead I will raise me a topic: Recall how I said that this book, being technically free (from the standpoint of creation) from any proper standards of judgment, is much like a person, to get to know, to try to understand, to manipulate and steal from? The implication there was that you would still find it in your heart to keep reading, to engage this person of a book who really asks nothing from you other than a place on your coffee table and \$19.95 or so (author's overprice estimation, 7/28/93). But of course you have always had the option (or at least have been made to think you have the option) of flushing the damn thing page by page after use as a harsh 1-ply lavatory aid. So it is the same with people, but the people will cry more.

The communion and communication between peoples, the thing that makes the pain go away, only proceeds smoothly if we pretend certain things, like that the listener would not stop the speaker short during some run-on sentence, put on some Grateful Dead, and begin to make flatulence noises with all the armpits present. This would put the speaker ill at ease and signal that the topic (or form) of such a run-on is not all that acceptable to the listener. This creates a rift, which kills the false sense of intimacy, makes folks go back to calling each other

Tripe

by their last names, and causes noise pollution (the Grateful Dead does, that is; yes tee hee it's sort of an actual frigging joke, okay? Just deal, will you, and stop your twitching).

Now since 90% of all communication is non-verbal anyway (so quoth the Raven (<— This is proper footnote form. Remember.)), this “communication” idea encompasses most of our dealings with each other insofar as they are actually with each other and not with our own drunken psychoses. Now most people We don't give a damn about; yes yes you and I may hold some abstract moral principles, and have a general feeling of welfare for all creation, and feel an icky sympathy for those that we see up close, but the fact is, we can't help but deal with most people on an instrumental level: they are useful to us only insofar as they serve our purposes as tollbooth operator or investment counselor or guru. When someone becomes your friend, this loosens a bit, but to varying degrees; if your friend acts like a total jerk even one day, they he's not much of a friend to you, is he? He has failed = he is ousted. Now in an actual “Relationship,” as they say, the purposefulness is supposed to disappear; if yo' hinny loves ya then it doesn't matter if you lose all your money or become a quadriplegic or go on a game show — you will still be loved... theoretically... maybe.

It should be obvious where this is leading... Though in a “relation-ship” the expectation is that love and hence compassion and hence givin' slack for becoming a useless pud should increase, that's not how it works, or really, when you think about it wearing certain hats, how it should logically work. After all, the “real-ationship” employs more “use” of another human being than anything else, for emotional, physical, financial, extra-special, actuarial, culinary, gustatory, extra-terrestrial, and fightin'-the-forces-of-evil support, and when the mate becomes a slug, stuck in an emotional quagmire with only his own skin to use as valuable chewing gum, then the mate of that mate must either be cruel or screwed, 'cause, as I said, if you hang around the damaged, you become the damaged.

Tripe

Now I'm very familiar with this situation because I have been in all positions of it: the damaged gettin' crueld to, the mate of the damaged both cruelin' to and not cruelin' to that damaged, the guy trying to seduce the mate of the damaged because she's obviously not happy and will dump him sooner or later anyway...

So the most recent time around, I 'spect, during the last chapter, in fact, I was and am in the last of these positions, which is an interesting place to be, especially if you want to try on the cap of the righteous villain and act suave. It is especially weird if you've been on the other side and are now trying to justify the act by which your own head was stepped upon in the distant past. There is a problem here, and I think it just might be worthy of my attention, as I obviously have time to kill. The problem is what to do with the damaged so as to get them out of the way and keep them from damaging others. Leaving them alone to die or eventually remarkably recover with only a few visible open wounds seems undesirable. Staying by them every minute to become polluted while all the opportunities of the world go by also seems out. My initial hypothesis for a solution is: **escape the boundaries of space and time**. Also, **eat paper**. These and other solutions will be developed by our team of experts if I can invent them ("them" referring to both the solutions and the experts, as well as to "them").

Oh my holy crunchy living Jesus Christ! I've just been struck by an idea so astounding that it would knock the socks off the Big Giant Sock Puppet Brahmin, revealing the hand of God itself. I thought of a *structure* for the *whole damn book!* I will cut to the chase and explain my situation. The mate of the damaged, my almost ideal conception true love wonder-creature, will in twenty days leave the continental US, which is where I hang out, to the far-northern tip of creation, there to spend at least one year doing God knows what with Arctic fishes and silk-screens and polar weavings and things. Now the damaged is not following her at this point, but he may later. We all doubt this will ever happen, because he is

Tripe

damaged and too skinny for Northern climes. So if he doesn't make it up there by some arbitrary date before Christmas (the present date is listed in this very chapter; find it), his term as boyfriend expires. Now by the genius of frequent flyer plans and family association, I have a ticket to yonder destination just waiting for me whenever I see fit to use it. This book, I pledge here and now, will conclude with an account of the outcome of this future expedition of glory, and so will sprinkle lots of classical romantic plot elements and plaintive musings before that, giving some direction and a new cast to an otherwise fairly meandering script. Of course, whatever the outcome of this sub-soap-opera adventure, it will of course prove, demonstrate, and naturally conclude the substantial core of paraphilosophic dogma building up to it. So, jeez, we got a plot here, and a time frame, which may be very long and thus chunky in page-length, and we'll have actual character development, as I may, say, lose a limb between now and then. Plus I will have plenty of time to find a publisher and maybe can get one to pay my expenses in living up there, it being research and all.

Fifteenth Sitting

Wow, this feels dandy. I'm telling a **story**, now, a story arising of necessity from the free association gradual self-realization that is Tripe (I say this to try to convince myself that I'm not *merely* going to digress at some great length). Many issues are undoubtedly arising as we speak. For instance, I've hinted at the relation between Tripe and the actual outside social world with its purposefulness and its sweet taboos. We will have to get to see how a narrative form such as this can embrace the accounting of actual situations, and how people

Tripe

who think like the preceding prose can actually deal with other people without being slapped too many times. This is no longer just a stomping ground for you lonely reader and the rest of me, but an open window on the frightening world with actual peoples with names (though I'm not sure if I'm going to tell you any of them or not). Then there is the question of narrative form. A story can obviously be told from a number of points of view, but the best stories are told from lots of points of view, which means I/we must pump up on this sympathy thing and see if we can't bullshit a few chapters spoken by a character other than myself. This may be easy if the spouting of Tripe truly is a universal impersonal language inherent in and uniting every one of us, but this may be difficult if I want to actually create characters, which are of necessity smaller than real people and certainly smaller than the great pretentious monolith of cosmic inevitability which has been the pretense for getting you to keep reading this book (or was that a different book, that one on 609 ways to make pizza out of various obscure vegetables, most of which look like internal organs scorched by years of smoking?). Okay, maybe I don't have a clue what I'm talking about. My point was that there's lots of fun stuff to think about in taking this little turn of style and plot, so you should stop sneering please. Thank you, my sweet.

Gurgle gurgle. Fizz fizz. – Crack! –

Thank you. That was a short passage written from the point of view of some random inanimate object. I will not specify which, as such objects have no sense of self, and I feel I should respect that. (“Bah! This is Tripe!” a reader cries, slapping the book shut with a resounding <<Thump!>>. Well duh.)

...Just doing narrative warm-ups. I betcha don't know how many fingers I'm holding up. Well, I will not tell you, but instead *show* you, using a short parable:

Tripe

...And so Las Vegas sat out in his garden speaking to the many children, who frankly seemed more interested in pulling all the bark off a certain unfortunate tree. “The bark is to the tree what the GM plant is to this city; it is an eyesore, knotted and imperfect, but supplies the fuel to keep the citree growing and growing, for you and your children and your children’s children.” The kids continued peeling, heedless of this, Las Vegas’s first and pretty feeble though obvious and inaccurate attempt at a parable. “Cut it out,” snapped the wise and venerable soul, smacking a few of the kids with his stick, no, not just *a few* kids but exactly **3**. **Three**, that is.

What this narrative shows us is that narratives need characters. Why, who could forget the trials and travails of that lovable old codger Las Vegas and those mischievous children? This is because they were all so thoroughly yet effortlessly characterized, using literary devices like the **simile** (“The kids continued peeling like limpets, heedless...”), the **roundabout** (“The, uh, the youngsters, I mean, no, they were... kids, I think, and they, um, uh, continued peeling, heedless...”), and the **randomly-chosen adjectives** (“The pervasive, droll, and scintillating kids continued peeling, heedless...”). With this in mind and a vague but sharp uneasy gnawing in my stomach, I will have to introduce some characters for the present endeavor. They may have the same names as people you know, but this only means that I am parodying **your** life because I, once again, hate you, for you have degraded yourself and brought shame upon your family for not paying for this book, or in any case not paying *enough*.

If ya want my body and ya think I’m sexy, come on baby let me know. I’m 6’0”, oozing with skin and bones; I like biking, music, and playing with the garden weasel. Though I’ve graduated from college, I’m thinking of going back, because Jerry Fallwell made Liberty

Tripe

University sound **so** appealing (once again, if you fail to catch a reference, simply pass on and watch more TV so you'll be ready for the next one.). Why, did you know that rock music today is teaching youth to worship pleasure as an end in itself in opposition to Christ, and glorifies violence and perverted sex both explicitly and through back-masking (try to play your CD's backward (by placing upside-down in the player) and see if I'm wrong. Go ahead. I dare you. Plus, if you scribble on them in green marker, they'll sound better (Yes, more media references. I refuse to explain them. You may be frustrated, but grit your teeth. Humor depends upon common experiences, and can I help it if you're just *too special*? (I am a children's TV game show host.)))? (((Did you know that people sometimes disappear into parentheses and are never heard from again? 'Strue!))) I usually feel high like an eagle, yet lower than the deep blue sea (You see, we characters, to be related to others through narrative, are necessarily permutations of various clichés strung together.).

"I will touch the sky should you dare me," said I to she.

"Jeez. While I find your taunt titillating, I wish you'd just be normal for once," Camera follows She. She's a gray-eyed bombshell with a heart of soft warm clay spinning on the potter's wheel-thing, and a mind divided. Shall she stay with the habitual — the deep and powerful with a gut-wrenching hold yet boring and ultimately destructive, or turn towards the unknown, the appealing yet slightly scary and ultimately hopeless (as all things are)?

And, of course, Him the damaged. "I'm so damaged I can taste it," He was once heard to say. He's into nuclear engineering, Pakistani history, and necromancy. He was once seen in a bowling alley, but he claimed he was "just buying a smoking pet." When asked for a skin sample he replied "I have no skin. What I have has no name that can be pronounced."

Tripe

All right. This will stop now. I obviously can't deal, whether it be with the narrative as a literary form or with speaking of myself or others as actual human beings, or with my impending doom. I don't know, and the fact that this is a what? section doesn't help.

Okay, I will define: A what? section involves lots of unexplained loose ends and seemingly nonsensical (i.e. free association but not Tripe™) references, all set forward with the malicious intent of making the conscientious reader say "what?" What is self-defeating about this is the conflicting intention with which it is purveyed. On the one hand it is a joke set to make "conscientious" readers a bit less anal and tacky and just flow with the prose. On the same hand in a different spot it's a lament at the gap of Being (GaSein), the separateness and isolation and other synonyms between author and reader. Frankly, I'd like you to write this book for me with your own imaginative expectations, yet still give me your money, and buy me a Slurpee besides.

Sixteenth Sitting

...Which is where it all middled... "I used to pray for a Slurpee machine," she said, and gave me one of those smiles that sent my eyes and ears all running into each other and my nose with no direction to go but down.

"I don't remember if I've had one before. We lived by a 7-11 when I was young, so probably..." I looked at my shoes to make sure they were still there. They were. "...but I don't remember."

"So I'm, like, helping you to reconnect to the childhood you never had, then?"

"I suppose. Ah! Yet another thing you add to my life."

Tripe

“Uh huh.” She stepped off the curb as the light turned green. I recall noticing the small pale scars on the backs of her calves, the result of a number of different minor surgeries intended to stay the progress of her genetic curse, varicose veins. Twin scars, each about an inch and a half long, came together for a moment to suggest a continuous band as a faded black steamroller roared in from the left at 200mph and squished it all flat.

That hurt, I must say. [insert “what?”] Because I have no attention span, or for whatever reason that due to unresolved childhood conflicts I have yet to figure out, pretty much every story I attempt to tell in any form ends with some variation of “...And they all died. The end.” So, no, I did not enjoy witnessing the literary slaughter of my beloved (I mean *besides* the mischaracterization), but it was a formalistic necessity in this gradual move towards narration. Beauty image with the scars, not? I don’t know what it means...

Strange therapy here. (No, that was not a full sentence. Sorry.) As I was reaching the inevitable conclusion of that most illustrative and mostly true scene, two different pens ran out of ink on me. This is true. I had a hell of a time finding the third one. I had also originally intended for the instrument of destruction to be a passing bus, but couldn’t bring myself to set the words to page, opting for a cartoon motif instead. I feel pretty unsettled now as it is, but I feel something should feel right about it, so it kind of does. [what?] It’s a common Buddhist image that on the path to Enlightenment, should you come across the Buddha, you should slay the Buddha (the same one, you dig, unless another one is handy, in which case you should slay all, I think, having one and eating it too or something). The objects of religious focus are just tools to getting where you need to go. Now I talked before about love as religion, or at least our old friend Bataille did (p. 21):

Tripe

Through the beloved appears... full and limitless being unconfined within the trammels of separate personalities, continuity of being, glimpsed as deliverance through the person of the beloved. There is something absurd and horribly commixed about this conception, yet beyond the absurdity, the confusion, and the suffering there lies a miraculous truth. There is nothing illusory in the truth of love; the beloved is indeed equated for the lover... with the truth of existence. Chance may will it that through that being, the world's complexities laid aside, the lover may perceive the true deeps of existence and their simplicity.

The question is, does this use of one's relationship as a religious object constitute nasty co-dependence? Is it really very nice to put that kind of pressure on someone where Her later decision that you are a jerk, Her prior commitments, or Her decision to leave the continental US will lead you to a long dark night of the soul and a loss of communion with the universe? Or, on the contrary, wouldn't it be cool to exploit love for this purpose and keep what is gained, divorcing it to some extent from its original point of connection? Is this possible? Would it defeat and dispossess the love which would obviously be nice even without the mystical goo on it?

Some of this reduces to the age-odd question, "Is need good?" If you don't need someone, then He's just a luxury, and that's pretty frivolous now, ain't it, what with all the suffering you could be alleviating right now doncha think? But if you do need Him, isn't that a pissy way to found a relationship, leading to clinging throughout and suicidal depression when it all blows up? This complicates the issue of the Damaged: given a choice 'twixt a sickly gent who needs you and a healthier (for the moment) one who simply wants you, if you are a nice person, you choose Mr. Damaged, and Mr. Damaged, being needy, has not the strength or responsibility to suck himself out of the picture.

Tripe

I hope I'm not sound unsympathetic here. It's just that unless one has played the Damaged role a few times and seen the havoc it wreaks on the living, one doesn't figure out a graceful way to play the part. The classic thing, i.e. the thing in the classics, to do is of course off oneself, this being the favorite and usually overly-hasty solution of Shakespearean lover-types. I frankly think this was just because Shakespeare didn't know how to end a piece of prose either (or verse, for that matter), but forgetting about the author, this solution is just plain out of fashion. For one thing, we live hyar in an Age of Reason where all the questions that once troubled ancient Man are instead considered by committees, delegated to other committees, filtered through a mighty bureaucracy, lost in a file drawer and forgotten. What I'm trying to say is that Romeo and Juliet were basically stupid. The deaths there were not brought about by tragic and highly unlikely coincidence acting on these forces of nature called lovers. No, death came from tragic impulsiveness and basic stupidity. So ha.

No, no, no. It seems like if you're going to write yourself off completely, if the one thing you ever placed value in goes away, if you've gotten to the point where the pull of your remaining social ties, of worldly pleasures, and of the future is something you can honestly spit at and choose death, well, then heck, you've acquired yourself a bonus existence right then and there. You'd be better off just feigning your death, then going to Acapulco to be a juggler or something. Charm snakes. Join the Peace Corps. Audition for a life of crime. Why, you could make yourself a laboratory for drugs. Remember, you can always off yourself later if it doesn't work out, or better yet, start again on bonus life number two.

The only problem with this is the pain factor, whether it be those painful memories and the intense feeling that everything is totally meaningless or the "constructive" pains, the ones that pull you back to what you inadvertently still value, say, by making you feel that you're a pathetic waste of space (this implies that there is something important that you're just not

Tripe

doing, no?). Of course, the presence of these latter pains only means that you weren't really in a position to spit on all those things you thought you could spit on; the spit doesn't stay spat. So had you actually killed yourself, you would have regretted it.

My personal method is to sleep. Just go to sleep, for days if necessary, and eventually the rejuvenating juices'll make you sick to death of lying around and you might just be strong enough not to mess anyone up. If not, go back to sleep.

But this is, of course, not my official line of advice, which goes as follows (please quote me):

Just remember: **always kill yourself**. Even if you don't feel depressed now, believe me, you will later, and it's better you go now and not wait until you're desperate and muck it up. Time's a'wasting. So... when in doubt, kill yourself. And when not in doubt. Look, just die, okay?

Seventeenth Sitting

So are you digging these briefer chapters? Do ya feel like your life is moving faster, that these are the fun times, just whizzing by, and pretty soon you'll be old and smelly? Well, that's the way I've gotta be (We're in a plot now, recall?), because she's a'goin' away, and I feel so funny abouts it that I gots ta sing sing sing!

I feel so very weird

It's like I've got a scummy beard.

Because she's goin' away.

Tripe

But I cain't see her today... well, at least not for any real length of time, unless we invite Him along, which is fairly lame, but if she just sneaks out she feels bad about it, even though we behave within the bounds of our assigned relationship, except when I kissed her on the neck, but you know, that was just kind of an accident, as I was just trying to floss.

My, all this talk of flossing is making me hungry. Perhaps a juicy flashback...

“So where are we going?” She rolled down the window of my glorious yet awkward blue '90 Honda Civic.

“Nooo. Stop. It's very important that I actually keep this a surprise, not because it's that fabulous a surprise, but merely because I am fatally incapable of deception, and that is bad.”

“Whatever you say,” said glorious beautiful She. I gave her a lecherous look. “Okay, *not* whatever you say. And *not* whatever you imply.”

“Well, shoot. You ain't no fun.” I was lying.

“We can't be long. He's kind of freaking out. No. Not kind of. He's freaking out.”

“What? Again? Why, why? Look, I'm not a threat, right?”

She gave me that “Oh, really?” look.

“Well, not a dangerous threat. I thought you told Him these things.”

“I did. He's still freaking out.”

“Well, what? Should I turn the car around and go get him? We can bring him to the special surprise place?”

She paused. “It might help.”

Tripe

“Done.” The car barreled left into a sharp U-Turn, catching up to speed in the opposite direction just in time to meet the oncoming vortex of eternal nullification from which nothing emerges alive (or otherwise).

***(<--happy, candy-like mark indicating flashback change of phase)

Better? Much less narration, there, but the dialogue was more realistic (...even though it may not *sound* realistic. I know; I was there). These days are slipping by, I realize, and this may be the only record I have of them... unless of course she becomes my merry bride or my depressed literary agent, and we cement some solid group memory storage units to store what would otherwise wriggle about and slip away come someday. As this is really doubtful (as I will probably be asleep), I feel compelled not to warp things too much in this account, and to take lots of pictures, as they last longer.

I feel much better about both of us dying there and not just Her, and in such a sanitary way, too! Just being taken away by nothingness to nothingness. There's a swell alternative to suicide... though I guess it's more perfect if the whole world vanishes into a hefty nothing, so as to leave none of those wondering worried friends and relatives calling the police, sending out search parties, and you know, generally clouding the world with bad vibes. Better to go back and pick them up; bring them with. Besides this, everyone should have the option of just writing “Gone South for healing” on his and/or her door and just vanishing for a long time ‘till the Damage, that mighty happy gorgon of pain, she is gone. This might be less plausible in Antarctic regions, for obvious reasons (i.e. the epithet “healing and nurturing” would have to be used instead to be NewAgedly correct).

But every old wife's butt knows that all ya need ta fix the Damage is true love, right? Works for me, but then I am a classic Freudian non-sublimating, non-projecting, non-rationalizing, non-etcetering face-my-demons-and-wail-pitifully original Sin kind-of guy. My

Tripe

weak spot, She is obvious, as is the cure. Yep, the old “true deeps of existence and their simplicity”’s fer me, that’s certain. So, basically, if you don’t like this book, I doan’ care, unless you are She or the next She or someone who could physically, socially, or financially disfigure me so’s to prevent future She’s. So again ha.

No! No! It’s madness, I tell you. I renounce the whole last paragraph! Everybody and his or her *dog* knows that value is an extraordinarily complex matter, raised in people by a complicated network of mechanisms triggered by biological, psychological, social, and otherwise cognitive factors. To even pretend that only one thing *really* matters is self-deception, is plain stupid, is completely unhealthy, is... well... religion.

Ha! Didn’t see that coming, did you? Yes, it’s true. A wise man once told me “People will always be slaves, but they can sometimes choose what to be slaves to.” I thought this was pissy and reductionist, and said so. Various Christian warning-label-types have preached in my vicinity that if you don’t accept God as your god, you’ll worship other things, like money or power or pleasure or Juicy Fruit. The implication is that all these are ultimately empty, that you can be rich, powerful, or what have you as all hell and still be miserable (I find this comforting. Misery is a devoted friend and will never completely abandon. Also, always kill yourself. Then eat paper.). This may be true of those things listed, but what of the big “L?” (“Land ‘o Lakes,” that is.)

Sure, if you’re a psycho depressive who needs a honey to make up for the faulty parts of yourself, then when you end up with a *mere human being* you’ll inevitably get disappointed and go screw up that relationship, but if the need is within the norm (which I guess is still pretty gapingly huge), and we keep our wits about us, isn’t this the one single-cause means to eternal happiness? I guess it depends upon who you talk to.

Tripe

Oh, incidentally, this has all been part of the song that started at the beginning of this chapter, doncha know. I guess I must repeat the hook, being a slave to the formulaic as I am.

I feel so very weird

It is just as I feared

Yes, she is going away

And I'll probably sleep all day.. and a day doesn't have to be *just a day*, you know, as in 24 hours. Why, didn't you see/read *Inherit the Wind*, in which a very famous based-upon-an-actual-guy lawyer tries to reconcile the creation story in the Bible with anything that makes any sense at all by positing that maybe, just maybe, the seven days mentioned in said story aren't actually referring to calendar days, but to geologic epochs, so one day could equal a jillion years or so? Granted, this argument was helped by the fact that there was supposedly no actual sun during the first couple days to even suggest a time frame, but we can use that element here by talking about Alaska days, one day equaling 14 hours of daylight or so, however many days that might take to occur around December or so. You dig?

You realize that if I do go to sleep, this book will end faster, so it's in your interest to... well, you know. Hold me underwater 'till the bubbles stop, I suppose.

Eighteenth Sitting

I just gotta keep repeating to myself: "This book is better than *Mein Kamph*. It is." This is not to imply that this book is supposed to be in the same genre as that one, or that I hold anything but revulsion to that carpet-chewing moron or to the senseless babblings of a deranged and demented man... but you can see the basis of my fear though...

Tripe

What is this? A part of the reader's brain engaging in self-pity? (I'm pretending this is new for a second) Or are we even doing that puppet show these days? It should be pretty obvious that my story here is pretty much generally applicable, for just as I and the Damaged become pretty much indistinguishable at some points, so do you and He, you and I, you and She, etc. No? You resent being included in this weird mess as if it were your own? Perhaps it is just that you want your own place, your own identity, is that it? I will grant this. You now have your very own spot in the back of my hot blue luscious Honda Civic-duty,-ha!, but you'd better move over and unlock the door to your right, because we're about to pick up the Damaged...

I stood leaning on my open car door, my hands dangling through the half-open window. Were my knee to somehow roll up the window, my fingers would be chopped. Were someone to slam the door, my legs and chest would be chopped. I was a vulnerable boy.

The door to their house opened and She emerged, wading through porch cats and half-skipping to her side of my car. She smiled like Clinton, semi-helpless, totally friendly, half-heartedly encouraging yet giving little hint of her inner workings. "He's coming. He has to get his coat."

I had kind of hoped he'd be busy. He usually is, what with three jobs, four independent research projects, and all that sulking to do. Nonetheless, he seemed a nice guy, so it was mostly in jest that I asked, "So does he get violent, ever? These seat belts are kind of long and could be used to say, choke someone in the front seat..." I demonstrated. She laughed and took a few steps towards the house, escorting by unseen strings the gaunt figure who was then slipping through the cracks between the door and its frame. The porch cats had scattered, and the porch steps required only one step from this man of the longest legs. His

Tripe

face turned up in my direction for a second, leaving only the little rectangular mustache like a taped-on piece of dryer lint. We exchanged pleasantries, with his face and voice retaining the staid but twittering-on-the-edges manner of a scientific mind being questioned about issues only slightly related to his field. My voice and features sped up to about fifth gear, the point at which a few key exaggerated facial expressions, an aggressively friendly manner, and a series of constant semi-random quips flow from my face, leaving no need and no room for my actual personality. She offered him the front seat. He opted for the back.

Before I had even fully pulled out of the driveway, my left elbow started to hang out the now-fully-open window, the music, *my* music bought and placed on the cassette deck by *me*, layered softly as the first line of defense underneath the car's oxygen level, my face set itself into that overly-relaxed New York cabby look, and I glanced in the direction of the rear-view mirror and spoke: "Okay. The purpose here is to convince you that I am in fact not evil, and not out to destroy anybody's life, so you will stop freaking out, okay?" I turned to Her. "Was that too blunt?" If she answered, I didn't hear it. He certainly didn't answer, but instead lounged in that back-seat-with-the-music-on sort of staidness that makes dogs stick their heads out the window and pant.

There was a pause.

I'm not sure who actually spoke next, but within a minute we were all explicitly searching for a conversation topic. "...besides awkwardness, which would be a much too self-reflective topic..." I of course said that. She was amused.

"Nuclear power in the Ukraine," He suggested. At this point he was only a voice to me.

"What about it?"

"With the dissolution of the USSR, the Ukraine, which before relied on nuclear power from Russia, is no longer in the position to be asking for favors, and so has had some major

Tripe

problems...” At this point, someone let out a tremendous wet belch. We all turned; it was **You**, of course, with not so much as an “excuse me.” He pulled out the shotgun he’d been saving for me and pressed the barrel to your nostrils.

YOU HAVE DIED. Your score is 20 out of a possible 400 points, which gives you the rank of Chick Pea.

Thank you, Friend. I’m still finding writing in a narrative style quite uncomfortable, and so am happy that you broke that spell with your inadvertent gaffe. Suffice it to say we took that topic as far as it could be taken, with me speaking very quickly, bullshitting, admitting that I was bullshitting, and giving opinions anyway. If only the Ukraine had something Russia wanted, then all would be well. A deal. A trade. An agreement.

Nineteenth Sitting

Okay, let's just stop with that obvious-flowing-segue stuff right now. Yes, yes, quite soon I will give an account of (in the form of a verbatim insert) a certain attempted contractual agreement put forth by Yours Partly to obtain His blessing in the long car or truck journey North during which She and I would be sleeping in a tent or back-of-truck together many many times. As has been said, this isn't going to happen, so the agreement is pretty much moot anyway. I will get to this, but we've got a long tradition of gratuitous procrastination going here, with which I must comply.

...Which is actually pretty typical of the way these events have moved for me: stuff happens, I hang around thinking about it for a long time (in the shower, in line at the post office, writing this book, all of the above, etc.), then I get restless and go out and make some

Tripe

more stuff happen, or try to and instead end up wandering around lonely forest paths asking squirrels for spare change.

...Las Vegas picked up a log to show to the children. “See you the bugs that crawl on this log, living in and off of it, making it their home, giving it meaning with their devotion... Oh my, they are on my arm now. Little fuckers.”

You may split your sides at my wackiness. Or you can say oops with me, for I have made an error of teaching, concerning sleep. The previous recommendation said “Yes, you problem child, sleep. Go to, that is, and you will awake refreshed... eventually.” The truth is, ‘tis not true, not always at least, and I mean by this not the obvious, but something else; sleep-as-suicide-alternative brings habits of a) sleeping, b) waking up because you just *can't* sleep anymore, c) being groggy=depressed for a long time, and d) sleeping more (though never quite enough). So, the drug of choice is not sleep, but something else — maybe love, as mentioned, but maybe something as yet untried, like actual narrative, or protein, or Special K... certainly not Kix, which is just nasty. Oh, and here’s that “contract” I mentioned:

This document concerns the party of the first person (“I”), the party of the second person (for the sake of clarity, “He”), and the party of the third person (“She”). Its purpose is to forge an agreement whereby She and I may drive together very far without Him flipping a gasket.

The purpose of the proposed trip is: a) To get Her safely, efficiently, and enjoyably very far; b) To give Me a chance to get out of this stinking town on some pleasant and adventuresome excursion, which I sorely need; c) To cement a friendship that, alas, started too late, but would most likely have been a long-standing and pervasive influence in the lives of Her and Me had We met a few years back. As it is, the companionship is exceptionally enjoyable, energizing, and dare I say meaningful to all

Tripe

concerned. Nonetheless, it remains friendship, though of an intensity unfortunately rare for the two parties.

The purpose is **not** to transform this relationship, and most definitely not to destroy or weaken the long-standing relationship between Her and Him, which is to be regarded as an absolute role-defining limit upon all behaviors.

Behavioral restrictions: As a general rule, then, I and She must and will restrict all behaviors to the types that would not create violent conflict were He present. Specifics include:

--No physical contact except in a purely casual and/or accidental manner, with the following exceptions: a) She may thwack Me for stepping out of line, engaging in crappy puns, or otherwise being annoying for several hours straight. b) One party may tap the other should the tapped party be driving and on the verge of falling asleep as the great white cliffs loom near. c) One party may save the other from falling off a mountain cliff if desired. d) Thumb war.

--No utterances of affection of the sort that would make His hair stand on end, i.e. no actions, commitments, etc. will be taken to make things more complicated than they are.

--No ripping on the absent party, who seems to be a pretty damn nice guy and so doesn't deserve any.

Enforcement, Primary: Enforcement must of course come from parties She and I, both of whom have large pain associations to the premature dissolution of long-term relationships, Hers, of course, especially relevant here. She has demonstrated extraordinary devotion to Him (brood though He may), and part of respecting Her as I do requires Me to respect and support that devotion.

Given the brevity of acquaintance between Him and Me, there is of course no direct reason for Him to trust Me to abide by these restrictions, but a functional equivalent can be attained by combining two elements: First, She must trust Me in character, motive, and action. If She does not feel She can

Tripe

do this, She must cancel said excursion and thwack Me. Second, He must trust Her, in both deed and judgment, and if He can't... well then, there's not much relationship worth saving, is there?

Enforcement, Secondary: *Should the situation somehow arise that after said trip the primary relationship (Him & Her) is weakened, He may trommel Me, this trommeling restricted the infliction of debilitating but non-crippling injuries. Should He be averse to doing this, He may hire Burly Thugs, and I will reimburse Him for 1/2 of their fee. The secondary enforcer, then, is fear of pain.*

Failing this, there must be some way to sue Me for breach of contract, as I intend to have this notarized by at least one of my housemates, which is, well, almost legal.

This, then, is an expressed record of My honorable intentions and good will, a pledge and hopefully an agreement. So, again I say: chill.

[My illegible scrawl signature]

All names have been changed except Mine, to avoid My being hurt. In pursuit of this same goal, I will rationalize that the reason this contract was not accepted (though it was not explicitly rejected), is because nothing could appease the Man in His situation. For the Damaged, threat is always immanent, or already victorious, having a nice buffet of one's vital organs in the halls of victory, which are somewhere down near the pool tables, but not in the direction of the snack bar. He called it "patronizing," yes, and hence was I the patron-wanna-be for my rival, which I suppose is like the KKK inviting Grandma Moses to come set up a studio in their garage ("Yes, Grammy... we want you to be *comfortable...*" (evil music ensues)). It was because of this, because of her honest and admirable respect for a person who was very important to her, whom she could not bring herself to slight, that I was bidden not

Tripe

to come, that she found cheap flight arrangements and said I should not follow, not yet, anyway, not until those important months of adjustment had passed. This was *not* because She didn't really want me there, that she didn't *want* to weasel out of her present commitments, because she didn't even trust me to stay to my role as innocent friend and protector, and *not* because she didn't want my company... really... I... yes, I almost sort of believe that maybe. (sigh)

Twentieth Sitting

Well, I'm in Alaska. Yes, yes, I know, I should have called, should have written, should have let you know what has gone on in the meantime, but I was a bit at war, you see... not with myself, or with my rival, or the expectations of others, or those bastards in British Columbia (to be randomly offensive), but with this book. I hate it. I mean, I love it, it's... well, is it me? No, not me. But close... well, it was close, it was leisurely, it was fun, but this narrative stuff — what a pain in the arse! It's hard enough to actually experience these events, to wait through the boring, awful silences and take in those manifold, shifting, and damn incessant atmospheres, but to record it all as well? Verbatim? Bah! Waste of frigging time. I am not so insecure that I can't bear the solitude of my own mind, that I feel the need to record and share every damn impression so as not to explode upon myself in an orgy of self-consciousness hell. Well, I am, I guess, but narrative doesn't ease the pain, or, well, I guess pressure would be a better word, a bursting and buzzing just inside the temples. Nonetheless, hurt me though it must, I must finish this damn book, and finish it well (“well”=“at great length”), so I will call it my nemesis. It was leisurely, but with the retreat

Tripe

from the early stages of Tripe (which is what I heretofore described) to gradual self-consciousness and order, to the acquisition of purpose, it is no longer an extra mouth, a part of myself. No, this book has acquired its own life and direction, and I am powerless to stop it. I *must* finish it, even though you're already bored. Think of the children. Think of the fans of Buddy and Snake, our colorful main characters who bust down trail after trail in search of adventure. Were I to can the serial now, they would be disappointed. The two people who I've gotten to read this far would be disappointed. Mom and Dad would be disappointed (well, not *my* Mom and Dad, neither of whom got past page ten, but you know...). She would... well, I don't know what she would do... but at least it will keep me out of her hair during my visit to her. All the reasons not to kill oneself apply here (except that one about thwarting Brown's Chicken, a reason which applies to living in general as Brown's feeds off the flesh of the living, so you should survive until you're gamy and chewy, but not to the writing of this book, which will not thwart them even at all nope. Sorry, just had to throw that in to encourage absurd lawsuits.).

So dammit this book will be done, even if I have to hire someone to do it, or just color for fifty pages. To start I will send you a postcard, as I should warm up to send postcards to all the people whom I picked randomly out of the phone book and pledged to send postcards to. (This way I will make many friends, and so be more popular than Jesus, and so sell more albums.) So you have to picture going out to your mailbox and pulling out a colorful card (or as colorful as you can get for 25¢; I really don't know you well enough to buy you anything nice) with lots of trees on it. I mean lots of trees, all of the same two or three types, the only kinds that can actually survive here. And boy are they tall; I'll tell ya... they are so tall that they have to shop at a big and tall store (That was a wonderful joke, yes? You can use it for a nickel or so.). Plus there is a big Alaskan landmark of some sort on it; I don't know which

Tripe

because I just got here and haven't seen them yet, but just imagine something as cool as all the other lame-o landmarks that appear on postcards. Plus in big letters the card says "ALASKA" or "FAIRBANKS" or maybe a joke like "ALASKAN winters are so mean that they once shot a man just for snorin' too loud." Now turn the card over. There ya go:

Dear friend whom I don't know well enough to buy anything nice for,

Wishing you well from Fairbanks, Alaska. There are lots of trees. They are tall, like myself. I will climb them all before I leave, proving myself the master of this place. Don't even think I'm not having a great time. Why, the surf's up and my blood pressure's down, whoo-wee! Hey, is that Freedom Rock? Well, turn it up! Betcha didn't think I would send you a postcard. Betcha thought I'd been eaten by wolves already. Betcha thought I didn't really like you anyway, what with killing you off a few chapters ago, didn't you? Well I'll have you know that it's far less likely that I'll be killed by a wolf than by a moose, as the moose and meese tend to wander around goring people so as to protect their young (even if the young aren't actually present... I guess it's better to kill everything just to be safe). So I'm here, and sleeping on Her floor and eating Her food, as it's a pain in the flank to walk anywhere to shop, so I haven't yet done so. I got in two days ago and spent yesterday being a migrant worker putting up insulation on some guy's cottage. I have the option to do more honest work for honest pay, but I feel compelled to kill this damn book, even to the point of just making this card to you, which I was going to write anyway, as part of it. Jeez, I must write pretty small for a postcard to be this long. So I'll maybe see you in early October when I return, it being now (exposition point coming:) Sep. 9, 1993, just so you know. Take care; I hope your syphilitic symptoms are letting up... you really shouldn't

Tripe

have let it go that long before treatment, you know? Doncha go completely insane on me now, okay chum?

Bye now,
Me

So now you know that not *that* much time has passed since the last chapter, that stuff must have happened so that I am not going in December or whenever, but rather now, that His opposition either lessened or was ignored, but my God what happened? **WHAT FRIGGING HAPPENED? WHAT IN HELL AM I DOING IN ALASKA?**

Does that work as a suspense builder? I really am not sure. I will break this tension, or the lack of tension, or your impatience with my procrastination, or three bricks with my bare hand (thin bricks), but you must give me slack, or rather I am *taking* slack, as you really can't stop me, as there are a ton of flashbacks I should put out, hate them though I may. Really what's called for is some sort of continuity, some sort of foreshadowing presented after the fact, some story about the death of a pet...

Hmmm. Porch. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Food. Here on the porch. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Eatin' it, I am, yeah. Pretty good.

People. Yeah... yeah, yeah. Pettin' me. Tryin' to make me forget about my immense and obvious bladder infection that makes me drip urine randomly on everything all the time and will undoubtedly kill me before too long. Cancer's Cool for Cats, it's Cool for Ca-a-a-a-ats. (<--Lyric reference; doan' worry about it.) Pettin' me all night. Givin' me food. Debating on whether to take me in to get put to sleep now or in the morning when it'll be cheaper. Finance wins, as I have stopped dripping blood and look fairly contented. It's 'cause I am.

Tripe

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm just as miserable as anyone else... moreso, probably. Sittin' on the damn porch. Dealing with the other cat whose last owners made him smoke lots of bad pot. Dealing with the other cats beside that one that come up randomly and eat my food. This furniture is pretty gross; all that cat hair on it. Hell, *I'm* pretty gross for that matter. Yeah, yeah... yeah. I have had very little use up to this point, other than as a plaything and occasional companion, kind of like a lot of women are still made to feel in the harsh marriages of the twentieth century (score one for gratuitous political correctness). But now, yesssssss... I can be a symbol, a sign of mortality, a sign that anyone, even a cat whose cancer had been diagnosed a long time ago, can just up and die. I will make them all reflect on the fragility of it all, of the sheer thinness of the human will as a force preventing and making things happen. Something like that. Oh, yes, and also Aaaaaaaaaaak. (thump)

Yes, these are old lessons, but someone's got to teach them to us, and remind us of them continuously, so we remember just how crappy, or arguably not crappy, or, you know, just there, organic and completely uncategorizable and hence unjudgable life is, judge it by our momentary purposes (like wanting to live and be happy) as we might. Ho ha. Dang that narrative was painless. I should write more from the point of view of animals; these are better than inanimate objects because they can die. Since no one knows how well animals process the world (well, actually we do, as we know what kind of sense organs they have and what sorts of neural sludge the signals run through, but I will pretend to be as ignorant as you), we're free to make up any cockamamie shit up about them that we please (I am not just catching up on my swear quotient, but rather describing a certain kind of shit characterized my its rough texture and navy blue cardigan sweater), and there's nothing God can do to stop us, so phooey on Him.

Tripe

If you've noticed the similarity between His name and His name, you are quick. There is more to it, and much more beyond that, than you would initially think. In the personal drama there is Self (me, of course, at least in my case), and Other, the mass of great She (...not that she's overweight... She's not, though she is worth infinite tons of gold and then some, especially if the market is down.), with the power to give and take, to isolate or fulfill. So what's left are big stupid forces of nature, logistics that make it so even though your true love really does want you, she's got this appointment to wash her hair, you know, so she can't do anything tonight, or Saturday either... look, maybe she'll call you... He is, of course this logistic, in his guise as rival or God. Whatever. Silly shit for a silly book, you bastard book... I WILL FINISH YOU! I'm not sure where the book itself fits into this Self/Other/Other than the Other trichotomy, but I will conquer it nonetheless.

Did I mention the trees? ALL THE TREES? There are many. They are big and also tall, yes. Don't even tell me later I didn't mention the trees, that I don't know how to describe a setting. Whoa, trees! Also the moon is visible pretty much all the time, and is prettiest in daylight. But I don't look at it very much, as if I did, I would probably walk into a TREE MY GOD THERE ARE A LOT OF TREES! So much yet left to deforest; my life's work is clear. I will do it by making this book very very long and printing many many copies and not recycling. Everyone must do his or her part by buying many copies of this book for friends, families, and the homeless (or all of the above, for you folks who like Cousin Annie and her three daughters, but not enough to let her and them stay at your place). At least now I've figured out what to put on the cover, should I find an artist who wants to draw trees for free. Maybe I'll get Her to do it.

There's obviously a lot more to say and do to and with you. I feel like we've been apart for a while and there's still so much left to talk about... Nonetheless, we should go to sleep. I

Tripe

will lie on your floor on couch cushions next to your bed, and you will scrunch to that side so we can see each other, and we'll talk about how tired we are, and exchange those little indescribable looks that say everything is at last wonderful now, but I just can't believe you're here in the same room with me. Wow. When it gets completely dark and we still can't sleep, I'll pull out my guitar and try to remember the words to one of the songs I wrote for you. You will appreciate the serenade, half-mumbled through though it was, and sink into a restful but interrupted sleep, pausing now and to realize that I really am here. Wow.

Twenty-First Sitting

I remember a feeling that I'm tempted to call indescribable but which I should not, as I'm going to attempt to describe it. It's associated with certain music, with different albums over different periods of time for me, but always appearing at the time to be unique only to that album that is playing, prompting repeated listenings at future, less-inspired but equally ill-lit times to try to get it back. It comes often from meditating on the Good God, that is not the He but the Other, on the Hugeness as it is encapsulated in the idol of whomever I happen to be obsessing over, and usually at that point writing to, trying desperately through word or song to ease the burden of my flood of powerful emotion, directed at different people over different times but always at the time channeled uniquely and directly to Her. It makes the mind haze over with a sparkling clarity, a gaze that pierces so far down into the page that it has to shop at a deep and tall store ("A reference! A rehashing reference! My kingdom for a reference!"), broken only momentarily by trains of thought that lead to sickly cycles of critical self-consciousness and lame plays-on-words. In this tone I wrote her letters, some sections of

Tripe

them anyway, saying nothing I was not allowed to say but having no emotional restraint whatsoever. In this tone I wrote more to her on the plane on the way there, listening to a portable CD player that kept skipping and freaking out just to taunt and kindle whatever passion-mongering the tunes were performing on my exposed neck. In this tone I did I-don't-yet-know-what, as feedback from her has been as confusing as communications from people tend to be when they matter most. All this when my visit here is devoid of dramatic purpose (I seek not to sweep her heart away and escape this too-cold-place, though I sure wouldn't mind doing so), filled with mundane purpose (I am to finish this book and study for the GRE, the Graduate Records Exam for the uninitiated, so as to facilitate future lousy career moves on my part), and which I enter with role fixed, on my honor as described in an implicit contract more restricting than the explicit one contained herein. The book, this hunt, this destruction I will wreak, these are my sublimation... that and jogging in very cold weather.

As vague as I was trying to be just then, I guess I just gave away the fact that He's not dead (despite Nietzsche), or else why would I have any role other than the lover awaited? Yes, He's alive. How was he convinced? Why would his insecurity break, or be transformed, so that He said it was okay (though strange) that I come? I have no idea. I suspect that for the Damaged, Paranoia is not the only destination, as I stated before. There is also Obliviousness. I guess he got reprogrammed or something last time he was in the shop. The change was apparent the last time I saw him. It was less than a week ago, when I pulled into that same driveway of the Place She used to live. I had offered (after being hinted at extensively) to bring up more of her belongings that didn't fit on the plane the first time, and so had to stop by their Place to pick them up. I had expected a bundle of stuff waiting just inside the door, as She had informed Him beforehand that I was coming (though not exactly *when*)...

Tripe

I dread an immanent and painful narrative scene, and even though it would be about six lines long (I wasn't there very long), I must do something perverse. She's a nature-person, you see (hence Alaska); she travels; she gets funky internships that require her to scuba dive, climb mountains, and/or (what is relevant here) collect bugs and put them in jars. So one of the things I caught sight of in the process of our accidental courtship was this leathery bag containing lots of little jars, each with a dead bug. No, I didn't have to bring these bugs on the plane, which would be embarrassing, but I will narrate the following flashback from the point of view of a particularly nasty bug that was for some plot-device reason that I won't bother to invent perched on His shoulder throughout and, despite the five years or so since his removal from nature, not quite dead, and still pretty damn perceptive. This perspective may actually be indistinguishable from my own (except that I was not on His shoulder at the time), but it makes me feel better about writing.

Oh My God Kill Me Please! He is jiggling, and that makes me nervous, because my little jar-thing might fall and break... but I guess that would be good because Oh My God Won't Somebody Just Step On Me Or Something! Ah! He is jiggling because He always jiggles slightly, which means I am always nervous, but moreso when he moves, because his movements are very sudden, though overlaid with an apparent calm that says "You have no idea what I will do next, though I appear harmless enough." That mustache is really beginning to bother me; for so long I thought it was another bug, and when it ignored my cries for help I became angry and threatened to sue. Then it looked like it would kick my ass, so I huddled as far back in my jar as I could (about 1mm) and tried to look inconspicuous. The doorbell has not rung, because there is no doorbell, but if there was, it would have rung, because there's someone at the door. The twelfth knock finally made its way up the stairs,

Tripe

and He is rising in a slightly hunched manner to trot down the stairs, the mantis on his lip rearing up as if to attack. No, it's only fur; it's only fur... I've got to believe that now, true though it may be. He's opening the door... and... it's another slightly hunched trotting fellow in a long black coat. He has no visible bugs on him, though I suppose some may have claimed him already. As I am trapped in a jar and have a death wish, I'm not really into colonization anyway at this point, but it's good to notice these things. Sir, Excuse ME... Oh Sir Kill Me Please Please! Or at least commit some dirty betraying woman-stealing kind of act on my host Holy Father here, okay?

Speaking of that, He's changed recently. Since She's been gone, He's become more relaxed, more agonizingly calm, though still jiggling. He's breaking some of His ruts, He's moved to a different room in the same house, He's getting some of His scholastic/career stuff together, picking up abandoned projects and actually finishing some more recent ones. The two exchange greetings, the visitor faking a pretty casual demeanor, the host unfathomable as usual, but certainly completely and overly polite; the malicious glint in the eye may just be me imagining things. He is caught off guard by the visitor showing quite then, and He hasn't gathered the stuff to be taken yet. He does so as the visitor waits, mumbling aloud off a list he somehow received, dashing about, throwing various items in a box, items essential enough to want, but not so essential to have taken the first time, like some chemical meant to destroy sneaker odor, later abandoned in Chicago because ya can't take aerosols on planes, ya know, or they explode. 'Strue; ask anyone. The visitor waits, following Him around the house to make sure he doesn't go somewhere and construct a weapon. They speak briefly on matters of mutual interest ("She does have a nice ****, doesn't she?" "Oh, yes."), of mutual acquaintances and the progress of each other's plans. He reveals he will be staying in that house at least through December (i.e., *not* going to Alaska by Thanksgiving, as She had said

Tripe

she hoped), but mostly He just gathers, stopping only for a fifteen minute phone conversation while the visitor reads last year's GRE booklet (which looks about the same as this year's). The stuff is gathered and in a few small boxes. Thanks are exchanged; the visitor gathers the items and He walks him to the door. He grins: "Have a good time when the frost hits." The very very slight maliciousness contrasts with his over-politeness so as to create the illusion of Satan. His grin widens and widens, dimples popping into the increasingly stretched pale skin, the mantis stretching with it, out wider... wider... to the shoulder, brushing my jar, and it strikes Yeah, yeah, yeah! <<crash>>

No, this somebody-having-to-get-killed in every flashback convention isn't even slightly amusing anymore, and I did already break it with that little bit I sneaked in at the end of the last sitting about Me and Her falling asleep on the first night (Actually the first and second nights combined, to be totally accurate about it; my guitar was not unpacked the first night.), so maybe I'm ready as a writer to transcend that little annoyance and we can have some good Dostoyevsky-level stuff. Or at least Hemingway: "There are many trees. They are tall." Oooo, yeah. I'll have you know, I almost enjoyed writing that last flashback, though as soon as it was finished the dread of the next one hit full force. Bah! It's all your fault. You should have just been there with me throughout, and then I wouldn't have to write. Bah! Go home, now. I will call you when there is work.

Tripe

Twenty-Second Sitting

I was a teenage migrant laborer. I came up from Nicaragua when I was twelve, and my family and I lived on the Californian/Mexican border for a long long time waiting for our entrance papers. Because my father was a skilled gasket export stylist, we had a good chance of getting in legally, so we didn't just pay someone to smuggle us over the border as so many others did, but instead waited. There was very little to do down there. Local clergyman types had set up somewhat of a makeshift school, and I did go to that a few times, but as I already knew how to read, they had very little to teach me. And besides, we needed money to settle in what we hoped would soon be our new country, so I went to work. Every morning dozens of us would just show up at this one place on the main road, and if the weather was good, trucks would come and take a certain number of workers to work their fields, or orchards, or whatever. The wages were low, the conditions were unfit for humans, but we were glad to be there, because it was work, which means money, which means some hope for a better life, or at least more cigarettes. This man picked me up once, only me (the car was small), and took me to a cabin he was building behind his house. He needed someone to help put up insulation, and then aluminum siding. I got to play with buckets of glue with large warning labels, with power tools fitted with treacherous appendages, with nails as long as your forearm, to climb precariously-balanced decaying ladders up dozens of feet (not too many dozens, granted), to stain my clothing (having a two-suitcase limit, I had foolishly packed only the clothes that I liked, and hence did not want to stain) with various toxins, to scrape myself up on various metal beams. I worked 9 1/2 hours that day without a break, all for \$45 (I being an *unskilled* laborer). Did I mention that work sucks, that no one should have to do it for a living, that unless it was *your* dream house you were building, you'd opt out of a second

Tripe

day on the job if you could too, at least if you had any kind of sense? Doesn't my lying about being a lily-white-skinned upper-middle-class midwesterner never-had-to-work-a-crappy-job-for-longer-than-one-summer recent-philosophy-major-college-grad make this criticism sound more plausible coming from me?

So that was my first day in Alaska, after the long and intense plane ride on which I stole *two* Crudly movies by listening to them on my "personal headset" and tried to hide my overly-large carry-on luggage from voracious flight attendants who would try to shove it under the plane, presumably to be run over and left for dead. I'm not sure what its function in this plot is, but it happened, so there it is. I was relieved of any romanticism about the working man that I might have inadvertently picked up since my last industrial-hell job (a whole summer hauling industrial garbage bins in a gasket factory). I'd like to say that Her face hovering just barely above my visual field led me through that day, gave me strength to pound one more nail in pursuing what seemed at first like a not-so-bad project but ended up sucking big time, but I was instead merely annoyed, especially in the last hour and a half when I knew She was already back from classes, and I could be spending time with Her, if only I weren't swabbing glue on drywall. I had done my day's work, which made my folks a little happier about the money I sponged off of them that I could have earned myself had I only not gone on this trip, but instead got an actual job. It also gave Us some time apart after our reunion so She could miss me intensely. I'm pretty sure that's what happened.

"What's the point?" you ask. "We've gotten the point about you gradually growing from Tripe into a drippy, cheeseball romance in which you can write drippy, cheeseball sonnets about your beloved, so why don't you just end it and let us go home? Just have everybody die, conclude with the moral that life sucks and things are unpredictable, yet also

Tripe

predictable (there was that foreshadowing scene with the cat), and just write ‘THE END’. Enough is E-frigging-nough already. Jeez.”

No, fair reader, do not judge me harshly now, not now that I am happy. Wait until the end where I am miserable and full of self-loathing. Then I will join you in your diatribe. The much more important question here is did I, in the face of our reunion, in the face of Her face (yowza!), Her rich, melodious voice, Her every look and mannerism that seemed right on the mark... did I, in the face of this, attempt a... try to with her... suggest a... *thumb war*??!

Not yet.

But you really need a lot more background, I guess, to be in a state to have expectations about how things will turn out, what happened between us before she left, what the hell has been going through her mind this whole time... much more, some of which I don’t even know. All’s I know is I’m not dead yet, and I will one day win her, or sublimate (Warning: I will be using this word many many times. If you are under the impression that in so doing I must be referring to the process by which a solid changes to a gas without passing through liquid form, you might as well just die now.) a lot trying... yet at the same time I’m sure kicking this need stuff and *not* descending to the level of the Damaged, which is really obviously not that far down, despite my present equilibrium (I told you I was having a swell time, wasn’t I? I don’t lie, you know? Did I tell you that? I don’t lie. I don’t. I.). All this I most sincerely believe, and will continue to do so until kicked back into pessimism by the Hand of God, whichever Hand that may be.

We surveyed 100 people with the following question: “In what way is the Author full of hooey?” The answer given by the contestant is “every possible way, except in regard to his stealing those movies on the plane, which is absolutely true and in itself enough to make him cool.” SURVEY SAYS: **22**.

Tripe

Twenty-Second Sitting

Hey crunchy-people. We have a ton 'o' flashbacks for ya today, here at the book-destroying emporium, and by the time they're done, the author's experience will have been objectified and distorted to the point of orgasm. My, oh my, oh my. Where to start? What piece of the puzzle has escaped you? That one in that part of the picture mostly covered by TREES, perhaps? Oh, my dear, for you... for **you** I have trees aplenty....

I was not in Alaska. The trees were many and various; She tried at several points to teach me the names of some of them, but damned if I can remember them. Just trees: fat trees, many artificially supported with chemicals periodically pumped into their roots, saving them from Dutch Elm disease and the like. The forest preserve was well tended; every summer the giant wild grassland in the middle was burnt to the ground, simulating the natural brush fires; the river was kept generally clean despite the two factories within spitting distance and the train tracks only a few feet away (also spitting distance, but less reliably so, especially if you're spitting from the train as it moves. Just remember: you're always spitting distance from yourself).

I had gone there because I made a mistake, because I needed to talk to Her, but I had walked out for fear of saying something stupid and petty. Five minutes later I had calmed down and needed to unburden — of course needed to unburden. But she had gone — was no longer at Their house, was no longer packing to go. I went to the preserve because that's where we ran together, where our rhythms had matched, where she might have gone if she

Tripe

was upset that I had left, that I couldn't sympathize. I thought as I walked around that I should have brought a tape recorder to rant in, because ranting was the thing, and it's damn good entertainment.

...Just another disappointment... Don't expect anyone else to be a romantic fool, to go the fifteen extra miles over high and dangerous seas just to bring you coffee. Don't expect anything even close. So repeatedly I had been force-fed the lesson that I have no power, that no matter how sweetly and gallantly I behaved, no matter how much I shouted, no one would be moved — no one that mattered. People do what they do out of semi-random fits of their own, and other people are at best witnesses. To be an actual cause and not just a place holder, to move someone when she was not just hanging around waiting to be moved by just about anyone, ah! The beginnings of the murder instinct in modern Man...

Oh, stop. You knew what You were getting yourself into, so suck it up. Don't make stupid generalizations from isolated incidents. Just because she wouldn't even *ask* Him if the idea bothered Him, if He'd mind if We just came up there after She left, got My own place, worked there for a little while. It's not like She'd even have to see Us that much of the time; it was My decision; She had told Me essentially to take it out of Her hands, that She had moral difficulties but wouldn't have them if She lacked control. I certainly have no such difficulties...

At that point the trees squished tighter around the trail that I stumbled down. They pressed closer until they formed a smooth circle, a cylinder with me inside, revolving as the floor dropped out like one of those standard issue spinning-cylinder-with-the-floor-dropping-out-so-everyone-gets-stuck-to-the-walls rides that lurk at every amusement park in the cheap-to-free world. My brain fled to the sides of my skull, leaving the remaining cerebrospinal fluid thick and still, as if it were still an inertial reference frame, which it was due to the funky

Tripe

spatial topography that was going on at the time. I don't understand it. In this fluid, the point is, was Calm... distilled, underlying Taoist calm built up through years of repeated brain damage by various blows to the heart. There's only so long one can be mad, and for me it's about ten minutes, and I usually even get through those ten minutes without breaking anything, though Tracy Partridge knows I could.

I had long ago abandoned the concept of fault as utterly useless. This is not just because I studied philosophy, where simplistic Free Will Reactionary Rightists just make you want to disavow everything they believe through sheer annoyance, but because it has no function other than getting more joy out of being aggressive, of feeling righteous about one's indignation and hate, of feeling good about needlessly punishing oneself. Read your Nietzsche; you'll get it. This doesn't mean there's no point or call for getting angry at anyone, but whether your reasons for doing so are good are much less important... If you're going to behave like a beast, go ahead, as long as you realize that that's what you're doing and don't off anyone out of spite. So if you kill my non-existent children, I will be mad at you, whether it was an accident, or you were insane, or whatever. If I don't get mad at you I'll get mad at God or Fate or whatever, which is futile, as you can't belt God a good hard one like He deserves. My thrashing you is an equally insane act whether you did what you did on purpose or not, or whether you really did it at all. I'm not advocating pacifism here, though it certainly is an easy strategy for dealing with most situations that aren't likely to be reoccurring, and certainly a more healthy way for ME to live. When in doubt, just kill yourself, okay?

Cycle it all forward... a different flashback, with the same mood, bordering into the indescribable one during which I wrote to her. I am so damn predictable; my triggers are so obvious. The frustrations build, well up, thrash around, and come out elation, or at least a

Tripe

strange, aesthetic sense of wholeness, of the gestalt as the Big Damn Unjudgable entity again. How are you *supposed* to feel in the face of that? People, including me, just do what they have to do, what they're programmed to do, not a whole lot differently than trees (which, as I have just shown, are often programmed to simulate an acid trip — not that I would know, being a non-beat poet kind of para-intellectual: a very rare breed). So the flashback is of me in an empty house reacting to that certain music, letting my muscles move as they are called to do in some effort to harmonize, engaged in a poor dance consisting mostly of spinning, because I am confused, am adrift, don't know what I want among the second-choice alternatives available. She is gone and I aligned Myself to it, set her as my spirit guide and set out to be strong, to not waste my time left, but now after all that She hints that She wouldn't mind were I to be there, were I to use the plane ticket that I had not yet picked up but had not yet canceled. I was offended at first to be so jerked around, that even my pains to adjust were driven to obsolescence, but She did miss Me, and in a manner at least as strong and dignified as my own. So spin, Mr. Beast, until your confused mind comes to rest.

And this morning, too, Sep. the 10th, to stand and spin on her kitchen floor, the same song going and the same intense energy, but this time distilled to a carefully balanced joy, for last night, oh my God last night... She initiated... twice... thumb war. No, I'm not joking, and I'm not being euphemistic (those are different things, for you folks of the low vocabulary, though they come from the same Latin root... probably). As she stood showering yards away, I waited for the coffee and the bagels and the milk that I had all set to flaming to perfect themselves in time for her arrival. The third night on the floor was one of insomnia, Hers spreading to Mine, in a wash of conversation that left us both completely wired. I got through the whole aesthetics lecture, the one that says all preferences and chemistries are malleable, so there's no excuse not to wholly apprehend the one you love. I popped up early, still being on

Tripe

Eastern Daylight Time, and dove to morning preparation. And the tile floor on socks was slick...

When you can only think in lyrics, when you can only talk to clouds, where does that leave the one you love? Is she hazy in freakish morning light behind a veil of cliché? Does she nightly as she turns in her sleep and a few fragments of speech escape? To be drawn together until past each other by something I will neither understand nor remember very clearly six months from now, unless by some freakish coincidence I am still in the same life.

Try singing the preceding paragraph to the tune of “La Cucaracha,” and maybe it will make some bit of sense. Let’s see... have I gotten my point across? The point that I am a little weird, that everybody’s in an isolated existential hell, even if the furniture is pretty. I haven’t really gotten to the part yet about two people pretending they aren’t isolated, and so making things much much more tolerable, but that has been a major hint. There should be some big thematic stuff filtering through around now too, relating this whole narrative thing to the Tripe which it its daddy, stuff about the relation of that way of thinking to actual communication (which implies intention and is therefore usually associated with *purpose*, which, as I have intimated, is pretty inappropriate for real people who just want to be together and aren’t allowed to fool around). There’s also the whole Death/God/Him nemesis thing, which will of course eventually bring about a tremendous dramatic climax, even if I have to completely make it up and drag on for sixty pages with a scene that could be describing one of those really heinous civil war battles where two million people all got individually bayoneted to death because all the rifles sucked so much. My plan is to make some actual connections and continuity with the early part of the book even if it sounds forced and un insightful. This would even make for a good theme: that being locked in a room alone/on a desert island/in a self-consciousness hell does produce insanity, though of a healthy kind,

Tripe

and a very Taoist (see as I abuse that word) purposelessness that natural mental proclivity reinforces, but that the whole result of this endeavor, the energy and the goal that arises from it, is the desire for communion, which in turn turns the organism purposeful and hence makes him totally unwise. I don't know if I really believe that, but it does sound cool. Well, jeez, enough of that. I've got important topics to deal with, like the reincarnation of implausible bugs as airplane food. Also: DOGS. Many dogs. Cooler than trees, though certainly smellier. Stay tuned.

Twenty-Third Sitting

The dead cat's name was Lumbar, incidentally. This is important, I feel, because I haven't given to my knowledge revealed any non-pronounal names of anyone that actually exists, or existed, as the case may be. I told Her that I wrote about the death of Lumbar, and She threatened that I had better have been properly respectful, as Lumbar was Their faithful porch cat and never did nobody no harm. In a feeble attempt after the fact to adhere to this request, I will hereby present another parable:

...Las Vegas gathered all the major pronounally-named characters together on the porch and pointed to noble Lumbar Vertebrae, cheerfully licking his paws, apparently unaware that he was doomed. "So should we take him in now?" All eyes were downcast. "I mean, it'll be a lot cheaper if we do it tomorrow when the normal vet is open." She stroked the cat tenderly. He stood around politely. The Visitor opened his big mouth:

"He looks okay."

Tripe

“Looks can be deceiving,” said Las Vegas. “Sometimes milk masquerades as cream. The question is, what does he symbolize?”

“Gee, I don’t know, Barney. Why don’t we sing a song about it?” asked a child in some completely unrelated situation at a different time. At that, We all looked at the cat, trying to figure out what the hell this scene was trying to say, what happened to the airplane food and the DOGS that were promised. It was the Wise Fellow that saved the day.

“That cat is like this silly-ass love triangle that’s going on here. It just can’t last, even though it looks okay. The question is, should we take him in now, or tomorrow when it’s cheaper.”

“Tomorrow.”

“Definitely.”

“We’ll take him in tonight if he bleeds any more. He’s still eating, so he must be okay.”

“Yeah, yeah... yeah.” The identities of the speakers here are not so very important.

“Very well,” said Las Vegas. “Proceed with the waiting, with the petting, with the vibes of impending ambivalence that the stench of death or ‘end’ (from the Latin ‘endus’ meaning ‘Kieth Partridge’s Butt!’) tends to bring. To the airplane with you Nar-rator, Nav-igator, Visitor whose decision this is not! Proceed with mighty jumping jack flashback heart attack-ack-ack-ack; you ought to know by now...); Begone!”

It’s hard to spin on a plane, even if you *really* want to, unless of course the plane is spinning in which case it’s quite easy; just sit still with your seatbelt buckled, your seat forward, and your tray table locked in its upright position... And no smoking, please.

...This would be okay except for the fact that if one can’t spin, but one has reached that precarious balance where one would like to spin, then it’s tempting to get out this energy in

Tripe

some other destructive way, maybe involving one's delightful airplane delicacy. On the first flight, from Chicago to Seattle, there was a choice of entrée. I mean, they were both sort of sub-grade, but at least there was a choice, and choice equals delight and freedom and all that is good. But on this flight, from Seattle to Anchorage, there was No Choice. I felt restricted; I felt my country had betrayed me. Whyfore must I eat *this particular meal*? What must be *wrong* with it, that they would put it in front of me with no other option available? Again I felt powerless. My only choice: To Eat, or Not To Eat.

...Oh My God Don't Eat Me Please! The meal stared up with terror in its Rye Krisp™. It pandered (<--not a typo) a bit, flashing its little life before its little eyes (or the functional equivalent, which I guess doesn't exist, but oh well) in a flurry of semi-random self-referential thought: "I am a meal of Tripe. If you want to know what that is I will tell you, I mean specifically tell you. Webster's *New Twentieth Century Dictionary* (Unabridged; second edition— deluxe color, 1972) says, '**tripe**, n.... 1. the entrails generally; hence, the belly : generally used in the plural. [Obs] 2. part of the stomach of ruminating animals when dressed and prepared for food. "How say you to a fat tripe finely broiled?" —Shak. 3. anything worthless, offensive, etc.; rubbish; trash. [Slang].'

I also say this, though not as often or at such great length.

"What right has this Visitor to chaw my visage? I blame him despite his correct belief that I am inanimate and totally dead. Am I not an entity unto myself, independent of his hunger, his eating fetish, his bleeding lip sore (this is an over exaggeration; it was actually just a fairly small sore on the lower lip, and while it looked slightly like one of those syphilitic symptoms just preceding insanity, it was healing nicely), and his other purposes? Yeah, yeah, yeah... uh huh. Do I not have my own context, being an assemblage of functional and adjustable parts like any other organism, and do I not deserve to live out this context in the

Tripe

void of freedom, even though I will undoubtedly fail to achieve a satisfying “relationship,” inanimate mess that I may be? What a bastard! Must be from British Columbia!”

“No!” I silently shouted. “I will not eat this, whatever it may be! I will be nourished by love alone! Plus the Rye Krisp™ mmmm mmmm. However.” I brandished the cold glistening fake-plasticky-steel knife. “I will carve her name into it.” I did so, and though the gravy seeped to cover it up in seconds, I enjoyed the scream it emitted, or that it would have emitted had I cared to hear it.

My God, I’m making myself physically ill with all this exemplary symbolism, and I can tell you there’s much more to come; ready your airplane sicky-fun bags. I remembered more stuff I have yet to do. You still don’t know what really happens during the breaks, and the increase of breaks with the addition of the *** ones makes it all the more sinister. I mean, I guess you must have figured out that I put your hand in warm water that one time, but that’s not the whole story. Not even close. Plus I still have to tie about fifty themes together in a big Revelation-like free-for-all, not the least of which my image and merchandising as a religious figure, which I haven’t really talked about for a while, getting caught up as I am in this “Jesus goes into the desert and sees funny snakes before coming back to teach” love story as I am. All in good time, sonny, all in the best damn time ya ever did have. I bet you don’t even feel lonely any more, with Me so fleshed out as real person as I’ve become these past several chapters, and I’ve been trying to explain/show how communication is just as horribly non-connective as my present relationship with you, the reader. I can love you, hate you, order you pizzas, or just hack you up like a ball of phlegm in effigy, but there’s always that distance, characterized in this case by your inability to get information to Me about how much this book sucks, unless you know Me personally, which come to think of it is really really likely.

Tripe

Rumor has it that this book is now officially pretty darn long. Yes, according to my initial count, 100 pages has recently been passed, which means that with careful gluing, you may now use this book as two-ply lavatory tissue and still have enough for a whole roll. So I guess the plan is now to survive these three weeks or so, writing regularly, spilling out all the relevant flashbacks and accompanying commentary, go home, bullshit an ending, and just frigging publish NOW, as I really do want/need some money so I can stop eating sand.

So are you okay with this new narrative style? It really doesn't bug me as much as that "describe-all-the-scenery-and-make-up-illustrative-adverbs-for-how-I-breathed-heavily-and-shook" style that I conceived as a bit more normal, and so was trying to write in, as adverse to the strange and different as I am. Please write back soon, Oh, reader, and tell me how I'm doin'; tell me if I'm worthy; tell me if I kin be your Writer Man.

Twenty-Fourth Sitting

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!!!!!!!!!! Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!!!!!!!!!!! Ohhhhhhhh!
Hmmmmmmmmmmm...

Let me elaborate...

In my strategy to lick this book (draw your own sicko images, punsters; I shall have **NONE** of it.), I have even, no it can surely not be, **TAKEN** actual **NOTES** on some things that have happened, because my memory is totally overwhelmed and the story is getting goood, I tell you, worthy of a master story-teller but incumbent upon Das Animal, licking Das Buch

Tripe

with broad Michelangelo-and-His-Circus-Of-Blood-like strokes, pouring out the saliva of his life and leaving only scars. So I am here in this lordly computer center making noises of various sorts to vent my... whatever the appropriate emotion to feel at this point is. I am determined, and will make sure that I stay determined by denying myself the pleasure of eating the wonderful bagel that the foresightful She granted me before going off to make porcelain masterpieces until I have put at length to page what I put at brief into my **NOTES**: I have here a list of possible events that have actually happened but which I may only possibly relate, at least in any recognizable manner. Some of them happened yesterday, like that huge, highly symbolic deal with the DOGS (I am making She mouth vasser, ja? (referring in this case to You as She just to give you a pronoun now that You are dead. You will know whether “She” refers to “You” or “She” by the context, i.e. I will explain it at the time.)). But many of them are less recent — episodes I feel compelled to relate in order to further characterize my characters, for instance by demonstrating exactly how touchy-feely and undoubtedly implicitly sexual the little doggies are. Because these things happened some time ago, I am much less excited about them and will probably describe them in a monotone, though you may not notice.

for instance I can tell you about the walk that she I and he took after that kitty death sentence scene I had come by in the first place to draw her out into the night while I was in one of those indescribable spinning moods that Ive been describing she had gotten to the point where she felt she couldnt do things like that without asking him along so she did and he came so we walked around in the beautiful night each male having a private conversation with her that was muttered so the other could not hear the high points came first when we discussed trees and second when we looked through a closed shop window at big nasty power tools knives vacuum cleaners and other instruments of destruction and household

Tripe

utility what he was fantasizing I can only guess at what I was fantasizing I can only guess at with slightly greater accuracy

Geez (with its new non-J spelling; show that you care about our earth by supporting non-J initiatives in your community and practicing them on your own), that was annoying. It did get one of those damn anecdotes out of the way though. The point is that I was not a mysterious stranger at Their pad but a reluctant hang-about; there was a big push in the later days to give Her life some coherence by being in the same room with him — occasionally even the same conversation. Since I couldn't do this with the compulsive honesty and directness that is the only way I could deal with anyone on a real level, such situations left me usually feeling like the aforementioned bug pre-reincarnation. After a while, though, in such situations, an equilibrium must be reached — at least that's the way I work — a balance was struck of the same shaky but serenely indescribable sort that characterized my feelings about the whole situation; I became fairly comfortable through a certain self-deception. This self-deception is not actually *lying* to oneself, as in saying “He's really just a figment of my imagination that will go away shortly,” but the kind of situation that obtains when one holds the concept “2+2” explicitly in mind but refrains from holding the concept “4.” It's not that one convinces oneself that $2+2=5$ or anything; one simply doesn't think about the sum at all. “2+2” is surely a fine and wondrous thing to hold by itself, yes, like one's love for another, and the loved one's possession of a full support group, and Her fervent dedication to Her own commitments. All these things are wonderful, so what's to get huffy about? Merely be yourself and make as many ambivalent and obscure references to the weirdness of the situation as possible before someone sets you on fire. This behavior of Mine, of His, this very polite and underhanded passive aggression, I shall refer to as **growling**.

Tripe

Through a careful program of growling, one human being can relate to another: “I understand that you are a full-fledged person with a whole inner world. Because of this I can’t help from at least partially understanding you, sympathizing with you, and wishing you well. Despite this, *get the hell away from her or I will rip your jugular out with my teeth dammit.*”

After all this, do I even *need* to talk about the DOGS, to symbolize through their behavior the messy debacle that every one of us could slide into in a moment, if only human sensibility were a lot less complicated, and even so... Do we need the DOGS to teach us the lessons that Las Vegas could not? Well, no, but they’re very cool...

...I need to approach this topic very slowly and carefully, because I don’t want to get sued. You see, there are quite a few dog characters here, so were I to create imaginary names for all of them I would just get confused. So the dogs you’ll hear about here are real: if you come to the appropriate part of Fairbanks and/or Chicago and call their names, they will come running to see if you are food. Watch out, and please do not encourage any of these dogs to run in the street or hurt me, for I will make every attempt to speak only the truth about them and present them as the honest and noble smelly beasts that they are.

The most important dog in the world is the one I own. Her name is Merc, which is short for Mercury, because she is very quick, and we have a thing in our family about naming dogs after Greek or Roman deities. Merc is a fox terrier, which means she is very sleek, cute & cuddly, fiercely independent, quick as lightning, and likes to kill things. Not people, no, but I recall a certain occasion where she happily bounded around leaving about twenty-five baby bunnies slaughtered in her wake. This didn’t always apply to other dogs; she used to be very curious about them, and playful when she got the chance to jump all over them. Because of other dogs (and children, which aren’t that different), our backyard looks like Alcatraz, with a

Tripe

wooden fence as formidable as is legally allowed where I live, reinforced by chicken wire, various planks of wood, some other kind of wire mesh, extending the height and width of the fence up, down, and in by almost a foot. The gates are basically useless, having four latches each and large boards blocking their undersides. Nonetheless, upon seeing another dog anywhere near, Merc usually managed to vault over, under, or through these barriers for a rendezvous.

We felt very sorry for our dog, what with her incessant lonely whining, so we bought another dog, a larger black one, and named her Ares, as in the god of war. Ares was a very friendly and wonderful dog, but we had to take her back after Mercury repeatedly tried to transform her into a neckless carcass. A human would approach, pet Ares, Mercury would become jealous and jump at Ares's neck, a huge frantic dogfight would ensue during which the human would grab Merc's back legs and lift them many feet off the ground trying to disengage her jaws from Ares's flesh, this would eventually succeed, Ares would slink off and hide in the bathtub, and time would begin preparing for a repeat performance.

So the wussy god of war went back, and (Laurie Partridge willing) found a new and better home. Increasingly since then, all other dogs have been labeled Mercury's enemies, fit only for death. Despite this little fault of hers, we love her very much. Though not of the consistently overly-affectionate variety, she is always there to pet and hug, as long as she's kept on a leash. So naturally when it came time for me to attempt some kind of art-object gift for my beloved, one thought I had was to somehow share this reliable source of affection with her. The dog lived at my parents' house, and She lived five hours away where I went to school, so some sort of portability transformation needed to occur... The old carpets were hauled out, the image was transcribed, and I bloody sewed her a stuffed-animal replication of the beast — slightly smaller, and mostly two-dimensional (having two legs not four), but

Tripe

otherwise a surprisingly good representation. This was after the car ride with Him (I think) and before the cat-walk of death. She was charmed; He was mortified. Grrrowl. When the object's head started to sag, She accused Him of twisting it repeatedly whenever She wasn't around. Grrrowlette. Before the summer was over, She and I had many overly-cute photos of each other holding the beast, I had included a mention of it in the second full song I wrote to her ("Hold this my token in place of me; let it be broken, you shall be free..." thus giving her a symbolic way out... very nice of me, I think), and it was whisked away to her home (i.e. her parent's home) to live with the other stuffed animals of her youth. So much for my intended symbolism.

Not too long after that She and the dog actually got to meet in person, for as a warm-up for the drive to Alaska that I was still trying to go on with her, she visited my (parents') home for a couple of days (We asked him along, but he couldn't get of work. Awwww.). I must say that the two of them got along splendidly — a wonderful example of how two people (or the functional equivalent) who meet through the one they both feel affectionately towards can get along in peace and harmony, with lots of licking and tummy rubs. Women... I just don't understand 'em.

All right, dammit, I'd better just have it out with this feminism issue. For the record, **of course** I believe in equal rights and righting the wrongs that our society has performed in subjugating women, giving them little chance to develop a sense of self, making them feel that they have to operate by different and exceptional standards, whether this be in approximating our preconceived notions of beauty or being merely the witnesses and recipients to the oh-so-wonderful white male culture. I have had these issues explained to me for many many hours and understand them as well as I am able. But that still doesn't remove my basic libido-driven sensibilities. In certain moods, when certain unfulfilled needs set me towards the

Tripe

Damaged, male and female are just different entities... I told you this: I am Self, She is Other, the one who holds the power over me and thus is inevitably the object of both worship and a little resentment, and He is irrelevant... or rival, or the rest of the God concept (which would make much more sense if we were still polytheists, but I don't want to get into that right now).

So, being an American male, I still have lots of obnoxious hang-ups about what it is to be male. I've actually done much better than most in shedding these, of getting in touch with my feminine side... I recall one appreciative female telling me that many of my emotional reactions and behaviors in relationships were closer to those of women than of the jerk males she knew. This is sensitivity, and it's good. I also recall a not-so-appreciative female saying I was a wimp. This is sensitivity, and it's bad. What-ever. So I'm still touchy on this, and at least 35% of the songs I write come from the immature but cool angry-young-man perspective.

What's the relevance? I'm merely trying to explain that I don't have any idea why and to what extent men and women differ in the ways in which they compete for affection, and if I do at any point cast women in a weird light due to their bitch-goddess role in the male perspective, it's just because I'm a DOG. And now, as I have written a lot today, I will eat my bagel-treat.

Twenty-Fifth Sitting

The kennels (in which many new characters are introduced):

The kennels are owned by an eighty-year old woman named Zelma who has more vitality than I do. Adjusting for her age, she has more vitality than Hercules. As she can

Tripe

probably lift fifty times her own weight, one might think of her as an ant. As she is so old, she might be thought of as a great Aunt. She is obviously neither of these, for these categorically drive better than she does. Nonetheless, she is extremely worthy of admiration. “She is my idol. She is what I want to be eventually,” says my beloved She. And the similarity is there. Zelma is the kind of elderly person in whom you can clearly see the outlines of a much younger person. It’s sometimes easy to fall into ageism when the old people you know seem to have no physical or behavioral resemblance to anyone else you know, but this is not the case with Zelma. As I thought of this, and gazed at wonderful She, I thought to myself that She also has the kind of face that you think that you’d recognize were it to age sixty years... It’s a certain earthy quality... Her beauty is not fragile, not requiring complete tightness of skin to be effective, but something set very deep in whatever space She happens to have set herself.

Zelma is Her landlady, and so owns that glorious space, plus a very small wooden house on the other side of town that I will have much more to say about, plus a pick-up truck whose demise was immanent the moment I had heard about it, and about a dozen very boisterous DOGS. Some of these stay in the back yard, mostly the females, with the notable exception of Bear, a powerful male who, well, looks like a bear — a very ferocious bear who would like to rip off your face. He was top dog in the house that he used to live, and got very used to it. When humans approach the pen, all the dogs bark and wag their tails, but Bear is always in the front, very happy to see you despite his evil appearance. He makes a point of growling and chasing off any other dogs that dare to try to gain access to the humans. As the other dogs in the pen are female (besides Buster, an annoying and forgettable fairly large dog with a very small head), this causes little more than an annoying display, but were other males in the pen, there would be trouble, I am told.

Tripe

So the other males, and a few notable females (there is apparently still a major difference despite the fact that they're all neutered), live in Zelma's apartment and/or run around the property (and beyond) randomly. These are the ones I became most familiar with, the ones that will star in most of the hopefully few delightful dog anecdotes I will relate. Beyond these, I wish to stress that in Alaska, the entire landscape is virtually composed of dogs. There were at least six others in the kennel (which at this point I should say is not a kennel at all, nor is it called such by anyone but me, who wanted to demonstrate by the word merely that the place contains lots of dogs), belonging to different residents of Her apartment complex, two living in the house next door, two beyond that, one at the next house, etc. and everlastingly. They were/are of all different breeds and sizes except fox terrier; no Merc to my knowledge remains in the last frontier, probably because they were systematically hunted to extinction.

It is with this population density in mind that I relate the following tender story of Our first walk in the Alaskan woods, followed as we were by Duke, a fat, jolly, yellow dog with very little hair and squinty eyes; Sonny, a large wussy furry gray dog with a fashion haircut that made him look kind of like a bison; Teddy Bear, a furry tan sled-pulling kind of creature bigger than all the others; and, added to this anecdote for the purposes of character revelation but not actually present, Coyote, who looks, surprisingly enough, like a coyote. This walk was undergone for the purpose of getting me out into the wilderness, which I had hitherto missed, putting up insulation and writing this book and all, and so took us at least four hundred yards away from Her apartment building... Wilderness isn't too hard to find in those parts, you know. Our destination was described as "a lake," which got me just about as excited as I could get, especially it was re-described as "a lake *with beavers*. maybe." My

Tripe

nature sensors were nary set to overload, and Jeez (I mean Geez) there were trees. Trees, even.

The coolest part of it, though, was not the trees, or the beaver (which Duke tried very hard to eat, swimming the length of the thirty-foot "lake" at least three times after his initial sighting until he was forced to substitute for his prey a stick, thinking that we might not notice the difference), but the DOGS romping together, running randomly into the woods, jumping on each other, eating dirt, spraying urine to the four winds, greeting the other thirty DOGS we passed in the one residential block before reaching the woods, and especially competing for my Beloved. Me they didn't know as well, so though they took pleasure in periodically trying to tackle Me, it was nothing compared with the way they worshipped Her, groveling and leaping and barking uncontrollably... I was totally unprepared for the sight of all those monsters pushing past and over each other, seething around in a jolly and barbaric rugby-like mass. Occasionally in vying for Her attention they would actually notice each other, or exchange some snide DOGGy remark, and let out a long low snarl, pushing into each other and away from their Beloved, sometimes up to a hundred yards away from The Beloved, until they were just romping around again, apparently forgetting what they were arguing over (not having a language makes this fairly easy). The group we were with were fairly tame in this respect, Sonny being such a Euro-cut wuss, Teddy Bear being so mightily gentle (= dumb as lumber), and Coyote being, in my opinion, the coolest of the DOGS: he knew what he wanted out of life, and tended not to be snarled into such doggerel, at least not without a sound explanation. I certainly wasn't going to give him one, as geared up for nature and romance as I was... Plus, having been so geared for fifty-nine consecutive hours or so, I was fairly tired. She, of course, was damn radiant, so we set off...

Tripe

I'm stopping for a moment to think of a way to make this trip, during which basically nothing happens, in the least bit exciting, so as to give some substance to the character-development (of both humans and dogs) that I had wanted to occur. Perhaps if I relate the story from the point of view of Lionel Richie. Or I could let the dogs drool on my rough draft, connect the dots of drool, adapt the result to become the closest-resembling Japanese characters, translate, unroll, peel, and eat. I haven't done anything totally alienatingly bizarre for a few pages now, I think, so I should gear you up for a scary surprise, the surprise being that I'm just gonna tell you the darn story, and if that's very hard, oh well.

Um, well, I guess it was kind of hard, because I didn't bother to do it. In fact, the prospect of detailing that scene in a normal literary kind of way scared me so much that I abandoned the book, left it to mold for... well... sixty years? Yes, something like that. So the rest of it might be a bit harder for me to remember, but I'll be able to give a more satisfactory denouement. She and I have been married now for longer than I can conceive. The visit I was just relating ended pretty uneventfully, with us still friends, but by June of the next year she was through with Him and had returned from Alaska. She came to stay with me for a week or so, but with all the barriers off, the week turned very quickly into the rest of my life so far. Our marriage hasn't always been easy, but much easier than I had imagined. I've got to say that despite my general cynicism, despite my total confusion about just about everything (which has only gotten thicker as I've gotten older), I am happy.

Tripe

Twenty-Sixth Sitting

We remained in the cramped room our family had rented for most of that year. Repeatedly we got word that our admittance papers had finally come in, but it was always a false alarm; there was always some technicality that got in the way, and it was always “Everything will be cleared up very soon.” I had begun to get used to our poor accommodations, which scared me more. I wanted so much to live in America, to be an American, to have an American job, to be someone like I could never be in Nicaragua, and moreso here in Mexico. On one very fateful day I went out as usual to find work for the day, and there was Zelma... and *Her*...

It was Saturday and I was, for the first time, woken up too early, my body having eased out of jet lag and my mind reeling from the sheer ecstasy of the night before. Today, I had been told, I would have the opportunity to sell my body for \$15/hr., which is more than I make sometimes in a year, putting aside those occasions where I am hired by my own subconscious as the executioner of love, for which I am paid in self-loathing and Pez, both of which make for nice anniversary presents. So I got in the back of this car, see, a car with Zelma and She in the front, with Zelma driving (“Just don’t talk to her and she’ll drive just fine,” I had been warned). The car kept stalling, which was not her fault (I think), and this was good, as it kept us from picking up enough speed to smash into anything. Ordinarily a drive with Zelma would have taken place in her pick-’em-up-truck with at least two small dogs and one larger one jumping all over the hapless occupants, the driving controls, and the greater part of human sensibility, but said truck had (un)fortunately been totaled only the day before, with no serious injuries absorbed by anyone except God, who, being omnipresent, had been right between the truck and its target (a semi) at the moment of impact. What had

Tripe

provoked the truck to such an attack is beyond Human Understanding (i.e. I don't know); it undoubtedly had its own story: perhaps years of mishandling and mad occupation had at last driven it to strike out, heedless of the well-being of itself, its occupants, its target, or that Divine Guilty Bystander who seemed as oblivious as the rest of us... serves Him right, I say, the multifarious British Colombian bastard.

It has come to my attention that I don't know how to characterize worth squat, so there's no way in hell I can convey how Our behavior in that peril, Our constant passing back and forth of a simple thermos of coffee, My hands slowly toying with Her hair or resting on Her shoulders as I attempted a full body-lock on the seat in front of me. I can't make you see through this the constant and strong flow of energy between us, the effortless and comfortable fit of ego against ego, the tenderness and concern, and, yes, the CHEMISTRY. Oh, well.

So we didn't die (yet), though we did get lost a couple times, and eventually made our way across the mighty city of strip-malls to a place that looked approximately like the one we had started out from. It had that aura of Zelma ownership on it; it had DOGS. We didn't actually see these DOGS, as they were (so I was told) very wild, and would beat us if they had the chance, so they stayed all day inside the house with its single human resident, a woman much older than Zelma who didn't drive at all.

The house... yes, the house... well, should have been burned down to collect insurance. This house was much less bitchin' cool than the cottage I helped put insulation on, and much smaller as well. I could have built it out of a single largish set of Lincoln Logs™; I could have lifted it given proper leverage. This latter fact was reassuring, as my work occurred primarily *under* it, digging out a basement, and were it not for a few very large strategically-placed supports, the house would be falling in just about the right spot to squish us flat. We were digging so that a foundation could be laid, the old one having completely rotted away, so as

Tripe

to make the Damaged house somewhat less highly unsafe, or at least within federal and state building regulations. A match would have done the trick better.

The day began fairly enjoyably, with Her face (and whole body for that matter) hovering nearby as I entered into various machine-like rhythms of digging, making a trench around the house big enough to hide in with anti-aircraft guns (which I did not do). By afternoon I had dirt in every orifice of my body (the crunching between the teeth was funky to say the least), back pains to no end, several small bumps on my head from smashing it on the beams lining the bottom of the house, and the eternal echo of many DOGS performing unearthly rituals a foot above my head. I was also getting increasingly annoyed at the presence of the one older flannel-clad guy who was undoubtedly being paid but seemed to have no other function than to stand around and smoke, occasionally stopping for a moment to glare disapprovingly at the quality of my work. But ya heard no grouching from me, nope, because it was money, I was with my Beloved, and I was doing a proud American job.

This description is accurate only if applied to the many moments before six o'clock, an hour and a half after the "foreman" (who did not wear flannel, but nonetheless knew as little about what we were doing as we did) cheerfully predicted that we'd be done within the hour, whereas as far as I could see we weren't even close. The act of either hefting dirt up nine feet to the surface or tediously weaving through the various supports to get to a sort of underground dirt-conveyor belt that ended up burping half the dirt back into our hole anyway got a bit tiresome. The Popeye routine was getting old; I was forced to drift confusingly through different bits of flashbacks, presented for your amusements to deepen the exposition and allow me to dote.

Tripe

Time it was to romanticize on the goodly days, to record them in thought and data-base to keep them from slipping to the four winds. Yes, it's very hard to divide them from the present, as the whole thing has been for the most part one wash of goodness (yes, with me this *includes* occasionally wanting to be dead), but they are at least less recent, and so more easily romanticizable (should this prove necessary). It was in the first many days of the second phase in Our relationship, the phase in which we realized that we could do things socially *besides* running around in the woods until group heart attack ensued. This realization opened up a world of inadvertently romantic possibilities, and though in those days she was still very shy about making eye contact, the connection from head to head (and elsewhere) grew strong and leafy, blooming every hour or so everlastingly.

Please excuse that barf-o-rific image; it won't happen again. So... I remember going on long walks around the campus, Me sometimes carrying some bit of tree I had just pulled off, carefully stripping off all the leaves, the stray twigs, shortening it to the proper length, and presenting it pristine and perfect to Her to cherish forever and ever. I remember diving headfirst into the pesticide-ridden grass next to Her like it was a deep blue lake, only not deep, blue, or a lake. I remember sitting on a see-saw with her to see who was heavier (it was a tie; I am a very skinny boy), playing trust games as to who would let who clump to the ground first. I remember similarly loitering on a near-by swing set, talking about how we both got bullied in junior high, about various conceptions of God (the kindly gent vs. the biggest ball of nothin' encompassing us little nothin's and happy to be so), about her home town, about what is ideal in love, what is required, and what we periodically settle for.

I remember trying to get to the highest spot possible to see... well, the rest of the world, I guess: entering a building we weren't supposed to be in, up an elevator that would take us up to the high, forbidden floors but wouldn't open its door without a key, up some back stairs

Tripe

past the “DO NOT ENTER” signs and the ventilation shafts, through some skanky crawl-space to the final door, which was jammed, but which I rammed through anyway... *to the roof*, above the CRUD. We could see almost... well, maybe a block. Okay, so we weren't really that *far* up, but it *felt*, God, it *felt*...

I remember Her swinging on a tire, with Me pushing at first, her propellant, but then standing aboard with Her, well-balanced with my legs against Her back... our first lengthy physical contact that I can recall. I remember Her impressions injected into my consciousness, reading Her mind...

...This happened quite a bit... Her housemates didn't pay the phone bill so it was cut off, but She wasn't... on more than two occasions I would, of my own accord, decide to walk the block to Her place to say hello and find Her meeting me half-way, set out with the same idea as my own. This tendency was reflected over and through most of our dealings, but only came out in a manner tangible enough to be seriously scoffed at through a simple parlor trick...

We sat on the grass in a great University courtyard. I laid the cards out in front of Her and lay back on the grass, watching the cottonwood drift and trying to capture it using more inappropriate ocean imagery. She held up cards one by one so that She could see them and I couldn't, and told me to guess whether they were red or black. She would then place it in the piles corresponding to my guesses, and lo! at the end all my guesses had been correct. “I can send to some people,” She said, “but you have to be open to me.” I was.

All right, I admit that while writing this section I have had my most beloved, cheese-dippy music going, the kind that made its way into my subconscious sometime shortly after puberty and before maturity (so to speak). I admit that right now I feel like writing Her name in the sky, regardless of the havoc that might perform on the aerial ecosystem, or at least

Tripe

writing Her name in this manuscript. I admit that I long to kiss her long, slow, and many times. You may yak if you wish, and believe you me I am plenty embarrassed thinking of the various people that know me reading this, but dammit I love the Girl... [pause for fifteen minutes staring at nothing directly after writing this]... [and another six minutes after then]... and the ink grows lighter on the page as I write, and the mind slowly shuts down, leaves this Earth.

So it was as I shoveled dirt beneath a cabin in Alaska. The only refuge from work is romance, and the only refuge for the romantically-destroyed is work. Those in crummy standing on both counts may visit the zoo, which will at least make them tired enough to SLEEP. (Note: Use the expression “zoo tired” to refer to any experience comparable to the horrible “No, I don’t want to walk another five blocks in the blazing heat to see the goddamn monkey-house *dammit*” feeling that all parents and field-trip-goers understand.) The end of said work-day, our weasely way of stopping work well before 9:00pm when the project actually got done (proving that Zelma had more stamina than either of Us combined) constituted Our first almost-fight, as I in my Damaged-by-work state could not be properly sensitive to her apprehensions about abandoning her admirable employers to finish the job themselves, and borrowing Zelma’s car to get home, and She in similar Damage and apprehension could not fully engage my back-pain, and so procrastinated endlessly before actually arranging Our departure. The fact that We made so much of this later, that we took so much pleasure in working things out and forgiving each other I take as a good, if repulsively cutesy, sign.

Twenty-Seventh Sitting

The book — I fear — she is winning; she is using underhanded methods to keep me from finishing her. I say “underhanded” because she calls the word from my pen, this book does, by being so sneaky, yes! Comfort is good, yes? Also home and love... good, yes? Thinking, at least, should give me much to press to print, yes? ...but it is not so. For the last three days I have been holed up in Her apartment during the days, not set as before in a computer center with nothing to do but write. This has been my choice; on Monday I did in fact sit *outside* that computer center, slowly writing and torturing a quarter-inch inch worm (if randomly thwarting its plans to move anywhere, giving it roller-coaster rides on my pen, and yet not allowing it to just lay there like a piece of dirt constitutes *torture*), and it has been a good one insofar as it has allowed me to relax, to get romantically groggy, and to eat lots of snacks, but it has been bad insofar as it has encouraged me to climb into Her bed and sleep among the erotic-dream-inducing vibes for many hours, to sit around, pouring my thinking into guitar works, long, hot showers, and playing with the DOGS, and to eat lots of snacks. This adds up to One Sitting in Four Days, which leaves the book winning 30-love.

Maybe because of this, maybe despite this, maybe as a result of this, I am a bearer of the 50,000 signs of angst. It started to snow today. Once it snows in Fairbanks, say the Ones Who Know, it doesn't melt until spring. And now I am sad — sort of. I don't know why I'm writing this, exactly, and I don't know why I'm in Alaska, exactly. I entered the act of writing purposeless, as I am. This book owes you nothing more than honesty and respect, and since these are pretty dubious and flexible notions in this context, that doesn't entail much, but now I'm attempting what? To write an actual novel, something that nine million people have already done better than I ever could? To write a journal, to hold these memories fast and

Tripe

keep myself from exploding? Why would I put you through that, my consumer, my critic, my friend? I'm honestly afraid that no one will read this far, that after all that's happened between Us, She'll stay with Him in the long and (maybe) happy SLEEP, and I will be only a memory, a bad episode, a slight annoyance felt and dispelled like indigestion. I've completely put myself on the line, revealed all but my detailed physical description (which doesn't matter anyway, and might even come out in the "about the author" section at the end), let Her know very clearly (though not *explicitly*, until She reads the preceding sitting) how I feel...

The break-down will pass; the idea of "4" will pass from consciousness; it is Normal. She says She's under My spell, that She thinks about Me for hours after We separate for the day, Her to classes/work, Me to whatever. We've been building socially-acceptable excuses to touch, dancing and massage, and then proceeding with the level of physical familiarity these gain us long after the activity has ended. The magnet grows stronger; gravity increases. Something has... got... to... give... ..Maybe.

...What should have been the most bizarre day yet. I had seen it in some twisted form on the Nashville network and spreading... I had performed a different twisted form of it at age eight at my now-deceased Indiana-farmer-grandparents' fiftieth wedding anniversary... Contra dancing. Contra meaning "against," so "dancing against itself," a dance of self-loathing, or self-awareness, performed by the old and maybe wise, the redneck "I own the secret of simplicity but may be pretty ignorant nonetheless, but maybe not" folks, those emulating either of these two categories, and the Confused like Us. This is, I must admit, part of my "heritage," my CRUD. She brought me there. It was free. I was thirsting for new and random experience. Most of all, I wanted to dance with Her, to hold Her, to move in the

Tripe

rhythm, to be lost... (Okay, really. No more of these hoaky images, no matter how passionately they make my heart sing... Ach! What in France was that? **No more, boy. NO.**)

All the elements were there: the country-fiddle band (“Geese in the Bog”), the gentleman “caller,” the friendly folks... not the Romantic setting I had in mind, but perfect for us in the flesh. Partners rotate amidst every dance, so by the end you’ve danced with everyone in the room. I whipped around eighty-year-old women; I twirled middle aged country gals; We performed strange rotations with other couples who had no more idea what they were supposed to be doing than We did; I held Her, and we spun, extra times, until we were dizzy, ‘till all we could make out was each other, until we had to just stand and clutch each other afterwards to keep from falling over. We practiced this many times afterwards on Her kitchen floor... all this was the aforementioned night of ecstasy before shoveling dirt.

Twenty-Eighth Sitting

Coffee was a constant theme: Her nectar, Her source. The greatest service I could imaginably perform was to wake up a few minutes before Her and turn the machine on. Coffee set the frames around which all Her activity began and ceased. Coffee, not love, was Her drug of choice. Coffee was the river upon which we had our first planned meeting...

Before the obvious flashback: something simply must be done about these mucky, sappy, inept, and amateurish images. Coffee ain’t no river; gravity cannot pull together bodies of such slight and equal mass; contra really means “opposite,” as in “partners dancing opposite one another.” Stop it stop it stop it, you Writer Man. The book speaks to You and

Tripe

objects to your silly sentimentality, your bad lyricism, and your general lack of coolness. You have wussed out; you started as a clever little bastard, insightful, and maybe wise in some accidental way. Now, look! Crud reigns; you've spelled its name in airplane-food across many many pages. Being conscious that you have done this only makes it worse. There is no excuse, no literary device you can pretend to be using, no way to reconcile this stuff with the beginning as being one book. I, Your Book, am a mess, a split-personality disorder, a big heap of SLEEP, complete with dream imagery, wish fulfillment, anxiety, and random effluvia. I hope You're happy, Writer-Man... Visitor... DOG. Now proceed...

I had gone for coffee several times that summer already with several different people. It was social, non-committal, and a good time-killer. This time was very enjoyable but pretty unremarkable. The chemistry was obvious: we talked well, she (she was not capitalized at this point) made me smile, but the live-in boyfriend thing spelled No Go... another nice thing that could happen but won't, like fifty million others. We drank our coffee. She expressed pleasant surprise that I had called her after only just meeting her when we both performed at a local acoustic music club. I explained that I really had only intended to get her address for my band's mailing list, but seeing how she lived so near-by, and her number was right there in the student directory, it seemed worth pursuing. She talked about her boyfriend. I made cynical comments about relationships in general. She expressed her lack of enthusiasm. We made friends.

Love leaves a film on people. I know people who were engaged or otherwise seriously involved with people out of state or country — or dead. In their rooms, their faces, their lives, you could see their significant others, smell the territory marked. I never got felt those traces upon Her; the impression that She was "taken" never set in, even when He was there. Of

Tripe

course They were connected, of course there was and is so much history, but to me it felt like ties with Her family, of ties with the past, not with a living, breathing Man who still held the reigns to her heart, the keys to her body, and the voice-activated remote-control satellite connection codes to her mind, you dig? Not enough urine sprayed around maybe. Bah! I'm still a damn home-wrecker, or at least a home-wrecker wanna-be.

Time out for morality check. I've said a lot on the subject already, mostly about how useless it is, when we have concrete considerations that means so much to us. I wrote a thesis on the matter only slightly shorter than this book, so I know what I'm talking about, or at least am ignorant in great detail. A moral judgment, says I, is a judgment of what sort of creature the person in question is (or all people, if we're talking general moral rules), and so what is appropriate for he/she/it to do. If I am trying to be a janitor, then I should clean stuff and get paid for it. If I *am*, in *essence*, a janitor, then it is my moral duty to clean stuff and get paid for it. Since people, as I said, are essentially purposeless, i.e. have no essence, or at least find it very difficult to conceive having one, then moral absolutism is hooey. But all you have to do to get me to follow some rule of behavior is to show that I really do in fact, no matter what I might normally think, consider myself to be the kind of thing for which such a rule is appropriate. So if I'm acting like a DOG or a junior high school gym class member, then just point to one of my many sentiments against these types, to some practice of mine (like believing in Tripe as the primal force for good) that conflicts with this behavior, and I will try to set things right, or feel guilty. Then point to my negative comments on the practice of guilt and I will switch instead to self-loathing. Point to the corresponding comments and I will first explode, then try to go to sleep for a long time, and finally take three or four months to get my shit together and stop being Damaged. Ho ha. Now we're rolling.

Tripe

If you want some details or clarifications concerning the preceding argument, Read the Book; I'll send you a copy if you want one. I will warn you that it is very painful to read, and was much more painful to write, and it only contains four (i.e. 4) Butt (i.e. Danny Partridge) jokes in the whole thing. Ah, some fun never gets old.

So do I think I'm slime for trying to take another guy's honey? Sometimes. But I don't understand my process in thinking that, because I don't know what I really am or even really think myself to be. I know that I care for Her, so I care about Her concerns, but if She really, underlyingly or explicitly, wants/needs/loves me, then it is my responsibility to kick the Damaged where She cannot. Him I sympathize with, but know from being in his position that if She's not happy, He's going to be messed up eventually, moreso than He is, and will eventually recover. I don't mind being the instrument that merely speeds up the process. So you see, honey child, that this moralizing schmoralizing that you may exert upon me will do naught but bring lengthy boring intellectual digressions, so bite it and enjoy a cool made-up scene at which I was not even present, at least not since eighth grade, 10:35am-11:15am Monday-Friday at Northbrook Junior High School...

“Ear! Ear! Ear!” The yips were short and sharp, like the DOG which emitted them, whose name was Louie, despite his being female. He looked like a bat who should be chewing a cigar, but would be more aptly termed the morning songbird, as he/she/it would yap the same rhythmic, incessant, annoying yap every morning much too early when Zelma put her/it/him out.

“Lookit the Bonger! Lookit the Bonger!” Brandy would reply. She was one of the feistier females in the pen, looking vaguely like a smallish wolf with black splotches. She had large ears, I guess, or at least Louie thought she did. Frankly Louie's ears are much larger and

Tripe

more heinous-looking than any of the other dogs, but this did not stop her taunting yap. The meaning of Brandy's utterance escapes me entirely, being DOG-speak.

If she wasn't my friend I'd beat the crap out of her," said Bear of Brandy to Lucy Lou, a shining black hyperactive and loud comrade. The two of them began to howl together the Be-yO, Be-yO part of The Police's 1983 hit "Every little thing she does is magic" to demonstrate their coolness. Buster the useless dog tried to join in, but the others mocked him: "You don't even know what it means... Body Odor! Body Odor!" they shouted, thus giving away what they took their chant to mean and spoiling their exclusivity...

Buster, being your standard loser turd, turned his aggression onto Queen, an all-black dog with long, luxurious fur and very sad eyes. She was very meek and mellow, and so a good target for abuse. "You suck," said Buster.

"So you've said," = Queen's comeback.

"Yeah, but you *suck*."

"I know."

"You totally *suck*!"

"I will keep that in mind."

"And... you suck." Satisfied that he had made his point, Buster retired to a dog house at the rear of the pen to avoid being eaten by Bear, who had resumed running around harassing anything that moved."

"Hey Buffy! I'm gonna fart. You like to smell farts, don't you? Come here and smell my butt!" This was Bear's come-on line.

"FffUGYOU!" howled Buffy, the last DOG to be introduced here. Buffy was a very pretty dog, tan with white paws, fluffy and smooth with a lassie-like grandeur, but she was totally psycho. Scared of everything, She had turned being sheepish into an art form. To

Tripe

every stimulus — DOG, human, or otherwise — came the same irritated “FffUGYOU!” bark, making Her, next to Bear, the loudest of the pen-ridden bunch. She demonstrated this again as Bear chased her around.

“You suck,” Buster informed her.

Throughout this banter, Brandy was still attempting (via a high-pitched whine) to jump over the fence to get to Louie whom she could easily eat. Louie wasn’t in the pen because he/she/it was too degenerate to handle being off leash even inside. Louie’s function was to keep Zelma worried by periodically escaping and standing in the middle of the nearby highway. One of the dogs *had* been once hit by a car, the as-yet-not-introduced Sugar Dee (who is okay now), but unfortunately, it was not Louie. “Ear! Ear!” she/he/it taunted. By now Lucy Lou and Bear were also trying to jump the fence, Buffy had lapsed into constant repetition of her obscenity, and Buster had taken to barking at all of them just out of spite. Queen fell asleep. I and She, not forty feet away in Her room on that 5:00am morning, did not.

No! I will not drag out such a scene featuring only actual true-life quotes from the degenerate acquaintances of my past! I must move focus into that room with Us in it and change the time to the moment I am writing (evening). She sits next to me on the floor now... now disappears from the room for some moments. These things bring the situation too close to reflect on, block out all thinking. Now here witness the exposure of Tripester to world. This moment, these emotions, call for action, not reflection. The Book says “Drop me! Kiss da girl!” but I know that would not be wise, would alienate and violate Her trust, so I must at least warn Her... I will say “The Book says I should drop it and try to kiss you. What should I

Tripe

tell it?" I let her read these words from the page just written. She says: "Tell it... she hesitated, and she hesitated... and... and tell it that would be entirely inappropriate... unfortunately."

...Unfortunately, my heart is beating so quick I can taste it, and my handwriting is getting too messy to read, so I must stop and climb deep into my sleeping bag, despite the fact that She's sitting on it.

1/2 hr. later or so... and now the pain in my chest comes as the heart grows weak from attempts to sleep when not tired. I breathe overly-deep for a minute or so and search with slow and forced pen for some way to *sublimate*. The air is very cold on the back of my neck, as She has opened Her window to the Alaskan night. I have been somehow bumped up to Her bed (for the moment), with She still sitting on my couch-cushioned one set up on the floor. She hangs Our not-altogether-dry laundry around the room. I attempt to help, but, unwilling to move from my resting place, merely throw stuff around unhelpfully. I want desperately not to waste these precious days.

Twenty-Ninth Sitting

Monday, Sept. 20, 1982: Dear diary: I woke up today and had I had breakfast and the DOGS were jumping around the apartment and they wanted my breakfast but I said no because I like breakfast so we gave them some licorice instead and She tried teaching them to lay down and Duke did and Coyote did but Sonny and Teddy Bear are too dumb and Sugar Dee just kept jumping and licking my face. She's so cute and small and fast! I like her! And I like Coyote too because he's so cool and Duke's swell too except he's fat but he's Her favorite

Tripe

one anyway which is why She gave him more licorice than anybody. And I think Louie's gotten lost because I heard Zelma yelling around for him/her/it during the night. There's a new dog too and he was barking all night until Zelma went out and did something with him. I saw him this morning. He's white and big. She took me to make pots last night and I got all frustrated because I couldn't do anything and I didn't complain but She was mad at me for having such a bad attitude but I didn't and I wanna go back sometime even though it was kind of like putting up insulation. So She was mad at me and wouldn't talk to me much last night until we talked about it and I said that She discouraged me when She said my pot was crummy just because it wasn't round but I liked it and when I tried to do it Her way I couldn't and so I felt inadequate. So then we talked about work and She said She had a work ethic and thought that you should keep a good attitude in bad situations and should always apply yourself, but I said that work's only good if it's for some actual good result and I hadn't gotten to the point where I understood why someone would really love pottery because it's just pots, so I couldn't have a good attitude, but I wanted one because She loves pottery and I love Her and want to understand Her, understand? So maybe I'll go back but She won't go with me because She says I sucked out all Her enthusiasm. So we know that we're different now because Her dad made Her stack wood for hours and hours when She was a kid and She thinks there are lots of things like that that you have to do, but I think the only haves come from wanting to do something, or wanting something that requires you to do that thing. So I would have a good attitude and work and work and work if I made a project mine, even if it was boring, if I did it because it was part of a job or life I really wanted, or because someone I cared about wanted it. So I would be good if I did pottery again because I care about caring about it because I care about her, even if She doesn't care if I care about it or not, which she says she doesn't. Besides the spinning wheel thing is cool even if you do have to kick it and I

Tripe

liked molding the clay even though it was doing bad things in my hands. So She accepted the thing about work not being good unless its for a good thing, but its not internalized. We made up and She said She was being silly because She always holds grudges about little things because She doesn't say anything at the time, but I do and I scream and yell and then don't worry about it anymore. So I said She better talk to me because if we didn't communicate there would be no point and She said yes and We hugged and We went to sleep.

Thank you, thank you. I *can* write like an eleven-year-old, yes, though not like *I* wrote when I was eleven, which frankly wasn't very different from the way I write now except that I used punctuation correctly back then. I am very seriously considering including in this manuscript some or all of a short story I wrote when I actually was eleven, to demonstrate the progression in style. Since I haven't had to write much narrative prose since then, there hasn't *been* much progression... lots of characters name-dropped but never developed, an inability to make setting descriptions flow naturally with the plot (or be included at all), etc. Maybe if it's thematically appropriate...

Don't think all my self-ripping means that I don't like this book, that I should just give it up and move on. My relationship with La Buch is shaky, yes, but I think still viable. She keeps me from loneliness; she gives me a sense of accomplishment. Yes, the book and I do love each other, and even if that isn't enough to sustain a relationship, it makes us have to try.

In this spirit, I'm actually reading earlier parts of the book ('round sitting fifteen) to figure out what I still need to explain in terms of exposition to put you at the same level of cluelessness that I am as to how this thing's going to turn out. I mean, I've used some hefty foreshadowing here, more than one conclusion of "something's got to give," but this isn't

Tripe

actually foreshadowing, as I am as ignorant as you, but rather reflects the daily tension/insanity wanna-be that builds up every day and needs somehow to be dissipated/sublimated, whether through writing a new song with lots of heavy (though vague) lust images, engaging in passionate massage (yes, I will discuss this before too long, erotica fans), or just talking for several hours until it becomes re-obvious that She likes me a lot a lot. I realize this is sort of an unhealthy habit, and I might soon invent some character (Capitán Terapíste, perhaps) to come in and give us healthful tips about alternative coping strategies. All this morning (9/21/93) on Today.

There. I have read many early parts of this book (“*What was I thinking?*”), and inserted the last sentence or “answer” at the end of sitting thirteen. Go back and look if you don’t believe me, then lose your place and flip through pages for hours trying to find it again (“Did I read about hacking phlegm *yet?*” The answer is “no.”) That’ll teach you to doubt me, yes! (I hope that sentences like that look like bad translations from other languages. I hope this because hoping is coping and so good. Nyah.) I have thought of a defense mechanism to make this book appear better, i.e. more responsible in performing its assigned duties. The fact that I lack the ability to present a longish narrative painting, that I must tell-not-show, is *good*, because it means I’m not deceiving you, not trying to bamboozle you into believing my “many-less-than-the-available-total”-sided account is actually true. I mean, I wish you were here to see and think what I am seeing and thinking (though I would be forced to beat on you if this were the case), but you’re not, so all I can do is send postcards (very *long* postcards, all the better to beat on you in effigy, yes!).

So I’m going to just tell-not-even-try-to-show you some of the rest of the exposition, like as if you were my friend and I was trying to make you understand why I’m doing these things that appear to be (further) messing up my life. You see, my account of the problem of

Tripe

the Damaged was never resolved: if Someone isn't holding His end of a relationship (by, say, acting in the habits and traditions of a dead fish), and doesn't seem likely to recover any time soon, should He be dumped to recover alone? I have been so dumped in the past (more than once actually, but for the purposes of this book all the bad elements of all my past relationships will be combined with literary aplomb and the bitterness of reflection into one big referent of evil), and was pretty darn emotionally scarred by it (These are the kind of scars that do not "suggest a continuous band" [see chap. 16], but rather traumatically replace key members every album like the infamous "John Denver and the Funky Bunch"), but in retrospect I guess it was the best thing, certainly better than the complete waste of my youthful energy and the century-long drift towards a miserable marriage and a messy divorce that constituted the major alternative. The question remains: would I do the same to someone I cared about? Would I run 'till I could no longer smell her gradual, heinous decay? Strangely enough, probably not... not like it was done to me. What offended me about my dumpage was that I had no say in it; I was not given the opportunity to thoroughly realize that I and X-She were totally unhealthy for each other and so would be wise to be slicing away at the ties between us — but slowly! No... for me my past went from dandy to dead in less than a week. She, unlike X-She (anti-She), being the light of my life, is not so barbaric... She isn't even willing to admit that He (the placeholder of X-Me) is irreparable, that She's not His cure, until it's obvious enough for both of them to see it.

She's also not too keen on the inhuman idea of scrapping the damaged model in favor of a shiny new one (Yes, I do shine myself... via buffing sessions many times per day; toxic chemicals are our friends!), which also happened to me and made me mighty resentful. So She wants to deal with Him in isolation, to make or break that relationship on its own terms, before I even enter the picture. She has pledged to uphold this ideal, and as it seems

Tripe

wonderfully civilized and in accord with all that I had wished upon myself before, I have agreed, at least on a conscious level... It's much better if We get to know each other as people, as friends, anyway, and not as bearers of heavy relationship-responsibilities like reminding each other to floss, right? **RIGHT?** Hmmm...

So why oh why did She ask me here, when I would obviously destroy any objectivity She might have towards Their relationship? I do think that that does require a few more flashbacks if you don't mind, but later... I shouldn't work up my phone bill this much. Why don't *you* call *me* in about an hour after the rates go down in your time zone, okay?

Thirtieth Sitting

Oh... hi. I just took a forty-minute shower and the damage-to-the-brain-via-steam phenomena is out in full. It's really *groovy*...

We lay on the... the something... the ground... with clover and leaves and all. Me and Her. Side by side by... well, She lying on Her side, though not on Mine. No touching. It was... at the entrance to the forest of preserves where we ran and also jogged... the synchronized thing... sexual SUBLIMATION. It was... what? Two weeks before She left? I'm not... sure. It all seems... *hazy* (oh, you noticed?).

"I want desperately not to waste these precious days..." I spoke with gaze fixed about eight feet up on a small spot of nothing.

"You're not, are you? What do you mean?" Her voice was piercing light, as always — the kind that makes shiny things shinier. I personally was feeling a bit dull, though...

Tripe

“I just feel like... there’s something I should be doing... that I’m not... that... I don’t know...” A wave of violent energy passed through me and was gone, leaving me incoherent again.

“Like what?” There’s nothing *to* do... right? What would you do?” An innocent and reasonable question.

“Well, I could throw you down and kiss you all over right here and now. You know, that kind of thing.” An innocent and reasonable answer. “...At least for a few minutes...” I trailed off and continued to stare after flashing Her a quick innocent and reasonable glance.

“Those would be a pretty expensive few minutes.” I could hear Her brow furrow with helpless concern.

...Or maybe that all took place only a few nights ago... not near the forest... I’m not sure...

“I could just go back now.” I rolled over and stared at a space a few inches from the front of Her bed, which I lay next to in my sleeping place... as close to Her sleeping place as possible, as if to spiritually enter it and make like a coin-op hotel vibra-bed.

“You’re going back anyway in... what... two weeks? There’s no rush.”

“Or I could get my own place.” I had been planning that originally anyway; it seemed a bit too rude to impose myself as a three and a half week house-guest.

“That’s one option.”

“Or I could sleep in the living room.”

“That’s the other option.”

“Or just get some actual semblance of maturity and stop acting like a jerk.”

She smiled.

...Or maybe it was the evening after that...

Tripe

“But I don’t know,” I said. “I’m not happy that I act this way, that I’m so damn impatient, but it’s there, and I don’t know how trying to put a label like ‘friendship’ on what’s going on here will seem in any way relevant.”

“If You were Him, You’d be happy I am acting this way.”

“I know. I know. I understand. I approve... mostly.” My stomach turned as the setting changed again to my front porch a few days after our lie near the woods. “But if you want it that way, then you have to set and enforce the boundaries, because I’m not in any state to do it.”

She paused as the scene changed again. “...I don’t know if I’m in the best shape for it either. I’m confused. That’s the point, isn’t it?”

I grunted noncommittally as my stomach tightened further over a number of different settings and conversations. “It just seems... if You know that He’s not going to get any better, if you’ve gone through these patterns time and time again...”

...And back to the present: “You have no idea how much of a newcomer You are. There’s all this history... I can’t just hurt Him.”

“Uh huh.”

Now I don’t think we were even in the same place, but talking long distance after She was gone and before I was here. “So if you want to be here — and I do want you to — you’re going to have to really understand the situation and take some of the burden of enforcing boundaries on yourself.”

...And now not even at the same time, but over the new and misunderstanding-fostering technology of electronic mail: “Well, that sounds fine in the abstract, but You know I can’t deal with general requirements like that. I need specifics.”

Tripe

“Specifics like ‘no kissing on the neck?’” Her reference to an incident I mentioned but have yet to detail jerked me back to Her vicinity, which was I don’t know where... All I know is We were spinning. “I don’t think We need to draw up a contract or anything... There are just some obvious prohibitions...”

We slowed, and are back to the present, standing on Her kitchen floor. I suggested: “It seems anything you’d do with your family should be okay: I mean, that excludes anything sexual.”

“Maybe... I sometimes hold hands with my sister,” she said. We stumbled to Her room, still dizzy and clutching each other to keep from falling. “You’re thinking on the right track.”

Flopping down onto my “bed,” I stopped to think, and grinned. “Well, haven’t You stayed in a hotel room with your family and ended up having to sleep in the same bed as one of your sisters...”

She flopped down on Hers. “Now you’re just abusing it.” She rolled over to face away from Me.

...and the setting changed once more, back to the forestry lie-about, but remained simultaneously in the present. “I just... don’t want to waste these days. I’m going to miss you... a lot.”

I started to turn over in the other direction, towards SLEEP, but was stopped by the touch of Her hand on My head. “I’ll miss you too.”

“Now, class, *what do you see?*” La Profesora has taken control of the literary self-critique at this point. She teaches the art history class that She attends officially and I use on occasion to get myself out of bed.

Tripe

“Horsies and duckies and Gerald Ford,” blurted an eager! student. All of the students here are eager!. They are also all thirty-five years old. They are eager because they have come back to school to escape their crappy jobs (I suspect). In this case the eager!ness is advantageous to us, as it moves the “dialogue” along and refers it back to youthful parts of the book with a subtle verbatim early-part-of-the-book reference that, at long last, does not refer even indirectly to an anal-orifice-trophy-case. Usually the eager!ness is merely annoying. As usual, though, the student is dead wrong, as the class is being shown a slide of a statue depicting a nude turned backside. Funny, funny world.

“No. *What do you really see?*”

“Um. A **BUTT?!!**” This was a unison line from the entire class. They practiced very hard to say it with such precision. Unfortunately, they spit when they talk and so the projection screen is now an unrecognizable blur.

“No. *What do you really really see?*” La Profesora is insistent.

“I see an unrecognizable blur.” This was spoken by Obvious Man, who is purely a literary device, though for what purpose I cannot say.

“Precisely. You see lines and shapes and colors... on a slide... with spit on it... Nice target lugeying, class.” This last was spoken sarcastically; She’d seen better.

“I see patterns,” said I, as indicated by the “I” in the statement beginning with “I see...” I’m the writer so I say everything. Duh hay, Obvious Man.

“I see patterns,” said I again, but less confusingly. I was referring to the duckies, horsies, and Gerald Fords that are the patterns I see in the relational development here. There are patterns, and I could draw them if I learned how to word process more creatively. Instead, I will discuss the matter in a different font:

Tripe

Here go: Beginning = no pressure, no expectations, enjoyment!

Middle = realization of enjoyment, relational growth, more more enjoyment!

Late Middle = the truth of the situation cracks down, barriers are put into place and rammed against.

End = some kind of uneasy balance is reached that leaves Me feeling like there's something I really should be doing, but I have no idea what.

The parallel occurs, if it occurs at all at a speed slow enough for us to notice without havoc-wreaking dilation of the space-time continuum, between the span of time before She left and the span of time since I arrived. You can't see this in regard to the End, as I haven't shown the End of either span, and I didn't even include the Very End in my professional-businesslike chart because it is, at least in regard to the first span, much too sacred and juicy for such commercial purposes. Plus I haven't seen the that part of the second span, for obvious reasons (e.g. I don't edit). So forget about those parts for now and focus on the Beginning to Late Middle stages. Or don't... I'll do it for you and tell you that there's a *reason* why the last dialogue could be expanded over space and time in such a trippy and dramatically effective way: patterns recur.

Ah, I'm sorry; that was Obvious Man talking again. I will be more wise: Patterns recur because CHEMISTRY is such an appropriately capitalized word, one of the key words in this book. Tripe looks random but betrays mental structure... One can't really predict how two people will react together, but to the extent that they're the same people over time, they'll react the same way when placed together at different times. And the less than two weeks between Her departure and My arrival aren't enough to have changed Us *that* much, right? ...Only if one or both of Us had some kind of *transformative* experience. This *is* a bit of foreshadowing, and I will give it away right now and spoil almost everything: Once the

Tripe

Beloved is put at the distance proper for a God(ess) (and Alaska to the midwest is pretty darn far), (S)He shines as is befitting to such, transforming in the mind of the worshipper, and so (maybe) transforming that worshipper. This process is similar to that which occurs when something taken as permissible, the touch of certain flesh, for instance, is suddenly made impermissible. The taboo object is instantly romanticized. It grows; its attraction grows. The worshipper is again transformed.

All this is to say that the patterns that seem to be there are only as good as the evidence you see for them.. It is true that time has dilated similarly then and now: In the Beginning, each day was filled with new wonders to explore. Why I remember going on long walks around the campus... Stop. I will not put you through that again. Anyway, those days were filled with activity; they went by quickly at the time but in retrospect seemed like weeks and months and years (this is, in this case, a *good* thing). The first week or so after I came here seemed that long too; I feel like I've lived with Her on an actual long-term basis, though we've only gone grocery shopping twice. But the last week... well, I've written much less, and that should be an indication. The routine has set in, the boundaries have been reinsisted upon, and zoom... judgment day (the flight home) is only a week and a half away. So the parallel stands upon those two points, but does it extend to a line? Well, we'll see.

“But *what do you really see?*” asked La Profesora again. Only she and Obvious Man knew the answer she was looking for...

“I see points,” the Man said. I *project* patterns onto these points, but only because I am a schlep like all other human beings.”

“Exactly.”

Tripe

The preceding has been a cheap trick to try to get you to actually care about the outcome of this melodrama. The fact is, I have no idea if this kind of descriptive relationship mechanics is the least bit interesting. I would like to encourage all you folk to make bets with your friends as to who will win da Girl, so you will at least have a financial motive for caring. Or you could see yourselves as my silent friends who may silently scream at me for being stupid enough to bother having mental breakdowns over this. Nonetheless, I expect most of you were under the impression that this book was supposed to be something other than (more than?) a single-plot soap opera or some annoying friend of yours asking for advice. So to appease you loyal patient readers, I will move very shortly to SEX and DEATH, in that order. You are so wonderfully most welcome.

For the moment, however, I must rest my weary head and loins. I must gather strength to deliver on the first of these promises: I must prepare to speak to y'all about great hoards of stentorian LUST and what to do about it if you can't just act, which you can't usually do unless you're strong and in prison. Okay, I admit I'm not going to talk about actual SEX, because I haven't knowingly participated in any during this affair, but come *on*, people, just be mature for one moment and expand your idea of the erotic away from the simple, natural, bestial act and turn to its many messed-up and totally neurotic sublimatory substitutes and derivatives... the erotic in the absence of the actually, explicitly erotic is, well, pretty damned erotic, and the worshipper is transformed appropriately...

Thirty-First Sitting

Obviously I have to quote Bataille, or he will be offended: “Eroticism taken as a whole is an infraction of the laws of taboos: it is a human activity. But although it begins when purely animal nature ends, its foundation is animal none the less. Human nature may turn from that foundation in horror but allows it to persist at the same time...”

“...In order, then, to get at inner experience, we shall now discuss physical conditions...”
(p. 94)

Please note and relish my use of Bataille’s use of **glue words**. The second part of the quote, the **glue part of the quote**, is included to hint at why, other than to be sensationalist and so not lose as many readers, I would bother to include a porno-wanna-be section in this Big Book o’ Mental Processes. The first part of the quote is included to sound cool and strengthen the lovely and obvious animal symbolism arbitrarily laced throughout my tale. No, I’m not going to tell another DOG story (yet); as I said, they’re all neutered... But I thought I should make it clear that all of the following is from an ultra-conservative religious “oh we are such quaint little worshipful spirits” point of view rotten to the core. So Mom, you should probably skip the next few chapters unless you’ve learned how to relax. On the other hand, how to relax is largely the *point* of these chapters — how to make the tension go away without actually requiring birth control or doing anything that’s illegal in any state or playing Atari.

So I guess I’ve set myself up to write an erotica chapter; what remains is to figure out how to do this. I plan to include lots of sound effects like <<heave>> and <<pant>>, much like in *Batman*TM (this reference included to confuse cultural historians about cultural events surrounding the writing of this book; it is obvious to one and all that the new *Batman*TM

Tripe

movies have no such cartoony noises printed graphically on the screen. Oh ha! our little joke on the cultural historians is “good!”). Plus I will set the arousing words in **bold**, like **so**. But even with such masterful techniques, you’re still going to have to help:

Where $X =$ “erotic prose,” listen to Her speech to Me that occurs later in this discussion but in which $X \neq$ “erotic prose:” “If you really want to do X right, you can’t just jump into it. You need to really pay attention to the environment; if it’s too cold, it can screw things up big time. Plus the lighting has to be set... maybe some soft music. It can help too just to touch for a while first, to get used to it.”

So go ahead. Do these things (...after performing the algebraic substitution... the class will wait until you have finished this task... but don’t feel pressured even though everyone else is staring at you with spittle dripping from their fangs and stark white hate in their eyes); draw a little face on your left hand Sr. Wences style to depict Lionel Richie, who can sing ya soft songs, make you feel all warm and shady, and give gooood touch... Unless you’re right-handed, in which case you should draw on your right hand... and if you like women maybe crystal Gale would be a better choice, though you have to have pretty funky long hair on your hands for this to work.

Wow. If erotic prose is just gross and hard-to-understand innuendo, I’ve gotten it down. Now don’t you hyper-ventilate, okay? Here goes...

This story begins with a phone call and ends after a number of diversions with me ousted to sleeping on the couch. Stop yer laughin’ at me and listen: Her phone was not working, I have said, yes? Then you will know that She must use a phone, yes? For She still has friends and family? Yes, use My phone, please and as You do I will dote upon You. Yes! Yes! Yes! <<Dial>> <<ring!>> (how’m I doin’ so far?)

Tripe

The circumstance surrounding the first episode is unimportant, but I will tell it to you anyway so as to lengthen (and therefore heighten) the anticipation (read: the book). Friends of mine were visiting from out of town, friends who recently lived in the area. I and these were set to go to a mutual acquaintance's for some hanging about when She stopped by and asked to **use my phone**. (Keep in mind that for this to be really erotic, you should be reading it to yourself in a sultry, overblown French accent.) I agreed, but we were leaving, and would She like to **come**? No, as He expected Her **back** by a certain hour. Well, then, I would leave my **key** with Her, which She would somehow get back to Me... **somehow**. So I and the **mates** left, and **sat** in a **small** apartment watching **television**. In every TV image (at least in the ones that sell sex, which were constant, as we were watching *Golden Girls*: <<“We’re so old.”>> <<“Yet feisty nonetheless”>>) I saw **Her**, sitting on My **bed** (a mattress which, in that it took up three fourths of the floor space in My **tiny** room, was hard to avoid sitting **on**). Okay, I guess I didn't see Her on TV, **okay**. **Fine**. I could **smell** Her though, I **think**... Plus I was restless, and the atmosphere was as dull as the dullest chapter in **this book**, which would be what, Chapter 29, maybe? Get back to me on this issue; **your vote counts**. What? Too many good choices to pick just one? Look, reader, just get off my case; I know not what I say, for I am pretending at this moment to be wracked with **LUST!** But at that past moment, no, not a pretending **Me** it was, but a really really, well, just look...

So I **slip back on some key-related** pretense, hoping to catch Her before She **finished** Her call. This I **did** with no problem, for the call was say months **long**. ...And so I sat on the bed **behind** Her as She talked to Her **sister**, and my blood was set to froth...

...Time out for a little exposition; sorry to break the mood... See, before this episode, I was truly noble of mind and intentions. I mean, sure, I, being a GUY, naturally think about sex every few seconds concerning every object within eyes' reach. And if that object should

Tripe

actually be FEMALE AND HUMAN, complete trains of pictures of primitive thought wail through the tunnels of harrowing desire to meet the marginal ports of wonderfully-clear ocean-vista-views and whoa! there is plummeting and... well, we gotta tell you: it sometimes takes a whole *second* for the complete fantasy to wrap up and allow me to resume breathing.

NONE!THE!LESS! (the action is back now) I had been to that point at least no more lecherous than is usual towards the girl. But sitting there the magnet reared and my hand crept imperceptibly but steadily along that bedly surface and **yes**, target hand reached, and **yes**, something enjoyed for a while, but then She pulls away. And **oh yes** was I pulled away with Her.

...Well, that was it... We held hands for about ten seconds, and my memory may be fantastically exaggerating that figure. Didja like it? I sure did, though I *sure* was frustrated that it stopped, that She felt She couldn't, that We couldn't. I guess I had all that energy built up inside me. I guess that is why as I escorted Her out after Her call, and we said our usual good-byes, I waited until She turned to go and then leaned over, kissing Her plainly on the neck...

Now, now, now physicality was after **that** always kind of an issue. **I mean**, Her affronted <<"A-hem">> reply to my neck kiss made one reluctant to try that again, but these things... they *are* persistent. It's always the **goodbyes too**:

We stood **on Her** porch — Their porch... It was late; He was **inside**, and I bet He could have heard Us through the **open** window of their room were He not using **SLEEP** as a **coping mechanism**. The **cat** was still alive, so it could have heard us too were it not totally distracted

Tripe

by its own genitals. Its cancer and Ours were in Sync. “So what do we do now?” I asked. “I always feel like hugging you at this point.”

“I know. I get the same **feeling. Maybe...**” She paused to be grossed out by the cat. “...**We could** just shake hands...” Her hand went out and clutched at Mine, which of its own accord attempted to climb up Her sleeve straight to that **juicy neck**. It got as far as a hold on Her wrist. And so so so that became Our handshake.

...Hmmm... Does Disney produce masturbation material? I’m beginning to think that maybe *The Apple Dumpling Gang* or *Pete’s Dragon* might be much more risqué than my quaint little life. Nonetheless, or rather NONE!THE!LESS!, it does get juicier, I promise.

So what would be sexier? How about Our tacit responsibility to keep bugs off each other? I just remembered this now (morning 9/23 as of this sentence) because a similar phenomenon has arisen as She sits next to me on my bed (the couch) quizzing Me on GRE vocabulary. The living room window is large and faces East, and Mr. Sun is bright in his happy sky, so bright as to blind Her if I weren’t deliberately sitting with My head blocking Her eyes. No? Not sexy? Considerately animalistic, though... I will shield My Love from maggots and weevils that try to burrow into Her face... I will *at least inform* Her if such a Beast is preying on Her (and He is, yes!), perhaps by mail if She’s been mean to me and **thrust** Me from Her life, and you cannot stop Me, you jealous Thing! You curious enjoyer of other people’s **pleasure!** What’s *wrong* with You, anyway?

There’s nothing wrong with You or Me; we just sort of disagree. I’m sorry; I’m desperately trying to construct a song out of my **pleasant** prose to escape the Kris Kristofferson muzak that She just put on. Speaking of It (“It,” the capitalized neuter, represents another aspect of God probably, though I don’t care which now, as God just ain’t

Tripe

that interesting), I have a stray quote from not fifteen minutes ago: "...I like everything hot and steamy."

"I did *not* say 'steamy;' don't you misquote me," She also said. Which brings us to memories of the long weekend, which actually occurred during the week. It was the four-day span several weeks ago where She met Mercury in the **flesh** (Yes, I am man enough to admit that this selective boldface is about as immature, annoying, and unfunny as the insistence on capitalizing Our pronouns. You're welcome to go through this book with white-out and change the parts you don't like, or maybe I'll just release it on CD-ROM, at which you will be *amazed*, or would be if it didn't presently mostly suck. That's CD-ROM, not the Book, which does not **suck**, and if you say it does I will kill you every night in your dreams. (This saves me travel expense.)). So speaking of SUCK, I remember a certain occasion on said trip to my hometown where nothing of that sort occurred, but only by accident.

So has the style here slowly transformed this Work into one giant what? section? If not, then I have failed in my task of frustrating you to no end, unless I have done this to you not by confusing you but just by being the big old BORE that I am, thank you. Listen as the white dog howls! <-By this comment, which I will kindly explain, I mean to rationalize my boorish self-criticism by comparing myself to the afore-barely-mentioned new dog, who has been howling continually for the last four days. Is he/she lonely? What is his/her name? What is his/her sex? No one that I have bothered to ask knows, so I don't know how to gear this porn thing to soothe and quiet him/her. I guess both sexes equally know tenderness when they see it, wretch differently though they may.

Let's face it. This book and I, you the reader and I, have a CHEMISTRY; it's no coincidence that the way I'm getting bogged down here in reflection and self-doubt is not too different than 'round sitting thirteen where I admittedly lost a lot of steam and enthusiasm

Tripe

and babbled randomly and formulaically (unless I have since gone back and *edited* both that section and this one, in which case I was *brilliant*, thank you). Back then I needed a new idea to super-charge me, and that idea was moving to a discussion of the whole love triangle thing, which seemed a natural outgrowth (or at least one I could force to *appear* natural) of the gradual-emergence-of-myself-as-a-character motif that I had been building for some time. So what's the equivalent idea here? There are lots of cool issues that could be taken up, like the state of living with the knowledge that one's actions are going to be recorded; at recent points we have been even acting, I think, *for* the book. It's like knowing God is watching, and so watching Him back, and watching one's step, which you can do at the same time because He (being *everything*, remember) is the scum on your shoe, He is, yes!! This phenomenon is, I suppose, a natural consequence of that insecurity and isolation that forces us to *record* in any case, to *create* so as to leave one's mark, affirm the reality of *something*, split oneself by merging one's creative energy with an objective medium. Why is the *issuance* of Tripe inevitable? Why spout it? Why bother to go on writing, or go on at all? Well, I tell ya: it's the very same thing that makes Us need each other quite so much as we do, that makes anyone who's gotten himself a language (a means to form, i.e. objectify, one's thoughts) *need* (use that overblown French accent again in hearing this word, but this time with much more angst) anyone... I don't know if I can really at this point say more concretely what this "thing" (the capital I "It") is, though I know It has something to do with the anguish of isolation, the illusion that we're actually separate beings, and everything else Bataille talks about and I, facing Sex and Death, fencing the valleys of Tripe and Crud, recording/creating in this book or Her pots or the songs (available on the soundtrack to this book). It is all like a tremendously-confusing Love Boat episode with all the plots involving Tom Bosley and Florence Henderson and themfolks: all apparently independent but upon closer examination possessing an underlying thematic

Tripe

unity (if only because they all happen on the same stinking boat with that cheezy lounge music and the Congressman purser-fellow).

I am now officially as profoundly confusing as an Eastern wise Man, but I'm only a great spiritual teacher if this is actually *working*, if you can actually see the patterns in this book (which I'm only beginning to see) wherein the love story is an illustration and concretization (beauty word, eh?) of these big old themes. So then you can walk away from this book feeling that you've learned something, but still be able to write *me* off as some random confused jerk. This, not Jesus-hero-worship, is the religious ideal. So yay Jesus's teachings = phooey on Jesus. (Just for the record, this kind of good-natured blaspheming will soon get much more directly offensive. Know that as I have been typing in this section, I have made it much more tame, so as to lessen the shock of what comes later by priming your tender ears. Unfortunately I couldn't get primer, so have been using lovely all-natural sweet-scented massage oil instead. Ready up for orgiastic fun!) On the other hand, I suspect highly that I am walking in the steps of Mr. J and the aforesortofcharacterized La Profesora, i.e. I'm expressing what to me is/has been pretty darn enlightening but to everyone else in the world is pretty stupidly obvious. So I am frustrated and once again feel myself to be festering away in the swishing vat of my own empty Tripely excrement. May I gratuitously overreact and ask you to join me in a chorus of my favorite slogan, meant to put things in perspective by being as offensive as possible? Why, praise You, gentle reader! I have heard Your answer and know that I am not truly alone in this not-really-all-that-sad-for-me-but-in-general-pretty-sad-sad-sad world. Thank you. Also, Fuck God.

Tripe

Thirty-Second Sitting

Oh yes yes yes! there is more SEX to **come**, though not as sensationalist as the pro-religious propaganda. Yes, chickie, it is **pro-religious**... symbols are just symbols after all, and God's name is not God, which is why He doesn't come when you call Him. Duh. We don't know His name, and aren't allowed to, which makes Him much more alluring and leaves the worshipper transformed... Duh hay. And by relating what *might* actually be wise (though I wouldn't bet on it), if Herr Profesora (Me, that is, for the moment) always spoke as if to Obvious Man, thereby insulting the audience, His/Her/**Its** message will be lost on the masses, of which all (both) you readers are a member (the one in charge of the Bake Sale), and so not corrupted and misunderstood by **You**. (Just so you know: this kind of chicanery is known as **Rorschach Philosophy**, and is, technically speaking, just plain wrong. Nonetheless...)

I'm not being very reader-friendly, am I? Well, look at it this way (and if you don't, I will cry and scream): Every once in a while, probably for long periods of time, your mate, your significant other, your relationship-partner, will act like a weenie. He/She/It will do this merely by being Itself, by pressing into you Its field of experience, Its world-view, Its patterns of perception and expression. As these are necessarily somewhat different and irrelevant to Yours, You will feel affronted, annoyed, and probably a little sick. This is part of the CHEMISTRY, and it always happens sooner or later, unless you're dating a clone of yourself, which at least would probably be convenient in that you could wear each other's clothes without the stretching of fabric or gender roles. For the relationship experiencing this part of the CHEMICAL reaction, it is the Late Middle stage: the truth of the situation cracks down, barriers are put in place and rammed against, and it doesn't matter if your honey doesn't

Tripe

have a Him waiting, as in an explicit actual human shining person, because the Him is always there, the Other than the Other (i.e. other than either of you yet still as insistently in the way as your own nose), and barriers will come, put in place to keep one's aesthetics, one's sense of self, intact. I *will* rebel against Kris Kristofferson, and She will continue to like Him, and that tension will be there and leave its mark, preventing the feeling of total union which is both our goal (as in sex) and our dread (as in death). And if I get so I actually *like* old Kris, or at least grow to understand why She might... well, a million other barriers will take His place.

No, the point is not *just* to sound pretentious by chocking up musical disagreement to a cosmic inevitability... I was in the process of defending myself for acting (i.e. writing) like kind of a jerk to you. Whether you actually feel I was/am doing so depends on your whole aesthetic set-up, including and especially whether you are on an explicit or underlying level ruled by notions of traditional piety. And maybe you'd be offending me as well, depending on your aesthetic stench... yet to be safe I'm feeling the need to ask you to please be merciful on me for being who I am... I suppose if you're a total stranger I don't actually care what you think of me, at least not too much, but the fact is that I'm just thinking aloud, making a desperate attempt to understand the things that control me, and if coming along for the ride is helpful to you, I welcome you with mostly open arms (...If they were *really* open, You'd see the blood and veins and scales and stuff. Ewww.).

My point, my defense, my suggestion as to how to look at this book so as to actually find it worth reading, has been developing since page one: concretization of the Self in order to accept the Self, even though the languages of acceptance — aesthetics, morals, and love — are so dubious — aesthetics being so ultimately flexible (I *can* get myself to like Kris Kristofferson, *or* pork, *or* porky women with beards, after only a few mind-destroying sessions of *getting used* to these), morals being so damn irrelevant and useless (replaceable as

Tripe

they are by concrete evaluative considerations, i.e. purposes that we have {e.g. “this is evil” = “this conflicts with our general purpose to live or whatever}, purposes that can, at least theoretically, always be changed), and love being, as I said, nothing but the usage of other people on a variety of levels (which once again boils it down to *purposes*).

The idea (finally) is this: Just like in a real relationship where your mate acts like a weenie a lot, but you ideally want to put up with It anyway, you should keep reading, please. (Sing along:) If you leave me now, you’ll take away the biggest part of me... If you can’t stick it out with me, given how close we’ve become, given the CHEMISTRY, given that you can just look and see that the majority of this book is over (almost), then you’ll certainly never make it in a real relationship, or at least one that is sufficiently confrontational so that you and your creature see each other’s ugly deficits (after all, your special someone might like John Denver and the Funky Bunch, or think your favorite nourishment is just a tooth-staining wussy-drugged cup of tar, or have the rebellious taste to point out, say, that all that talk of God’s vastness is just away of euphemistically expressing the fact that He’s grossly bloated and fat), feel the consequent barriers press in... as opposed to being distant enough to conceal the conflicts, to romanticize each other, which will only leave you in the end as pissed at your lover as I am at God. In this way I will justify any stagnation in writing-style for My part, and while I shall always try to overcome it, to keep energized by this writer-reader relationship of ours, you’ll have to help and be a little tolerant, because I will not lull you with literary charms... As stated, I am incapable of such dishonesty (i.e. skill).

...So She was staying at my place on the long weekend that was not in fact a weekend at all, sleeping in the guest room, which used to be my older sister’s room until it was attacked by fake-Victorian redecoration featuring photos of all the dead relatives. It’s amazing how

Tripe

similar the set-up and gestalt of that room is to the one She stays in here. Not surprisingly, then, today's habits (or at least those of a few days ago before I got ousted to the couch) got themselves set up there.

Now before I attempt to paint this lil' narrative picture, I must take precautions to keep it from being boring and irrelevant. What does the event symbolize? Can I demonstrate the sweet agony of existence as a separate entity that is LUST? No. Why? No, not because I'm such a sucky writer. I've admitted that, okay? So lay off. I can't show the agony because it wasn't agony, because anyone who sees love as agony is just being an existentialist and phooey on him (and Him). It's not *obviously* agony *because* there is separateness in the pretense of love (which pretends that there is no separateness, that people can *be together* in as harmoniously as the organs of your digestive system and moreso), and with that separateness comes romanticization, or, as is grammatically correct, romance.

The way We spoke, the magnetism between Our eyes and bodies, the sound of Her so-beautiful-I-could-scream soft voice, the mood created as I serenaded Her in Her bed — these lulling charms are a dishonesty if anything is... a deception and a distraction (or a *celebration* if you like), from (of) Our central purposes, Our uses of each other: It, the need, the LUST.

On the other hand, Our situation was/is exceptional, as we're only supposed to be friends; we're not supposed to have designs on each other, at least of the comprehensive sort that true erotes have, so maybe it was honest enjoyment. Plus, is it really dishonesty to focus on the good vibes of the moment and not the underlying conflicts of purpose and aesthetics? Or is "selective emphasis" just another name for deception, including in this case deceit towards oneself? The correct answer, of course, is that the scene was both lecherously and perniciously deceptive and *also* an honest enjoyment of a good situation, which just shows

Tripe

that honesty vs. dishonesty (which connotes good vs. bad), is a crummy way to think about the issue.

So why did I bring it up? I brought it up because like the rise of moral terms to describe everyday aversions, the use of the vocabulary of honesty is useful here to give a rough picture of what's going on: what I wanted from Her, to the extent that I was or ever could be aware of It, was simple closeness, attention, and growth towards the less-apparently-simple forms of these (concluding with the not-at-all simple and probably hopeless "fulfillment on all levels"). Instead of asking for these, though, I was just taking, as She took from Me, and in the drunkenness of our togetherness We vicariously enjoyed the illusion that We were in harmony (I resist the urge to capitalize that word), that our connection was complete and thorough, whereas in fact one false move, whether it be a lustful advance by Me, a mention by Her of His name, the sudden appearance of Kris Kristofferson, or demonstration of My lack of an unconditional work ethic or Her possession of one... any of these and a thousand other occurrences would have tipped us off to the depth of Our separateness, disharmony, and isolation (known as Boo, Hoo, and Hoo). The barriers would become apparent, and then there would be anguish, however slight, that would need to again be dispelled (by forgetting the number "4") just to let my over-sensitive head fall asleep. But the mood was not broken, and after I tucked Her in and told Her a story (or tried to... the Characters kept dying off), I placed my head on the covers above Her chest and held that lump of blankets containing God-knows-what, and felt Its hands running through My hair...

Imaginative readers may wish to be Me...

Thirty-Third Sitting

Betcha didn't think I could extend LUST over three whole chapters, did you? And I still haven't gotten to the X-quote (see page whatever). But I know what all of you kiddies are thinking about, don't I, yes?! Enough of the mushy stuff, Cap'n! Tell us a dog story! (Stupid, hackneyed, yet always funny high school joke voice: "That's what She said.") I will sort of satisfy you, though I promise to return to LUST later (and possibly even to the neat <<sound effects>>> and the not-so-neat **boldface** "jokes"); I will tell you a mushy gushy DOG story. As with the other DOG stories so far, it's not really a story, as DOGS don't notice climaxes and denouements and endings and things, unless they die, which makes it hard to get a critique of the story out of them so as to aid editing (should I choose to do any of this), plus She would not like them to die, as I found out in telling Her the aforementioned bedtime story, which was about some dogs and a fox. As I don't really know the behavioral realities between these two species, at least not well enough to construct *dialogue*, I was forced to kill off the characters, which made Her unhappy and would have heightened the feeling of separateness if I hadn't quickly unended the story and made the DOGS just sleeping. I only *thought* they were dead. "Awww." She said. "Sleeping puppies. Awww." Very very cute, I must say.

The story is again about the DOGS in the pen, who of all the DOGS act most like the degenerates of my youth. I have mentioned their howling sessions of the early morn. These happened frequently, but not all the time, until white dog came. Sometimes he (or she... probably she) gets the whole gang riled up, but his sorrow is much greater, so he usually outlasts them. Right now I hear the howl, and I don't have to translate it to English to know what it means... The dog (the nameless one doesn't get capitalization of any sort) is very lonely. The other DOGS don't really know him yet, so he isn't even in the pen, but instead on

Tripe

a leash, inside the first gate, in an 8' by 4' area designed to create sort of an airlock so that the DOGS have two gates to wriggle past in order to escape. Plus other DOGS aren't the same as lovin' people. Just as I have been conditioned for whatever warped environmental reason to need Woman, to not be able to get comparable energy from any amount of (male) good friends, today's average domestic animal needs people for affection. It's obvious from the way he shakes all the time, and from the way he flinches back if I raise my hand, that he's been hurt — that he's known abusive humans — but he still needs us to feel together and whole and stop whining.

I had sung to the DOGS before. I sang to Coyote in Her apartment. He got bored and left. I sang around Duke in the same place as I composed a song during a recent traumatic event that I have yet to relate. Duke was concerned, but by the eighth time I played the newly-written cry for help, he too was bored and took off. But for the delinquents it was more helpful...

When any human approaches, anxious barking and tail-wagging ensues. Bear accompanies this by trying to keep the other DOGS from even *looking* at this human. They get annoyed at this and growl a bit. Buffy barks in a general fear without tail-wagging and doesn't stop when all the other DOGS do, which is when the human gets close enough for the DOGS to lick his or her hand through the fencing, to reduce their tension through physical contact. Occasionally this is not enough, and said human must actually enter the pen and be jumped upon in an orgiastic frenzy before they'll calm down. In such cases, when the DOGS growl at each other to compete for affection, Buffy, though curious, stays clear, and will bark if approached. This of course captured my attention immediately; *that DOG*, I said, *must come to love and trust me*. And so on one occasion when no other humans were around and the crowd was especially boisterous, I took it upon myself to burst into song — a relaxing,

Tripe

melodic tune with very repetitious figures. This I wielded at each DOG, interjecting its name in every line. Gradually the crowd hushed, and though they periodically made a group dash to the far side of the pen to look for squirrels, they were for the most part entranced. Though Buffy still wouldn't let me approach her, she stopped barking and did creep a little closer to the fence separating us.

It was only two days after that that white dog came and the long howl began. He was obviously lonely and obviously distressed, and would continue to be so without constant attention. Not too far off from yours truly, I suppose... but I don't shed as much.

...So I did give in after the first long night and visited him — gave him the strokes required and held his paw as he shook and shed. The singing stopped the group sing once again, and white dog stared at me with genuine affection. I didn't know his name, his sex, his history — anything, but could make or break his day in nothing flat. Typical. As I stood in the pen's "airlock" petting the mutt, Buffy approached and smelled my hand through the inner gate. For the first time in a while I felt actually *needed*, and not arguably just a pleasant extra figure in an already-full life.

The sense of accomplishment was short-lived, though, as white dog's whining started up again moments after returning to the apartment. Within half an hour I was out again this time with my guitar, which even after I stopped singing proved fascinating to them. The embarrassment of human witnesses approaching brought my concert to an end, and loneliness swept back quickly for all parties. I guess there's little to be done: those DOGS need homes, individuals that they can hang around and don't have to share with too many others. Acts of kindness just don't cut it, but only commitments that most are unable or unwilling to enter into. What this comes down to is that he's got to learn to be alone, to stop howling and learn to live with it despite the shaking. It's always nice to be visited, though,

Tripe

especially if you're dense enough or clever enough to be able to forget that the Visitor will soon be leaving again...

Awww... What a tender tale of life, love, and growing up... much like this whole epic story, which will undoubtedly be made into a major motion picture featuring all your favorite stars and many action stunts... like for instance that stunt She pulled in leaving, which gave Me the chance to be alone with Her for these precious weeks, but will soon take Her from me indefinitely. Here's how it went: I was planning to come here eventually, but everything else in my life simultaneously becoming temporarily non-binding made the present a more convenient time, even though, as I know, dust would not have settled around the horror of Her and Him. She was non-committal at first about this idea, and then out of town, so I reserved plane tickets and adjusted my expectations. A few days before She was to leave, She expressed misgivings about this idea, which infuriated Me to no end. But there was little I could do but forgive Her, so I did. So it was with the expectation that we would soon be apart for a long long time that I took Her to the airport. Fortunately for My evil heart, the relevant airport was five hours away near My home town, and Her flight was an early one, so *of course* She must stay the night before at My place...

That night in the guest room was a little like the last one, but much more desperate and frantic. We talked a lot about the future, and about how wonderful the summer had been even though We had been in less contact with each other the last couple weeks... I don't remember specific words, and I won't invent them. I *do* remember the mood, and I *do* remember holding Her as She lay in bed for a long long time... I remember kissing Her forehead and setting the alarm clock very early.

Tripe

As I migrated down unfamiliar highways to Chicago's secondary airport, the one that the major airlines stay away from, I thought of all the things that I had forgotten to say, the parts of my life that I hadn't quite had time to show Her, and the opportunities We would never get again. We held hands most of the way except when dealing with nearby incompetent drivers (which I shot). I refused, for once, to analyze the situation, to talk about what Her leaving meant for Me and what was happening to both of Us. She was mostly preoccupied with what She might have forgotten and with the obscene amount of luggage that I had to help Her carry, over several trips, into the airport.

I went with Her to the gate, and we sat and waited. This was the time that we knew had been coming for so long, the time when there was nothing left to lose. She filled most of it by going back to the check-in counter to correct some suspected error with Her boarding pass, so by the time She was back the plane was boarding. We did wait until the last possible moment as we stood together and hugged awkwardly. My nose brushed passed Hers as I considered moving in, but it didn't seem right. "I will wait for You," I said in a tone that was not the self-assured melodrama it should have been, but rather a somewhat off-hand half-understood assurance.

"Don't you go saying things you don't mean, now." She answered. I nodded. She slipped through my fingers and moved towards the gateway, but an airport official stopped Her to demand that She check the obscenely large and heavy backpack that She was trying to smuggle on as a carry-on. She moved back to Me and We savored the bonus minutes.

"If I don't try something right now, I'm really going to regret it for a long long time," I said.

"Please don't." I didn't. I watched wordless as She disappeared through the hatch. I waited as the ground crew went through their ground crew motions and watched as the plane

Tripe

taxied slowly toward the runway. From gate to gate, window to window, I followed its path until it finally launched up into the sky and slowly out of my perception. I didn't break the silence even with thought as I moved out to the parking lot. I was sad but strong, energized but uncomprehending, badly shaken but beaming in love. Her traces were fresh all over the car, my house, my life. Nothing to do now but write Her long letters and get on with It.

Thirty-Fourth Sitting

So there's your first Very End for ya. Geez, I actually *liked* that narrative scene, though I admit that could be because it brought back a huge flood of emotion and it's 4:03am as I write. I must tell you that being on the couch sure is helpin' the writing juices flow at their natural rate, which seeks to impinge upon that time meant for sleep, taking my brain at its most simultaneously stressed and relaxed time. Most simultaneously? Most nearly simultaneously? Whatever. It's appropriate because this chapter, much of which is still, annoyingly enough, about LUST, is also about relaxing.

...and so I have relaxed, and morning cometh. And you should relax too, you tense reader-folk. If you aren't relaxed you won't fully enjoy the experience to come, and you probably won't let me do so either. I say this because I'm a bit worried that some very few of you have been increasingly appalled by my apparently anti-God comments despite my request for mercy and are now reading purely to get information to undermine my chances in running for senate. I merely say "fuck God" because... well, because I *can*, because talk is cheap and exploiting it makes me feel very free. Free speech = free thought = having the tools

Tripe

to eventually figure out how to make things not suck. So really, then, to cast myself as Mr. Swell, I say what I say because *someone* has to. Too many of us have from day one been inundated with messages to praise Him, to assume that even though things look pretty bleak, and we have a hell of a time figuring out what would be good and/or worthwhile to do (beyond certain very general, obvious, and thus mostly uninformative guidelines), surely He as the sum total of and behind existence knows exactly what's right about everything and is completely competent in bringing this about. As far as I'm concerned, this is frankly just a romanticization of the distance: eternal distance = eternal romanticization. No, kiddies... I want you to feel Him close, in everything that helps or hinders, in all that is Other than you, and because "you" are not a constant but a shifting point that identifies sometimes with one thing and sometimes another, what is Other becomes Self and vice-versa. So bark the mantra and tempt Him close like the DOGS calling for attention, or, like symbolic Buffy, calling out in fear and need and nothing in particular. Then We'll see what's to be seen and feel what's to be felt, and if this requires risking damnation, I for one will play the foolhardy for the sake of being what He's made me, oh Most Self-Consciously Creative and Smelly Being that He is.

So loosen up, I say to those cats for whom it's relevant: if God is in everything, then every time you've ever said or thought "fuck that," you have sung my refrain. Besides, He's the One you need worry *least* about hurting, what with all the more vulnerable types all around and in you. And to you folks who just think I'm overplaying this whole thing and should just set myself up as a devout agnostic (which I suppose is really all that I am), siddown and shaddap, please; there will be more treats and wheedlings for you later. So all of you better vote for me, dammit, even if you have to write in my name on the ballot... And my name is *not* Mephisbeelzasmodeusatan, you silly person. **Relax.**

Tripe

Incidentally, the entire preceding paragraph was aimed at Me, as I am the only one who I know will *read* it and not just skim, I mean if I have time and am in the right mood. I don't know if I'm really convinced by the "argument" defending my behavior, but I am RELAXED enough to be fairly forgiving: I just do what Mr. Logic-insofar-as-I-grasp-him tells me to, often in hushed, repetitious whispers while I am wielding power tools.

And logic (or the mix of personal experimentation combined with hearsay and linguistic knowledge that passes for such in normal use) says relaxation is unequivocally cool in dealing with matters of the long run, like Me in this situation with Her, you getting through this book, me getting through this book, the establishment of a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine, you and your "mate" not killing each other, and none of Us killing ourselves. Am I hypocritical in preaching this? I am in that I am a hyperactive booger and so cope like I do in personal struggle (I'll talk more on this, Mr. Therapist, sir. I hope I'm paying you enough to listen... I guess you *can* watch TV or something at the same time if you want... <<*sigh*>>). I am not hypocritical in that I do generally know how to relax regarding other people's mistakes, even if these be chronic personality problems, even if these involve large doses of hypocrisy, which to my mind is just as necessary to human activity as the deception I was talking about earlier (being just another form of this deception). The truth is that all of us do or at least should feel somewhat ambivalent about everything... did I say that already? If I didn't you should have been able to figure it out from everything I've said about criteria of evaluation being so suspect (the aesthetics lecture). Do I have to repeat that all again, and again be unclear? No. You figure it out: Just take anything you don't like, like say murder or Laugh-In, and look in yourself deep deep to see the beast that really really wants to pillage and destroy, and you'll see that you could learn to like Laugh-In, and in some small despicable way you *want* to. So are you a hypocrite for telling people and yourself that you

Tripe

are pretty thoroughly dead-set against murder? No, you're just "sane." Despite this, your self-knowledge should allow you to be forgiving (at least in mind if not in action), to be free of spirit, to say "fuck God" or "fuck me" or anything 'cause talk, as I said for so little money per word, is cheap. So when we're not talking about murderers, but just about our fellow mammals who all have "aditude" problems with their attitudes, whether that's because they're snobby or bitter or arrogant or just boorish, and whatever hypocrisies and deceptions or puppet shows they have to participate in... well, you're certainly welcome to point these out, to heal the sick and reform the confused, but if you lie awake burning in hate or — if the confused and sick is yourself — guilt, then you've got a problem, bloke.

I have included the preceding morality play merely to demonstrate that even without "morality" per se as I was ripping on it before, you can still talk like Captain Jesus if you want and sound like much less of a dufus doing it than most o' themfolk around today. Obviously it isn't the whole story, for "looking inside yourself to see that you really are an evil SOB" doesn't logically imply being able to forgive oneself; you have to combine it with what I said before about our responsibilities being determined by what kind of beings we think it's likely that we are... I think it's pretty darn unlikely that we are beings for whom it is proper to torture ourselves with no practical benefit; it's certainly unhealthy to do so, and it doesn't jibe with the idea of a kindly God (the only kind most of us these days want anything to do with), so I forgive. I could be wrong, but you could *always* be wrong, and probably are, so just *relax* fer Chrissake! Despite all this: fuck God. Lie awake burning in hate with me, will ya, kids?

Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Yes, cretin. We are back at Marcolicious Lascivious's Flashback House of Pleasant Pleasure.

Tripe

It was the work that did it: all that dirt digging, causing Our bones to ache and muscles to pull, leaving Us sore for days. We had been traveling that long road and saw that big hotel...

...I don't know who brought it up first, but She had taken a certain class in massage on two different several-week occasions. I... well, frankly I don't know how much to tell you. I mean, it was all public activity, frequently performed by strangers on strangers, sometimes for money, but I nonetheless feel like clutching it in the deepest sacred secrecy, these things We shared, which for Me at least was as powerful as any "physical exploration process" that I've undergone. The excuse to touch, to *caress* even, with as much love packed into it as can be packed... But it was strange, in that (at least at first) We weren't allowed to openly acknowledge It for what It was: sexual sublimation. So I don't know if the emotion I was packing actually got to Her, as We weren't allowed to gasp in acknowledgment... not that We weren't appreciative of each other's efforts: I had been told by X-She that as far as massage was concerned, I didn't know what I was doing, but She said I was a natural: "It's something You either can do or you can't; there's really not much to learn."

Nonetheless there was learning, if only in the further attunement of already like-thinking bodies (<-quote this line in your discussion late twentieth century literary erotica at the dinner table tomorrow night). Much of this meant attunement on the part of the recipient, particularly Me, being Active-Male with incomplete body image... this means my legs are wildly ticklish. Oh, did I mention "massage" here does not exclusively mean back rubs? No, siree. Legs, arms, faces, necks, feet, hands, and (performed once on Me) the chest. Jeez (not Geez this time, as I'm being serious), I've actually got material now that I could paint as actually erotic, and I'm too chicken to do it. I've been thinking a lot (and talking with Her) about who is actually going to read this book. I have little sense of privacy (stemming from a

Tripe

lack of identification on my part with the contents of my conscious experience... it's not my fault if I'm a weirdo, so why should I worry), but Hers is more substantial, and She's not so hip on this work getting into His hands. I personally think that that might make a groovy epilogue — an account of His reaction to the rest of the book — but it's not really worth the effort on my part. Plus I do have privacy concerns too, and don't want to offend my religious friends too much, much as I think it would be advantageous for them to be able to divorce themselves from symbols and words enough to really embrace the essence of their respective faiths instead of pale abstractions. Plus there's no way in hell I would normally describe these events to my folks, so why would I write it all down for them in detail? No, this would be much better circulated after I am dead, but if I wait that long I won't have as much energy to look for a publisher.

But should I be this worried about it? My chief worry about the privacy of my own thought is that the voyeur only gets half the story and so misunderstands. If you get the *whole* story on anything, I allege (at great length you might have noticed), there's no way you can end up condemning it, I mean uniformly condemning it, just like you can't end up uniformly praising it (or Him as the case may be). I'm not too opposed to such quick decisions when they concern things or people that don't have much to do with us, when it's merely a choice on whether to bother pursuing pottery or not, but in such cases the condemnation or praise is *not* uniform and doesn't have to be; it's not that I hate pottery or *won't* understand why others would pursue it, but merely that it's not on my agenda. But when something is in your face, existing as an element in some long run undertaking that you're in, you can't just brush it off like that (She can't just decide on a whim that He's just a little too boring for Her and so not worth Her time without being totally and destructively self-deceptive... even the pottery thing, for Me, what with Her around and all, can't (I think) be brushed off that easily); you've

Tripe

got to actually *engage* it, to try to understand it on its terms with respect to all the possible conflicting purposes you might have regarding it. If you bother to do this, you'll have a pretty realistic view on the object, a view that will be to some extent *ambivalent*.

So I shouldn't worry as long as I leave nothing unsaid... any readers who actually *revile* me for this work must not have been really paying attention; any readers who after all these constant warnings and self-criticisms still come out thinking I'm Satan are frankly not worth me worrying about, unless they are important people in my life, in which case I hope they will do me the favor of giving me the benefit of the doubt given their lack of comprehension. Any remaining privacy concerns on my part (like those dealing with my parents) are pretty totally stupidly irrational, and I should get over them. Plus I'll add here that this is really just a work of fiction, and the me here is just a character I'm creating, so it really doesn't tell them anything about me or what's been going on with me anyway. Now I have rationalized, so I have no excuse not to relax (it doesn't even need to be capitalized now) and just tell you the story. I'm breathing deep now and will even start a new sitting...

Thirty-Fifth Sitting

So whatever. Confessions: there were several different acts on several different occasions. Probably, then, it was not an accident. Her ideal was, in fact, a Man who wanted to give Her one every singly night, so I consistently and eagerly jumped to it without provocation. <<jump>> (See, I'm getting into it now.) It's an addictive practice, but a rewarding one, at least with the right person. I will start Her off again: "If you really want to

Tripe

do X right, you can't just jump into it. You need to really pay attention to the environment; if it's too cold, it can screw things up big time. Plus the lighting has to be set... maybe some soft music. It can help too just to touch for a while first, to get used to it." So you know what X equals now, but it's also pretty obvious what it could equal, and equally obvious that that same alternate X could be the referent of every other comment so far this sitting... making this book that much more marketable. So you go ahead and substitute any X you need to for you to be enthralled... try reading it multiple times using many alternatives (some suggestions: skeet shooting, full body glue-sniffing, making Jell-o™, forging alliances between conflicting super-powers, the Zen of breakdancing, art rock lullaby, rituals involving smoking pets and Lysol™, ska, nose hair length comparisons, chanting "I hate you" "I hate you more" "I hate you even more" etc., toenail-clipper haircuts, angst-filled howling sessions in which all noises are based on that Scooby Doo questioning "Awwrrru?," and indiscriminate licking).

So whatever. I'm not going to tell you about every session, as your alternate-X metaphors might eventually get a little absurd, plus I don't want to end the next six chapters with "...it *felt*, God, it *felt*..." You should already be convinced that we didn't have to set the lighting or put on music because of the good good CHEMISTRY that leaves its by-products in a warm, sticky film coating my every word and gesture. So my psychosomatic reaction wiped out all the pain from my back at her touch even though I was really suffering from actual pulled lower back muscles, which massage shouldn't have been able to alleviate. So when I touched Her legs and worked up to the thighs ("Just tell me where you want me to stop." "I've had complete strangers go much higher than that."), lingering on the whole thing for as long as I could find excuse to drag it out, she said it was "perfect. It couldn't get any better than that." ...despite my lack of previous experience with that particular maneuver. So when We simultaneously focused on each other's faces ("usually simultaneous massage doesn't

Tripe

work, because neither person can get totally relaxed”) We just about melted through Her bed into the apartment below. All this is just a natural consequence of what’s already been said; It’s what we let build up and It means that even though our actions have never gotten actually out of bounds (i.e. He would only have five heart attacks upon reading about them as opposed to the traditional twenty), We are a lot more physically primed than some couples acting unfettered for years. I guess We’ll just have to see if the gut-wrenching physical reactions that always (in my experience) come to people who have gone beyond certain physical levels show up when my immanent departure becomes much more immanent.

We were both good at dishing out the stuff, as I’ve said, but as I also said there was somewhat of a discrepancy in reception, in that I am Ticklish Man. I’m often under the impression that ticklishness is a purely physical property of the skin, but when you consider the simple fact that you can’t tickle yourself (unless you’re “weird,” a scientific term meaning “like X-She”), it seems more like the ticklish bloke is just uptight. So, an amazing application of a much-harped-upon theme to a somewhat narrative account, Her advances upon Me forced a therapeutic confrontation that was, well.. highly therapeutic, and were responsible for much of the preceding prolix (good GRE word) pseudo-philosophical babbling. Blame it on the leg strokes, which at first set me to flinching away and hysterical laughter, and then to paroxysms of lust and hysterical laughter as She moved higher up, then to paroxysms of lust and a wide-eyed session of tension beaming as I tried to pretend my legs were not actually attached to my body, and *finally* to some sort of relaxation after several minutes of Her just holding Her hand in certain spots without moving, and then moving only *very slowly*. Yep, gettin’ accustomed to the X activity — gaining a stronger sense of comfort with one’s own body — it sure does change a fellow.

Tripe

You see (or you will hopefully see once I explain it, if I may be so bold as a front for my basic insecurity), people's habits are generalized. If Buffy gets conditioned that every time She tries to approach a human, Bear will bite Her neck and chase Her around, She learns not only to not approach humans when Bear's around, but to be totally freaky and sheepish. If Buster the useless DOG gets perpetually pissed off by Bear's domination, which he has to live with *all the time*, He'll start to cope with many other similar-seeming circumstances by being pissed off. So my physical reactions, for whatever reasons I developed them, are somewhat generalizable: My normal reaction when dealing with a problem (or more precisely a persistent condition such as a constant and increasing pain in my back from shoveling, a growing feeling of incompetence and frustration at my lack of control over clay, the constant presence of Him keeping Me from a total glorious experience from which I would hopefully never recover, or a hand on my thigh that just won't go away), is to first act to remove it. If this is not possible or desirable, then I try to get out the hostile energy by some other method like screaming and gritting my teeth. If I'm trying to be more constructive about it, I try to disassociate myself with the hostile energy and be at peace. As this doesn't work, I end up internalizing, which for me is immediately apparent and comes out as angry brooding. None of these reactions involve actual relaxation, the acceptance of the stimulus as something that is not necessarily good but that isn't going away and so isn't to be stressed over. I can hardly even phrase this accurately because my understanding of it isn't really internalized. I'm used to a stronger approach: the attempt to actually come to *accept* the stimulus, to at least partially *like* it, to make it very clear that my attitude towards it is not altogether negative but just *ambivalent*. This, unfortunately, is much harder, and can't really be pulled off at the moment of negative stimulus without self-deception ("Why *yes*, I *like* the pain I'm in that you caused in hitting me with that large blunt instrument! Thank you!").

Tripe

So there's my illustrative anecdote. It told me what I should have done during the pottery session, what I should have done while digging dirt, and what I should be doing in dealing with this whole situation. But it's hard to change reactions like that, and if you're going to be offended by those two little words next to each other, at least as a gut reaction, I will understand. If you think being offended as a gut reaction is just a stupid reaction to anything (as I do), then I encourage you to chant the mantra, perhaps very seldom at first but with increasing frequency, until you are desensitized, until you can *relax*. See, aren't you glad I got all offensive? ...It's a very good audience-participation ploy... You and I will be together as one Tripely mind yet, just You wait and see.

...But I haven't finished my story. The SEX must climax and I must end up on the couch. The greater physical comfort and familiarity brought about by the massage (*and* the dancing, *and* the inevitable brushing-against-each-other that occurs whenever two people cook together in the same kitchen) made the magnet very very powerful, and it became increasingly difficult to be close for a long period of time (e.g. a night sleeping in the same room) without touching each other. She dreamt early on that I slunk up into Her bed... I didn't do anything more in the dream; I just slept in the bed. I of course would never do that unless She asked, which She obviously wasn't allowed to do, so in substitution my makeshift bed got closer and closer to Hers until it became possible for Me to leave a hand up there, or for Hers to dangle down, at first for only some few minutes as we tried to go to sleep, and then for the greater part of some nights. This became even easier when I put all my laundry under the cushion that rested under by back, creating a sort of stair-case arrangement that allowed Me to keep My whole arm or even My head up there for the whole night. Granted, this was wildly uncomfortable and made my back hurt so as to require massage attention, but that wouldn't have stopped Me. The next night She was nice to Me and let Me take Her bed while She took

Tripe

Mine; by 8:00 am Her back hurt so much that She heaved herself (still in My sleeping bag) up next to Me. All this was building a tremendous inertia that would have moved I don't know where if it hadn't been for the intervention of reality, of the Outside, of Him.

Thirty-Sixth Sitting

I promised SEX and DEATH, and you're going to get it. To be sure, I don't know if anyone will actually die (maybe I'll have to rehash that Lumbar the cat scene again), but there is actual bloody violence as well as a lot of more-traditionally-human conflicts. I know Zelma is the obvious choice for having a character get killed off, she being so old and representative of the future of My Love. To have her die would probably (still speaking in the realm of symbolism) be a cleansing experience, allow me to distance myself from my worshipped Object, to assert my ambivalence towards Her, and thereby regain some of my independence, my strength, and my ability to find charm and enjoyment in Her presence to the extent I was able before Him and the other matters on which We conflict became permanent presences within our dealings. I really really don't want Zelma to die though, in this book or especially in real life, which is why I haven't characterized her much beyond that initial introduction. I've witnessed so many cheezy formulaic dramas that I *know* that if Zelma were set up extensively as the matriarchal figure, then she would have to die to bring Us further together, send the DOGS their separate ways to who knows where (probably the pound, and death), and set a turning point in the tone of the plot. No, no, no! Zelma will not be a puppet for this drama... besides, I've got some incidents here that can perform the same function. The first

Tripe

will be symbolic of the main conflict to as to get you all worked up, and the second will be directly about this conflict (the love triangle thang, of course).

Now as usual, I want to get you wildly enthralled, or horrified, or however you're supposed to get when confronted by large-scale violence, but I don't want to underhandedly manipulate you into feeling this way, and I wouldn't know how to do so even if I did want to. Constructing a really effective vile-fest seems to me much harder than writing an erotica script, as people's triggers for the appropriate reactions aren't as obvious, seeing how simultaneously desensitized and sheltered from the whole thing most of us in these here rich and developed countries are. On the one hand I find extensive special effects depicting oozing carcasses covered in maggots with personality disorders pretty entertaining, but on the other hand, such "horror" movies are not in the least bit actually terrifying (at least to me) unless they involve actual household appliances in the act of mutilating one's hands or eyes... or insects burrowing under one's skin and giving birth. And even in these cases, the reaction is not one of spiritual anguish but a somewhat surface-level "Ewwww" that produces only repeated flinchings by and toward the imaginatively-injured area. So I guess I could try to produce this reaction, but to do so I would have to tap into your immediate physical revulsions, as surely actual maggoty carcasses would do, but which descriptions usually fall short of for we the media-desensitized.

So I will probably have less success doing this as I did getting you all actually hot and steamy in the SEX section. I'll try to try this, I suppose, but I can't help thinking there's bigger fish to swallow here. I've looked back at my earlier comments on sexy death to find that the only thing actually intelligent that I said was that they merge in the extremes. In feeling oneself on the brink and really good sex there's (so I hear) the same sort of obliteration of self. I, for one, haven't had a near-death experience, except for yesterday when I slipped in the

Tripe

shower of Her apartment (while resting my head against the tile wall to drift off to the steam at a 35° angle), and I personally didn't feel myself merge with the cosmos, but that is what happens, isn't it? In hedging on death we re-learn that everything we have called our individuality is just a temporary cruel joke? In the extinguishment of Self, consciousness gets merged with Other, which at least looks to get the same result as the sexual Urge to merge. And just like all the boundaries keep crashing in and revealing that it's all just a much-needed deception, that you're two very different people who necessarily in some small part really actually do *hate* each other, with the long-standing slight Urge to be dead I've expressed on more than one occasion here I keep getting hit over the head with all the competing considerations, with the constant reminder from some other part of my brain that what might seem in some way like a final and major fulfillment is just some shmuck that couldn't take it and is now rotting away, leaving everyone else a bit more bummed out.

Okay, I guess this parallel is far from exact, but I'm trying to figure out what the hell I can sensationalize in this section. So far I have no idea how to apply anything I've just said, so I'll just say that you're all welcome to have mystical revelations as fear and horror press through your bones, but my explicit goal will just be to be sort of accurate in relating these events and my impressions of them while grossing you out.

The pen had been introduced only a week or so before I arrived. Before that all the DOGS had just run loose. This, I figure, was the source of the lawsuit that is presently being brought by the city against Zelma. So the occurrence of that day less than a week into my arrival (I'm losing track of the exact days, but I expect you never *had* track of them, so I don't care) wasn't new or even rare: all the DOGS were loose. Well, not Louie, as he/she/it is clearly insane, or white dog, who wasn't yet in the picture, and there is one little black very

Tripe

old DOG, whose name I don't even know and who is indistinguishable in all appearance and behavior from a small throw pillow, who was absent from the festivities. The rest of them, though, were all there, including Gorbachev and Samantha, a pair of mid-sized spaniels of sorts (I really should learn something about the names of DOGS if my descriptions are to be the least bit descriptive, and so *horrific*, as all realism is) owned originally by Zelma but adopted by some people who live in the same building for the purpose, I believe, of representing the twins Brick-a-Brack and Mothra, harbingers of the coming of perky death present in some form in all ages and cultures except 1976. So that's... what? ...*many* DOGS. It seemed none of them were brash enough (like my Mercury) to simply run away and never come back until trapped in the local Dairy Queen to wait for us to come pick her up, but they covered an enormous amount of area in a very short time. Queen was going to be my poster-child for relaxation in the preceding chapter, but set free she was anything but relaxed, but rather set to bursting with a jubilant energy that spelled D-E-A-T-H to the lowly but noble plant life she trampled underfoot. Buster fixed himself siamese to the shins of local humans, growling a bit when other DOGS threatened to disturb his courtship, but showing nonetheless all the signs of potentially becoming a not-completely-screwed-up-and-horrible animal. Buffy stayed basically within twelve feet of the pen at all times and still ran from human contact, so I guess freedom wasn't her problem (at least not that *kind* of freedom, there being also the sheer lack of restraint upon the floating consciousness which produces an affective BIG VOID, much like Vancouver). The normally-free DOGS got very into the action as well, bounding all over each other and their long-separated cohorts in a fleshy sprawl that made my early observations of the activity of only three or four of such beasts seem very mundane. They played nice if left alone, but when humans got involved, there was tremendous competition for that *sacred*, and therefore at least for them sort of kind of *bone-chilling*, commodity of

Tripe

attention. (Okay, admittedly that one didn't work, but it doesn't matter because the horrific things haven't happened yet.)

Such was the case on the steps of Zelma's porch where She and I stood surrounded by a large number of overly-energetic bodies. Did I mentioned the darkening sky that had yet to show any sign of the renowned Aurora Boremealis? I'm quite sure it set the mood in a most dark and sinister way, but I don't really remember because it just wasn't any more cool than usual (which is still very cool, but I am easily desensitized). There had to that point been several episodes of growling involving Duke, Coyote, Sonny, and Sugar Dee (I will not translate these into English, because a lengthy debate over who gets to slobber on the most-recently-tossed stick wouldn't be *that* interesting), plus the regular and constant episodes involving Gorbachev and Samantha chasing each other around whenever there was even a *thought* of people, so We really didn't think much of it. It was just DOGS trying to be macho (including the females), showing each other up, and ultimately erupting in something akin to play. So when Bear and Duke both began to worship Her lovely legs, and began to growl at each other, We did reprimand them, but not with anywhere near the level of force that would have been effective. But the growling increased in volume, and the two DOGS coiled as a single self-afflicted entity away from us and into the building, eyes locked and teeth bared. Then <<leap>> and the kind of blood-curdling cry that makes you think someone is being physically ripped apart right before your eyes... Which I guess isn't too far off from what was happening right there in front of Us... the fight slunk down the set of six stairs or so leading to the lower apartments, right in front of a door, which opened to reveal a woman and her husband panicking big time. Zelma appeared, having sprinted down from her upstairs apartment, and joined with the young couple in whacking arbitrarily at and around the flailing mass. She succeeded in disengaging Coyote who, infected by the brutal stench, had

Tripe

for whatever reason begun to attack Duke's BUTT!, and the other DOGS who may have had similar ideas were also appropriately distracted (aided by their being basically oblivious), but no one could disengage the two opponents: Bear had his jaw chomped squarely into Duke's front leg, Duke had a solid grip on Bear's head, and both seemed seized by the kind of frenzy that could only be said to emanate not from their stinky little bodies but from the rapidly-vibrating space between them. By this time the opponents were a good twelve feet or so away from Us, and we were most definitely not drawn to move closer. She grabbed my arm and gasped; I responded by alternately staring and hiding My eyes with the same sense of helplessness that comes when one's car has gone completely out of control and leaves no option but to wait until it gets where it's going to go. I thought that at the very least Bear would lose an eye, and would not have been surprised if one or both of them had just burst in a pool of blood and guts. Eventually the woman in the apartment below emerged with a can of hot pepper bear repellent and broke the struggle by spraying it all over both of them, and the whole area for that matter. There was a mass exodus from the infected area, and the suddenly disheartened DOGS were readily apprehended: Bear we pulled outside and chained to a post, while Duke was taken upstairs to Zelma's bathtub for treatment. Both were in one piece, or rather their respective pieces, having failed to fully actualize their potentiality for being dismembered. I for one was happy about it.

So was that a good sensationalist violence scene? I think the "blood and guts" line showed it to be very graphic, yes? Should I have said "pools of gushing blood with gut flecks" too, say in describing the hallway afterwards? Or I could have at least been a bit more horrific in describing Bear's head being almost pulled off. It *was* pretty revolting, even though no one died. Really the worst of the mess in the hallway was the bear spray, which covered everything and took days to fully dissipate. I was privileged to experience this close-up when

Tripe

I helped immediately after the fight to put the DOGS back in the pen. Some were fairly acquiescent about this (though of course I couldn't get anywhere near Buffy), but when I tried to put Coyote in (who couldn't be trusted loose with Bear chained up and looking attractively bloody and meek as he was), he wouldn't go past the first gate and started to growl. He was very shaken up, so instead of just forcing him in I kneeled down and gave him a big hug, healin' the hurt through the power of what appears to be love, or in this case Luv. In so doing I rubbed my face directly in the bear spray and inhaled, serving my New Ageyness right. This was not a good move. My immediately subsequent coughing fit lasted at least five minutes straight and forced me to go back to Her apartment to wash my face. This didn't work, though, and within minutes I was once again sporting a beard/nasal hair combo of fire, so I fetched a wet rag which for the rest of the evening became my inhaler. (Was I trying to shield myself from the sheer horrific *nausea*? Was I trying to get *high*? Are the *elements* my *real* drug? Try charting out the symbolism in this section and then perhaps construct an amusing board game around its various elements to provide much enjoyment to viewers over seventeen unless accompanied by a parent or guardian).

And there was a rest of the evening, which was less horrific I suppose, but offers the realism necessary for the previous section to fully impact your recurring nightmares... The DOGS needed medical attention and We offered to help (having hearts of gold, tender sensibilities, and nothing else planned for the evening). One of Zelma's friends brought his truck (Zelma's was mashed, if you recall), and I sat in the back of it on a wet tire with Her, the husband of the bear-spray woman, and Bear himself, wounded and sulking. So I got to chum around with the bully-boy, and found that after getting to know him (and I think getting the whole story, or at least the whole relevant part of it, as I doubt there's much more to it except lots more experiences with squirrels, dog food, and his own dung), and hence also to the

Tripe

archetypal junior high gym class member locked deep in my heart (to the considerable extent to which his experiences also involve dung), I could forgive him for being such a mean old bullying shmogus. I held him as we drove to prevent him from jumping off the truck, but made sure not to get my face too close to him lest I feel the power of Luv scorch any further inside my respiratory track. I did get his hair all over my wet rag, though, and no that is not a euphemism, ya perv. It was a very beautiful night (even though the sky wasn't really holding its own in perpetrating the horrifically mystical mood), and the air whipping at us as We rode was very cold, so We huddled together, petting each other's hands as much as we pet the DOG.

When we got to the vet, the DOGS were taken in separately to the custody of the doctors. I was somehow designated to hold Sugar Dee (a DOG who, I am pretty damned sure, must symbolize some major elemental force, having stared into the face of auto-smooshing-related death and all, or I wouldn't have had the momentary cuteness-induced desire to use *her* as my inhaler), who had insisted upon coming along for the ride. And who could resist her sweet guile?* She is very small, light, energetic, good-tempered, and cute as six buttons plus a small child. Her presence made the ordeal much more, well, fun. After a few minutes in the waiting room with Zelma's truck-driving friend, who insisted upon loudly chortling every thirty seconds for no reason I could fathom, I joined most of the others in the operating room where the vets drugged each combatant in succession, cleaned it up, shaved the relevant areas, and stitched up the major wounds. None of these were particularly serious, they said, though Duke might be limping for a while. As repair proceeded, the vets

* winner of the "Best line of the book" award as awarded by my friend Ted, who insists on saying it over and over and laughing hysterically. Freak.

Tripe

began to be overwhelmed by the force of death... I mean, the, uh pepper spray-stuff, and had to obtain rags like my own. Zelma related various anecdotes about the DOGS (Bear and Buffy had almost starved and/or frozen to death when their previous owner went and died on them in his cabin deep in the heart of nowhere), and We doted over Sugar Dee until it came time to drag the DOGS back to the truck. Each haul required two people, as the freight was still drugged and pretty fat (being neutered does that), so I got to carry a bit of both. All the while my whole face, especially the inside of my nose, burnt itself a quaint little hell, but on the way back I felt very good despite the cold, and the burning, and the fact that we were in the midst of a pretty expensive tragedy... I felt like this partially because it was a bonding experience for all concerned (though the bond between the damaged was undoubtedly of a somewhat different character than those between Me, Her, our friendly neighbors, Bear, and Sugar Dee), but mostly because I could feel even then that it would make a wonderfully climactic and illustrative episode for this book. And I gloated. Pretty sick, doncha think?

Thirty-Seventh Sitting

This sort of conditioning of Our perception to detect or interpret events as dramatically appropriate for this book (i.e. fitting the patterns of the many crappy dramas that I've been forced to experience) is pretty typical, and it's getting annoying. I've been getting more tension from this than from the actual romantic situation, because it's frankly growing way out of control. It's perfectly fine and dandy to get more out of a text by analyzing it to death, by showing how each detail introduced in the early parts is necessary for the thematic development that occurs later, how every element of description reflects these overall themes,

Tripe

how images are fleshed out in fifty different apparently unconnected occurrences. To be sure, I pretty much *hate* people who do this (and will therefore say I love them and want to fondle them all over so as to balance out the evaluative issue in my mind), but if it makes more of them spend a longer time poring over *my* book, more power to them. But when you start looking at your actual life and are forced by demons within to pick out every occurrence or pattern that reflects upon every other... well, I guess maybe that's just Tripe, but when you specifically start picking out the kinds of patterns common to the cheese-dip Crudertainment that flows through your veins because you're trying to write an account of your life, well... you feel just sick. It might be fun and refreshing to know that your life actually resembles the weakest, sickest melodrama; it might help you to give up and relax more effectively, but you can't even get *that* satisfaction, because you know that it's just you being a normal, overly-hasty-in-drawing-connections-and-just-about-everything-else human, which is depressing — but then maybe not when you figure it's so all-encompassing, but it's not because you can see it for what it is and dammit can't we just escape the madness and hit something real for just one damn minute and if it's so damn unreal why the hell can't I hit it and kick it and tear off its fucking head with my teeth!

Thank you, thank you. ...Another miracle performance totally manufactured for your benefit to get you in a frenzied mood. No, I'm actually pretty much at peace with the cosmos, as I said at great length... which may be (if I'm in the business of always trying to understand the other side, to explore the widths and depths of human experience, which I'm not because I couldn't afford my employees' health insurance) my problem. Recall? Philosophy as therapy? Well, I've naturally been directing most of the therapy at myself, I being the only one here at the moment (it's true; I don't even *have* a friend named Ted), though also with a definite eye out for various other folks who at least may be now where I have been at one time

Tripe

or another (Other people I really can't speak authoritatively to, can I? And if I can't be authoritative, why would I open My big stupid mouth?). So the trick for me in my self-acquired therapeutic purpose is to figure out what lessons I need, what point of view has been dangerously lacking from my field of vision, and to try to get some grasp on it. The result, if successful, will of course be largely illusionary: I can't kid myself into thinking that for me to, say, try to understand the outlook of some people with a strong sense of cultural identity (which I pretty much lack), I will end up with any fragment of their actual experience, but I can get enough of a notion of it to fool myself into thinking that the gaps between them and me aren't as overwhelmingly vast. This is what peace is made of, and I would have to say that the *use* of such a cultural identity is a major widely-used method of pretending to have relevant commonalities with people that, were they really exposed to each other up close (though not close enough to get the *whole story*, of course), would be quite tempted to scratch each other's eyes out.

So I'd have to say that my lack of full understanding of this sex/death thing has something to do with my general state of peace with the universe. I don't mean by this that I'm not depressed a lot of the time (though I guess I'm really not), but I must admit that when I say "Fuck God" I don't really mean it; I'm not expressing an overall dissatisfaction with the injustice of the universe. This is because I guess I'm divided between the idea of the total neutrality of nature (nature as a *whole*, that is; individual parts of nature can be total bastards, I know) in which we have to weave through obstacles to find our own happiness and the idea of an underlying system of regulation, which I guess could be called God. I don't rule out the possibility of this totality getting a consciousness (though I do find that pretty hard to conceptualize), but I really really doubt such a vast and magnanimous being would get on my case for acting in a manner that is basically "good" to the best of my Him-given judgment,

Tripe

which is what I'm doing, *obviously*. I also know that this is my Crud talking, though, and I must be sure that I'm acting in the most "healthy" way (whatever that means) in respect to this sort-of-belief, which I don't think involves dispelling it altogether (I couldn't pull this off anyway), but does, I'm pretty sure, involve uprooting it to a good extent, while hopefully remaining (or becoming) able to celebrate it in the way (or at least the not-totally-deludedly-fucked-up part of the way) that the aforementioned ethnic identificationists (identists, fer short, 'cause it sounds cool) are into. I think I've been able to do this with the square dancing thing (There was, in fact, a *second* contradance a week after the first which we attended with no serious injuries... We improved Our spinning technique a lot, just so you know.), but many a wise reader, upon reading this my book, might think that I'm sort of a softy relativist lazy-ass who's so *groovy* about relaxing that I'd let murderers and thieves run rampant, the economy fall into a big heap o' gluey slag, and every large-scale enterprise ever started (like this country) fall to hell. Now, since I really would prefer that those wise readers vote for me and/or worship me and/or have the decency not to bomb my house, maybe I'd better just look within myself and make sure that I know when it is proper in reacting to the big picture to have a life-long hissy-fit. Maybe later.

I was talkin' bout symbolism, man oh man, and how *freaking* annoying it is when I start projecting it into nature. Let me give you a lil' example: I mentioned many pages ago a certain actual wise man who I know from school (as professor, friend, and impetus to uncomfortable self-reflection), the guy who told me we all have to be slaves to something, so we might as well choose God, representing the moral, the healthy, and all else that is good, as opposed to, say, Chee-tos. The function of this man in my life is to periodically appear out of nowhere and make me feel uncomfortable about being such a slug. He doesn't let himself be governed by anti-social social rules, and so has no qualms about just turning up and directly

Tripe

asking people personal questions intended to shoot them straight to Enlightenment. Since the composition of appropriate questions depends on a diagnosis of where the victim happens to be at, and so what he needs to hear, they often miss, especially when directed at someone as convoluted as myself, but I get a bit freaked nonetheless — just as you would probably be if I confronted you personally in a hallway and started quoting passages from this book... The distance, the one-sidedness of the communication, the fact that you can write me off at any point without my getting defensively huffy, aids any education that might be taking place.

Anyway, about a week and a half ago as I sat in the hallway outside Her place of employment (where for ten hours a week She sifts through sea water for juicy micro-organisms), some guy approached Me and in a friendly manner began to badger Me about My business there sitting on the floor, what I was doing in Alaska, who I knew there. Nothing really strange was said, but I was struck how much this guy sounded like the aforementioned wise man, in voice, phrasing, colorful metaphors, and the tone of His uncomfortable (for the Victim) extroversion.

Later as She and I ran through the woods (Yes, about a week before the end We took up running again. The romanticization of distance is proven, for despite all I nostalgically said before about the joy of synchronizing Our rhythm in a state of nature, it was basically just cold and tiring), We stopped and asked a couple where the trail was about to go, and the voice the man spoke in was the same, though it wasn't the same one as before. Then later in the same run it happened with a different man. The voice was following Me, trying to tell me something? Guiding My way? On Our second (and to this point (9/30) final) run (which I will eventually detail with many fun “being cheerful in the Long Run” and DOG symbolic references) run, We actually did run into the same guy from the hallway, who had coincidentally just the day before warned Her out of the blue to wear a bike helmet, a sign

Tripe

that She interpreted (along with several other bike-incapacitating events) as some form of protection from on high (well, okay, She says She doesn't believe that kind of crap either, but if the omens fit, [finish Tripe/ly proverb-derivative here, if that's the kind of therapy you need right now].) He was cutting down trees with a personal-size handy dandy dangerous power tool in the middle of the woods, and seemed a little freaked out when I called him by his name (She had since cut my hair very short, and I was wearing jogging garb and a more-resolutely confused and haggard demeanor; these made Me unrecognizable {see... there's been character development, therefore this *must* be a good book!}). (I'm sure that you are glad at my recently-acquired friendly habit of using friendly set signs{} instead of layers upon layers of cruel parentheses, yes? Punctuation notification is a free service; do not abuse it.)

My point is that the string of occurrences just related was completely trivial and coincidental, but because of it I have undergone beleaguering symbolism. Was this the Fatherly Voice of Wisdom guiding Our way through this mess? Was it the unified voice of Alaska projected by me, my romanticizing this new place by instilling it with that familiar friendly though creepy voice? Was it that inescapable disquieting voice in me, asserting itself for I-can-only-imagine-what reason? No, damn it. It's just my book-writing preconceptions, my Crud, flinging itself all over the likely candidates for literary depiction, i.e. the scenes of my life.

I won't weigh you down with all the other impressions that have driven me to this level of annoyance. Everything the DOGS do, every word She says to Me, every emotional reaction on my part, and every stray thought about matters artistic or philosophical... all these things beg to be exploited in a cheese-fest of poignant and effective (though totally cliché) symbolic depiction; they beg to add to the organic unity that is the story... but they are very tacky in doing so, presenting me with such ideas as maybe having each of the remaining chapters

Tripe

titled with the name of one DOG, and depicting all the scenes and thoughts therein which display the characteristic behavior of that DOG, showing that all these archetypes are within all of us and need our attention and affection. Gag me with yon silvery shiny spoon! I will engage in my customary behavior of hacking up phlegm (which I do with the exact frequency to make casual acquaintances think I have just had some one-time deviant fit but to make anyone I care about realize before too long that this is a nasty habit that She will just have to endure despite being in a state of constant revulsion, for it is necessary for my health and comfort... now you know.) until all such ideas flee from me in terror and nausea!!!

But, you know, I guess it's all to be expected when experience gets turned into a performance, whether it be for God or a book or your own bloated, insecure ego. It's beyond my immediate control and so not worth worrying about... breathe deep.

...NO DAMMIT STOP RELAXING YOU FRIGGING DO-NOTHING AND TAKE SOME ACTUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTROL **DAMMIT!!!** Okay, I guess I have to admit that that tantrum was again staged; I'm just in too good a mood. I really was annoyed about the symbolism thing, and I'm really trying to recapture that, but right now I'm sort of intrigued and energized by the whole dramatization of my life; I've written some damn good songs out of it, and it sort of feeds the love and worship thing to see in everything the reflection of whatever I'm over-dramatizing at the moment, especially at a time like this (the same date as the one last given, you time-conscious boo) when It's really hitting me that I do actually love Her (at least to the meager yet powerful emotional-whore-like level that I have been habitually capable of), and it's energizing the hell out of me (especially at times like the majority of today, when She hasn't actually been in my presence to bring up barriers... God, I feel healthy. Okay dammit, I don't think I'll even end this parenthetical comment; I hereby deem it part of the main text, because I guess I should talk briefly about this now because it's

Tripe

happening, and I'll try to cram it into the DEATH motif if I can. It's the distance thing, I guess, which stems from the fact that emotional life for the overly self-conscious is generally solitary drama. This morning, not two days before I am set to leave, I recorded the most lascivious and good-feeling of the songs I have written at Her since being here... just a little walkman recording so She'd have a record of it, and in picturing the way She'd be listening to it after I am gone, all lonely and confused in Her bed, I got much farther emotionally into it than I thought possible and frankly blew myself away. Though I knew I should get the hell down to this computer center as quickly as possible to channel my inspiration into something tangible (I have failed, of course, for this chapter is the A-mazing intangible chapter which can be neither grasped nor fondled by those who have yet failed to achieve total lasting union with the divine, i.e. everyone not dead or in the midst of a six-week long orgasm), I couldn't help singing the song a few more times, this time without the hindrance of having to sit near the recording device, and so... again... on the kitchen floor... spin spin spin spin.

So is that a good image? It's certainly a recurring one... I can certainly (and have probably) make (made) it into a major symbolic monstrosity depicting something purposely vague but very important and personal. I don't know... Maybe you should go right now and spin around on slick tile until you puke just to get the whole conveying-meaning-and-therefore-sympathy-to-the-reader thing over with, so I don't have to bring it up again. Oh, and maybe you should do it until you are dead.

I see I have conveyed to you the smooth sense of symmetry and stuff and non-awkward effortlessness of the thematic unity cleverly depicted, so I guess it's about time I subjected you to blatant cheating. Well, dang it, when the mood gets this cheerful in a DEATH section, something's wrong, so drastic measures have to be taken: I must have **edited** at least a bit, I guess, because I am about to actually go back in time...

Thirty-Eighth Sitting

9/28 7:30 pm. And what happens afterwards, after you've made your life into an object of reflection, a project that, like it or not, acquires some *purposes* (e.g. to be somewhat coherent and hopefully interesting throughout)? What happens after this week? I have no plans to write another book, She will be gone, and I will have reached what appears to be an ending point. I know there are always other projects to be taken up, other fish in the slimy sea, but I want neither to be pitched into it or to keep up this long and feisty run 'round the canoe forever. Here come those thoughts again: DEATH is certainly *not* an option as much as it springs to mind (I'm serious about this: I really don't want to scare the people that know me. I know one of the signs of impending suicide is talking about it, but I talk about *everything*, so that rule doesn't work with me. I'm simply not *that* damaged — just emotional, confused, and fatigued.). But I can't help shuddering at the thought that I might just be another bad dream for Her... I'm so far into Her I don't know my way out. I have done things to gain back that independence, to fight the attitude that's sometimes easy to adopt when you have basically nothing to do besides think and dote... the stance is not that different from that of (to rehash a simile) most of these DOGS towards the local human. They will stand around, watching, demanding attention, falling asleep at your feet, and when you get up to leave they will usually try to follow and get very sad when you tell them to stay. Occasionally they can be distracted, and will surely find things to do if you just leave them alone despite their objections, but it's not like having another typical purposeful, opinionated human boor around who will get offended if you say the wrong thing and maybe just leave you for no

Tripe

evident reason. So in my efforts to become more boorish I have tried to focus more on some of the bad points from *my* end, the things that offend my sacred though largely arbitrary aesthetic sensibilities: For instance, She just doesn't get Tripe — the humor or the philosophy. There are huge mental barriers there; She's not the everyman (by this I don't mean "average, normal man," but "*every* man")-wannabe with avant-garde tendencies. I have allowed myself on occasion to get annoyed with Her, to silently rage for a few moments just as I urge the religiously-Crudied to curse Mr. Big. The need is not as dire in my case, for She is still a recent object of worship (which is, after all, not the twisted one-sided thing that it is in religion) and not bashed into My head as unconditionally wonderful since birth. So when it comes down to it I *can* get free, and probably bamboozle myself into finding it the best thing to do, but the hell if I want to.

I'm thinking on the future because, well, this is the DEATH section and time'll have to kill one of the relationships going on here, if not all of them. And yes, I am and will be a party to and instrument of those executions. She told Me that He recently described Me as a shark, attracted by Their bloodied relationship, circling... circling... Yeah, bite Me. Grrr. But alas, time yes oh rudely time, goin' and bustin' up these ephemeral and self-deceptive but nonetheless happy days! Time it is to project into the future a remembrance of the present goodly days, which despite the explosion that will be the focus of the next flashback (to exactly one week ago), have been truly wonderful. The pattern, it seems, between the times before leaving and the times here, is not absolute, in that We have very few distractions from dwelling on the Very End, and so extending that period well into the present.

...But maybe not, for there is the same immobility now that She moves about near me and I want so much to just reach out and never let go.

Tripe

...Cancel that. Totally cancel that. Wow. I'll tell you what happened when the story catches up with the present, [which is still two days in the past, just so ya know]. Wow. That's all.

I'm not starting a flashback or anything, but if you'd like to read this section *as if* it were a narrative scene, I welcome you to try, perhaps by reading it while *doing* something as opposed to just sitting there like you usually do when you read. I want to be the one to just sit around this time, so move your big lazy butt. What are you, at peace with the universe or something? Well, stop it, 'cause I'm agonna go ahead and be the hostile voice of the most dangerous man, the man of reason, for a moment.

What's with this romanticization of distance thing? First of all, it seems kind of stupid in some cases, like maybe our attitude towards DEATH. True, I the damaged can imagine for extended periods that such would be a far better rest than I have ever known, but who's to say that this feeling would go away were It to come closer to actually happening? I mean, it might, and in my case probably would... no, I'd have to say certainly would as I picture possible situations (e.g. people trying to assassinate me). But this might not be true for everyone. In any case, it seems like a pretty dubious generalization on more than one level (especially the kiddie level where there's no Evil Otto and the robots don't shoot).

...And the way I've abused it! The play of ideas here has been very Tripely, i.e. concepts are pulled from their original uses to ones that only appear similar because of some characteristic that has nothing to do with anything. So even if romanticization of distance is a valid description of what might have happened between Her and Me during Her two week absence (and this seems either unlikely, or of little importance given the short time involved) or it is an accurate description of the way in which people achieve harmony by ignoring

Tripe

problems, that doesn't come close to justifying my application of the notion to the human relationship (or lack thereof) with God. More importantly, I have failed to apply it to the entity whose seeds should be multiplying and growing into a towering stack of God in Her eyes as we speak: Him.

Excuse me while I tell Mr. Smarty analytic philosopher man of reason to shove it. I'm obviously not concerned about being exact here, or totally persuasive (If you want to be persuaded, you will be. If not, all my efforts would be fruitless anyway.). Now that I have stated the other side (a fairly easy task), it should be an even more fairly easy task to consider the aptness of the notion to a wide varietous myriad of circumstances (yes!)... So, *I'm* not going to bother, except in regard to the situations particular to this story, which presumably you don't know anything about, unless you are omniscient, in which case you know which naughty thing I am right now screaming out loud over and over to you (though not out of any hostility, I assure you), or unless you are She, in which case I will now sing you a sweet ode to make you forget the negative things I said about our relationship several paragraphs back. Specifically I guess I should talk about His presence, or lack thereof, and how it resulted in conflict as brutal in some ways as the dog fight, though less graphic and itching and burning. But there is more to it, though, gory psychological deguttings... the turning of self upon self... and eventually, more massage for the loser (winner?)

I said before that His stench was not on Her. This is true: I'm damn sure that She doesn't right now even miss Him, given the number and intensity of bad vibes He was spraying all over Her before She left. She communicates with him daily on evil evil Electronic mail, sometimes with Me present so that I just can't help but overread a few words as my heart speeds up to 190 and my throat tries to become a more direct extension of my intestinal tract. She knows him so so so well — Her image of Him is so so solidified — that even were

Tripe

He to be gnawed to a living zombie by termites or if She and I approached the speed of light on a trip of passion, leaving Him to age sixty years in what to Us seems just an hour or so... no, better make it three hours... She would still see Him as having the same skin regardless of its obvious aging and/or absence and would act towards Him with the same devotion accordingly. Wow.

Allow me to pervert an already twisted image of love for a moment by casting Her, too, as the rough canine, though much cleaner and with pheromones more suited to my sensibilities. I do this with hesitation and a little sickness (which means good things for my image-breaking balancing activities with regard to Her), but the symbols demand it, so here goes. She is loyal, yay loyal! She likes to play, yay play! She likes to have Her head scritchd very vigorously and at great length, yay head! Plus casting Her like this puts Her on par with the males and so takes out *some* of the bestiality overtones. So dang it this is all much more natural than those DOG-fightin' cretins, fighting for the attention of a species not even their own, when there isn't any reproductive activity at stake, no difference in whose genes get spread where, no! Their struggle is but the by-product of twentieth-century canine inculturation, while Ours is the Original struggle for existence of self and prodigy on this earth! We are the primal and *they* are the perversion, despite the vast convolution of tremendously screwed up sorts of wackiness that self-consciousness, language, morality, Tripe, and other sundry humanisms engender! Hmmm. I don't think the primal = dark, mysterious, and therefore tugging the soul into mortal terror! maneuver is working right now. Maybe later.

Thirty-Ninth Sitting

Romanticization of distance is a swell concept, I think, but it isn't very exact. After all, it's not clear that the distant entity need become more splendid in the minds of the contemplators. The distant one only warps, I think, to fit whatever image such 'plators *want* it to have, or more likely *need* it to have. For the lost and lonely Girl, Her past beloved would most likely take on more wondrous qualities, qualities to fill Her present lack. But She's neither lost nor lonely, so *that's* not what happened. For those locked in mortal combat, images adjust to reflect their various attitudes, conscious and otherwise, on such conflicts. Do you need the villain as your enemy, the morally bankrupt, the worthless excuse for a human — someone the world would applaud you for destroying? Or do you require an equal, a worthy adversary, to lend nobility to the struggle and make the fight "fair?" Or perhaps you see conflict as just a mad mistake, as mass fields of subjectivity unable to connect enough to make their own purposes harmonious with each other's...

...Time it was to feel guilty and sympathetic, to draw on my own experiences so as to live vicariously through His, to imagine exactly how messed up He would be when She finally gave Him the boot. I sat there in Her room, warmed by Her glow, and remembered at length how I had reacted when it happened to Me... I mean the first time, after two-some years of relative swellness (I thought), not the times after, which were just annoying. I remembered all the energy being sucked out of Me over the thirty-second period when it first hit Me, making Me practically collapse where I stood. I was ready to sleep on X-Her lawn because I didn't feel it was worth walking the hundred yards back to My apartment. And just when some strength would start to return, usually in the form of a frothing rage, anger being the body's attempt to assert itself in such situations as still in fact being alive, I would see the

Tripe

face of the situation again and be knocked back into a twitching coma. Or better yet were the times when I was able to keep the anger, to vent it at X-Her even though I knew she was just doing what needed to be done. Those were certainly pretty moments, or rather weeks, as I walked around constantly listening to Elvis Costello being bitter on my walkman until it would start to screw up (as all walkMen do) and become the brunt of my rage. Then guilt, then more pathetic moping, and for the most part an inability to either concentrate or be alone, both of which tend to be useful for actual school work. The constant thoughts of the alternatives... suicide, therapy, getting in my car and driving until the whole Midwest was just a memory — and then not even that. And *SLEEP*...

All this I projected on to Him, changing the faces, moving the scene to His (X-Their) house, piling on what I knew of His present already-screwed-up life, until I ended up picturing an approximation of the aforementioned bug-on-the-shoulder... a little too weak to calm Himself, a little too lazy to die. (Jeez. Now I'm quoting songs you couldn't possibly know, as I wrote them.) What are the depths of sympathy? What do I really know about Him? What I didn't know I filled in; I pictured Him in His lab staring at the big scary scientific instruments and wondering if He could use them to drain His plasma, and would that hurt? And making dinner alone, constructing one of His usual convoluted stew-type concoctions, but this time totally heedless of what was being added as He threw in dust off the fridge, piles of broken glass, lemon fresh Pledge™. And *I* was doing this; *I* was the Scrooge mucking up this lad's Christmas. Fuck Me. Any kicks I might be getting out of this only-slightly-more-than-casual acquaintance are as good as nothing against cost of that *pain*, that all-encompassing spine-rotting premature-aging-causing *oh-my-God-kill-me-please* **PAIN**.

Tripe

I obviously wasn't dwelling on the fact that He's probably not as much of a co-dependent melodramatic shmuck as I am (was?), and as We fell asleep in Her room I played songs from that dark time in my life, to state His side with the same drama that I had stated mine. This was of course pointless, as I did not *tell* Her that that's what I was doing (It would have wrecked the mood), choosing instead to draw Her some obvious symbolic patterns so She could connect them in Her own way, bringing Herself to dwell upon Him with my support but without My particular inaccurate visualizations get in the way. I failed completely, so She still felt the burden of defending the abstraction of His interests against the force of My actual presence, and Her consequent guilt and confusion about how strong an advocate She was really being, weighing entirely upon Herself. To be sure, We hadn't actually done anything blatantly illegal, but the most dangerous flirtation, I am convinced, happens within. (<-That kind of line must by law be followed by "...And who could resist my sweet guile?" Thank you.) So so so She..., though more traditionally letter-of-the-law moral than myself, had certainly not been updating Him on every little fantasy She had been having which involved Him not being in the room, as She was not yet convinced that these flirtations with the Other constituted a real threat to Their relationship. Whereas now breaking point was about an inch away and True Lust could no longer be denied its voice.

The next day was for the most part very wonderful, which means I don't really remember it. I woke up slightly before She did, turned on the coffee machine, then sprang back into to bed — my bed, that is — back on the floor, taking a step back from the "tremendous inertia that would have moved I don't know where" (end of sitting 35) in the face of my new-found but quickly-rationalized (my rationalization = "Life sucks. Oh, well.") sympathy. I remained half asleep but cheerful, too tired to even consider going to class with Her today, until She was gone, then dozed for several hours in Her afterglow until I was

Tripe

shiny. Shower, Shave, She-think over a warm guitar, and off to type my heart out 'till She finds Me and reminds Me that I am mortal and must eat. Yes? You following? You feel suspense building? Ay, much suspense! ...And the sun sets, and grows dark, and evil came to perch a few time zones over... I mistook Her shock for casual everydayness as We walked after Her night class from the computer center where She had just E-mailed, or rather received E-mail, from Him: His response to a comment of Hers delivered earlier in the day while I slept.

“Pretty strong E-Mail, there.” She seemed not quite shaken, but certainly disturbed, as if sensing a distant train wreck.

“Is everything okay?” Something forgettable like that was said.

“He says if I care about Him at all, I’ll get you out of my apartment.”

She had finally felt it necessary to tell Him that She was finding me attractive, that She was having to look outside Their relationship for support, and this was His reaction. I immediately clicked into analytic philosopher mode and asked questions like “Is He in any position to give ultimatums at this point?” and “Are you going to accept that as an ultimatum?” I parried and jabbed and parried at every angle that I thought might be open to attack.

She responded to my sharpness with more sharpness. “I’m *not* going to cross Him for you. My loyalties lie with Him.”

Well, if I wasn’t going to be living with Her, there was no point in My staying in Alaska at all, as my point was to visit her, and neither of us had transportation. Dammit I would get a flight back for the next day if I wasn’t wanted. And no I wasn’t giving her an ultimatum. It’s just that if by living somewhere near-by we ended up hanging around together all the time anyway, then the spirit of His demand wouldn’t be complied with, and if we didn’t, then

Tripe

there was no point in my being there, so either defy or lie to Him or give in, but dammit do *one* of them, and don't pull more of this half-deception I'm-obeying-you-in-what-you-say-but-not-what-you-really-want bullshit. Dammit, if we're going to lie to him then let's lie, and you can tell him I'm gone while we're actually sleeping in the same bed. Dammit.

"Are you using the phone?" She asked.

"No, I can't find the number to call about changing my reservation." I had made a feeble attempt to call this but ran out of steam and lay back half-conscious in a chair next to the phone. She disappeared with it into Her room and shut the door. Many minutes went by, hours maybe. Her roommate came home; DOGS ran in and out; the sky outside the window flickered with strange colors for a while and then stopped. I lay immobile. I considered just walking out, but was slightly too responsible to do so. Finally the energy came back, and I marshaled my forces. She would calm Him down, make Him recant. And even if She didn't, it would be okay. Even if I had to stay at a youth hostel for the next week and a half. And I would play by Her rules and stand the small deception, which admittedly is much different than large deception (being bigger, you see). And yes, I would stand by Her and try to walk the thin lines She needs Me to. Because I care. Whatever makes Her happy. I wrote a song then and there with that title, busting in on Her phone conversation to get my guitar, and then again to get my tape recorder. Whatever makes you happy. Whatever makes you happy. Whatever makes you happy, I will perform. The song started out fairly hurt and hostile, forcing the abstraction of "what's right to do" upon my resentment at being asked to do it, but gradually I internalized it. Just be okay, my Love. Just be okay. I will stay with you in the way you need me to. I finished my song as Duke watched, made Us some dinner, served it to Her at Her post, and relaxed, getting into a conversation with Her roommate which had me defending arrogant hypocrite para-intellectuals as being a much lesser evil than their ignorant

Tripe

anti-intellectual counterparts, because at least the former have hope for a cure, while the latter have to just die off and hope the next generation wasn't too screwed up by their influence.

She emerged in the middle of this and kept generally quiet but not upset as We all finished eating and otherwise taking up space in the living room. Then the two of Us went out to see the DOGS, who for the first time since that awful night were all loose again. It was dark this time, and many of them (including Bear) had already disappeared into the surrounding acres of forest. Buster attached himself to Her leg; Samantha stole some sort of rawhide chew-thing from Sugar Dee which the latter spent the whole of her subsequent energy trying to recover. I turned to Her expectantly.

She speaks: "You are so wrong. We didn't go out that night; I was totally exhausted that night, so we just sat in the living room and you sang to me for a while, and then we talked and that was it, except for us talking more in my room."

"What? So when did I do the stick thing?"

"I think that was a couple days before; you were reacting to your friend telling you that he was getting married."

"What? No. That weirded me out, but not *that* much. It was the fact that you totally took His side."

The verdict, wherever I received it, was that there was no verdict. He had admitted that His initial reaction was rash, but was still uncomfortable with my presence. She would E-mail Him more tomorrow. She did think it was pretty harsh, though, for Me to actually fly back early. If I had to move out, We'd find someplace close, and if We couldn't find someplace close, I wouldn't have to move out. I still felt that my earlier arguments against moving out made sense, but I merely nodded.

"Did you still want to run tonight?" I asked.

Tripe

“No. I’ve got some stuff due tomorrow and it’s already late.”

“Well, I need to... too much stray energy.”

And then She said something... something that’s been blocked from my memory, that set me off. Something that made it clear that nothing was going to change, that She couldn’t bring herself to force Him to really deal with anything no matter how much She (and I) needed Him to. We had been in the woody area behind Her apartment, but split up to cross around to the front. I just kept walking... down a path to the main road and along that... just walking.

“I had been on the phone with Him, and you asked me if I had mentioned anything about us, and I said I couldn’t bear to because he was so stressed about school that I think He was, like, partially crying on the phone. I told you; it was *before* I told Him.”

Whenever it was, I knew We had hit the nastiest part of the Late Middle stage... or was it the End? Stupid-ass attempts to organize my experience. I don’t care where in the fricking scheme or the calendar or part of the geography it happened or what in particular triggered it... It was the frigging climax, and it happened. It had to happen. And the barriers were all I could see. Her loyalties are with Him. It doesn’t matter what I do, how well I behave, whether I live or die. Fists strike only air. I turned from the road and looked into the forest. The trees were thick and quickly got thicker. I considered just heading straight in, but decided against it. I knew it would eventually open up to some residential area, but I didn’t know when. Of course, that was precisely the appeal: to walk straight into where it would be quite possible to become lost, missing... to lie down under a tree and disappear into the night. The wood opened, and I entered.

Tripe

Fortieth Sitting

I got about ten feet. Maybe fifteen. Definitely not twenty. There are all these nasty TREES, you see, and they tend not to part red-sea-style to let folks just wander in to get lost, unless those folks happen to have machetes, which makes it difficult for them not to find their way out. So when the way became impassable, i.e. not passable without contorting myself into shapes not worth the effort, I just stood there... for a long time. Just staring into the wilderness, thinking the crap I tend to think, smirking occasionally, sometimes in bitter irony, sometimes in self-disgust, sometimes in nostalgia. I turned and looked through the branches of three or four trees back at the street, repeating the process. I heaved a hefty sigh and began to stir. I relieved myself on a neighboring bush and got my sorry ass out of there.

On the road again, still heading away from Her. No, toying with death wasn't the thing. Feigning death: now that's the ticket. I would stay out just long enough for Her to get seriously worried. That might not even take too long, as it wasn't clear the way I left that I was actually going running right then (I wasn't dressed for it, for one thing). Until then, I would walk, and relax, or emote, or whatever the hell I should be doing to be dramatically acceptable. I would find a very good view, a mountain top or something... somewhere to have the obligatory religious experience and get tired and cold enough walking around that I wouldn't mind the fact that I wasn't actually wanted. Something like that. Of course, I had no idea where a mountain top might be, and knew from experience that it was pain enough walking to a 7-11, so maybe that would do. Slurpee to Nirvana. Or maybe just back to campus to try to break into Her electronic mail account and read His excrement for myself. Ah, forget it. Not worth the risk or the effort. I turned around a few times as I walked, looking at the weird reflection of the streetlights off the ultra-thin layer of snow (which had

Tripe

melted and refallen multiple times; phooey on Those Who Know), the street stretching before me, reaching a curve some half mile ahead, the strip malls almost within reach in the same direction, the university looming on the hill across the street. And over the trees... the sky was so clear that it looked fake, like the inside of a movie studio all set to show E.T.'s heartwarming adventures, like one of those miniature museum models depicting whatever historical architecture set beneath painted stars. Oh, stop being a putz, Mark. Don't worry the Girl. So I turned around, the experience having reached the level of silliness it was hankering to reach. I knew what I must do. Besides relax, that is. (I learn my lessons, ja?)

So I searched along the edge of the forest as I walked back. The snows last year had come heavy and early, leaving many a tree bent and broken. I picked at an appealing-looking log only to find it was still firmly rooted down. A few more paces ahead, and... there. It was about eight feet long, maybe seven inches wide, and beautiful. I tore off the major branches, then the twigs, and continued to preen it as I started walking it back. A couple passed on the road about fifteen feet uphill and I hoped they would ask me what I was doing so I could answer "speaking softly."

By the time I got back I was beaming. I greeted the Doggies one by one in their play, showing off my prize for Her as surely superior to any that they could come up with. If I'm going to act like a DOG, I thought, I might as well be the best damn DOG I can be.

She was, of course, properly pleasantly amused by my token, for She knew the symbols as well as I did (She even helped Me figure out the ways in which She was canine listed previously), and invited Me in for some snacks. Before coming inside I carried up my catch out next to the path behind Her apartment where We had separated and suspended it between the branches of two trees. "So it'll fall on someone pretty soon," She noted.

"Yeah, I guess so." I smiled and shrugged.

Tripe

Ah, what a feel-good flashback. No, no, no. That was not the end of it, though it was the most dramatic bad part of it. (The pickins is slim for drama 'round these parts, yep!) As a result of His whining I got ousted to the couch... not that He was made aware of this, for then He would have had to know that I was sleeping in Her room previously. "It's just a gesture," She explained. I didn't really see the point, and said so enough times to annoy Myself, though She remained tolerant. The balance and resolve achieved in writing Her that song, or fetching Her that stick, had to be reestablished again and again (especially on the few evenings before it was firmly established that I would not be leaving). I had committed myself to the long run but continued to thrash around within my role, reminding myself to relax, then getting worked up some more about the time that was slipping away, or the fact that I was sort of acting out the same old patterns and was in fact in a skewed, one-sided relationship that demanded I make unhealthy sacrifices of passion and dignity, or the insistent symbolism in my own teeth (for example), or the fact that I was failing to relax into this long run, and so failing Her. Why, yes, sir, apparati to torture oneself is available in a variety of shapes and colors and conveniently located just six inches to the left of wherever you happen to be sitting. Wow, Man, this is like the owners manual to the human mind. Shut up, Mark. No, my sweet book; why don't you make me? Why don't you make me? I am, My Creation.

No, She and I never bickered, exactly, though We did and do disagree as to when certain events actually took place. On more subjective matters, though, She was infinitely more understanding than these flat white receptacles and the creepy person who's presently reading them. We discussed, We explored possibilities, tried to figure out how We would end up feeling, warned each other about Our respective neuroses... in short, We participated together in the same kind of attempted self-understanding, mutual sympathy, and adaptation

Tripe

of aesthetics that I've been performing solo here for your amusement. And that's something; that's a lot. So She didn't hold it against me when I came back into Her room that night after a few hours not sleeping and tried to talk the tension down, to break through the defenses that I could feel building up in myself.. And when I told Her I was scared, that since being dumped that first big time, every subsequent disappointment has just cast me deeper into the same patterns of despair, pushing me farther and farther each time, that I just didn't know if I could take another and felt really close to actually flipping out, that I didn't want to end up insane or dead. She didn't hold it against me, but just held Me instead as I cried for the first and as yet only time during this affair. And as I grew happy again in Her arms, I think I said that I wouldn't write about that moment, that it was too perfect.

Forty-First Sitting

10/2 11:52pm ADT: Did I mention I feel like I'm afraid of flying though I'm most definitely not? Did I mention anything? Did I mention I can't write, that the sentences all come out in the wrong order, sometimes even... well, no. I've... Even in the wrong language? The overstatement is an overstatement, and is preceded by the "...well, no. I've..." because it is a cliché, because the Crud is very strong, and though the stuff that's just happened with the "kiss" and the fire and all seem pretty dramatic, I can't keep it from being "*dramatic*," as in "*Last of the Mohicans was a 'dramatic' tour de force.*"

I'm on a plane and the child next to me is saying "fuck. fuck. fuck. fuck. fuck..." for which his mother is holding him, giving him attention, and picking her nose (this is true). Did

Tripe

I mention the plane? Am I even *in* a plane? I mean, I just saw a tunnel-thing from the gate, and I see planes outside the window, but where the hell am I?

I am... in shock. Obviously. And now the safety information card that I'm supposed to follow. Am I prepared to aid an evacuation? Irrelevant; I am sitting where I am, and not somewhere else, not where I would be *needed*. And yes I'm trying to draw a metaphor, but it doesn't fit so foo! Are the carry-on items secured? Am I? ...in the overhead bin, so to speak, that is.

My neck is cracking. No, no metaphor: it always cracks... started eight years ago or so... some bone on the right back side. And I had gotten Her *trained* to see when I was performing strange neck gyrations, desperately (always) in search of relief as I was, and proceed with a good, gripping neck massage, at which I would purr like a good DOG does after...

Does after... what? I know the form of said "humor," but the *content*? I know the content of said story of mine, but the *form*? Is the content worth telling? Yes, I say, for it's a juicy love story, and I'm an interesting guy with a villain complex — yes a fricking villain complex despite all such raging against guilt as a coping device. But it's not worthwhile to tell or to read unless I can put it in a form, and not just a form, but a mondo swell form, like the form of Justice or Chair or something else Platonic. Yes, I suppose the adjective "platonic" is close, but no cigar, now that I've crossed those lines, observed the letters of the law while burning Our spirits. I have betrayed no trust (I think), but have acted in ways I just don't understand and probably can't. That's right. I will know the domain of every man; I will fantasize about being (or deigning to be) my captor or my victim or my God, but I shall not know *myself*, for, well, that would me messy... And I would be forced to harp more on animal metaphors, which I guess are better than plant metaphors, but, like all metaphors, make me just want to burn this fucking book and simply live through these events.

Tripe

What is the *form*, I ask? Sex and Death are fine and dandy, but I just don't understand them enough to make their nexus characterize my experience. I mean yes, as big Freudian urges that I have been running in the face of and rationalizing over, they're perfectly appropriate, but... mmmm... Airline peanuts. I must order coffee to stain my teeth in Her memory. Yes, I am above, duh. On the plane, did I mention? So did I want to walk into that fire, or did I just think it was a cool image? Did I *want* anything? Did I mention that I'm insecure about my writing? The task that I know I've set, of filtering through Crud, through "Drama," of coming to terms with it to be able to tell a story that communicates this intense shit going through my field of vision (I state my heritage as Westerner by mentioning sight and not smell, though the two have been identical in my experience) is Work. Can I stay it for the long run, even if it means editing, even if it means going on for another ninety pages to culminate the culminations? Please don't leave Me now, gentle reedeereedeereedee — Buck? (<-Twiki reference as labeled), for you are "all I have left." Whatever the hell that means. Speech keeps reducing itself to music, to the nine hundred fucking million songs that I've rammed into myself repeatedly over the years and the several less that I've written. No... must talk... must write book and avoid expensive therapy. Ya. We're hitting turbulence; the flight attendants are all sitting down and strapping in.

She told Me Her father had seen a Man step into his burning home and kill himself by letting the blaze engulf Him. It happened at the moment fire fighters found a body inside... his wife. Touching though sick... the throwing oneself on the funeral pyre of one's mate. The only thing was that his wife was dead only because he killed her; he was trying to burn up the evidence for it. Still...

Still... Yes, very still... The whole damn state is... Stark nature with no whirring... or at most whirring in one direction only, so that its source can be located and separated from the

Tripe

rest, unlike normally when it's all around. And still I am not sure whether to let myself be moved by it, for atmosphere is cheezy and symbolic. But can I help it if it's a full moon on this night of my departure? Can I help it if before going to the airport we stopped by a bonfire-building contest or something like that which featured several three-story high infernos complete with flying fiery debris and daredevils running between the blazes covering their faces, just to see if they can? Can I help it if earlier today we set out on a grand scale to get as high as possible so as to get a view, sort of like in the before-leaving flashback except several hours longer and in a car? Can I help it if my hormones have declared themselves no longer just a side attraction to these emotional and intellectual events, but instead the culmination of all that is good and real in these other realms?

And now I crack my neck, and She is not here to help, so the tension is not as pleasurable to break, and doesn't break as easily. Oh, oh, oh, the possible obvious analogies...

And now I find myself starting to think, think of how this Very End relates to the last one, how I really feel, what I should write about next with an eye to *overall structure*, whether I'm going to get on the connecting flight that I want to, that my luggage will go on, but which I'm on a wait list for, or will I have to say at the Anchorage airport overnight? Already we are landing there. No fatalities yet, to my knowledge, unless the reason I couldn't say goodbye to Sugar Dee was that She had climbed into my suitcase and was now a brain-explosion mess in the luggage compartment.

Before Mercury, there was Maia, who was a lot like the floormat-resembling DOG except white. One time when the family went on vacation, my folks took Maia to the kennel without my getting the chance to say goodbye. When got back, the DOG was dead. How many of these DOGS will be dead before I see Her again?

Tripe

10/3 12:59am ADT: The same old song going through my head, music to spin by, music I played at Her until She was thoroughly infected, until She made Me teach it to Her on guitar, until She began to hum it constantly, until We joined in chorus after chorus. I consider not writing, just staring. I eat fake Oreos that would otherwise be fed to DOGS. Some German-speaking gents take pictures of me, and though I understand most of the words they are saying, no *ideas* get through. Maybe every time anyone talks He's just moving His mouth. Gibber Gibber. Growl. Welt kickstanden eine dinge aufgesprochen werhalt eine Katze zusammen Welt... *felt...*

...Feel again like I should just stop writing. Next time I will.

Should I feed the addiction; should I drag out the portable CD player and indulge? Maybe screw up the plane's radar as we take off? The flight starts to board, and soon I will know if I'm on it... Starting to feel like this kind of update is self-indulgent, that this book is self-indulgent. Why would *you* care? What makes me *so* wonderful to think that my Tripe is worth study? Then fatigue... These conflicts are all too familiar.

Yes, I made the flight, and once again wait for take-off. I realize that the comparison of this book to my ordeal to the ordeal of life is a good one, seeing how all these are generally arduous, but I feel I have already exploited your patience in this regard and so will *not* write fore every boring minute of what will be a very very long flight. Did I mention that you're welcome?

Tripe

Forty-Second Sitting

10/4 8:00pm CDT, Chicago: I'm not going to write any more of this in diary form, because frankly it doesn't matter to my story what I'm doing any more. I mean, it does, in that now that We are apart Her image will do whatever such images do, and so we can see if my earlier comments in that regard were actual dung or merely had the *appearance* of dung, being sham-poo.

The previous joke I regard as a family heirloom, as it was told to me many times by my father when I was just a wee lad. It's because of things like this that I must necessarily be shielded from the public eye, lest my campaign for National Zookeeper be disrupted. I recall an incident long ago when my father gently scolded me for informing a friend that my father had authored (in a single impromptu sitting, no less!) an undoubtedly masterful joke involving one teddy bear jumping on another in an Olympic event called "the broad jump." I hope by telling you that I will not ruin his retirement career as a children's singer.

Yes, I am home now, and though I will be back at the post-school locale shortly, my present location has set to growin' in me a storehouse of psychoanalytic self-accounting, which I suppose is the healthy thing to be spouting when you're in shock, when you are perfectly aware that your mind has blocked off some part of itself, that it's refusing to understand some obvious truths about itself... you know this because if it did, if it were really plain and comprehensible to you that you may never see Her again, there's no way you would be anywhere near this together, you who... I mean... I guess... I who... catharts like others eat and drink. So I will follow up on some Crud themes, confronting and beating the crap out of my inner child, petting the bully-Bear images, and dealing appropriately with the writing style attempts and romantic ideals of my youth, John Denver, and most importantly,

Tripe

my recent past, so as to prevent my subconscious from cruddying it, from distorting, selectively remembering, and reinterpreting it. I was thinking every step of the way (or at least every other step, to leave room), noting all the darn symbols and patterns and analogies and all that crap, so there's little chance of *further* misinterpretation as long as I can connect mind to mind, my own to my own, merging with myself while externalizing Myself, i.e. the person in the story, who's got to still be with Her, right? He's *got* to be with Her right? Otherwise *I* would feel very empty right now, what with all those parts of Me merged with Her in mind and body? Or is the sort of togetherness We achieved more like just synchronizing Our watches?

Consider the preceding as foreshadowing that the character emerging in this manuscript will soon get much more complicated, or at least confusingly portrayed by a proliferation of different pronouns. So geezme... what I was saying, what made this date worth dating even though this is in no way a diary, even though the date for the long night to come would more appropriately be labeled simply "After," was that I *edited*, or more precisely was going to edit, looked at one page, tried to insert one passage, and didn't do so. This is significant because it expresses both my present mood and the stage to which the "humor" in this manuscript has "progressed." The page in question is the first of sitting nineteen, employing in its first sentence the word segue, which I originally thought to be spelled segway... Well, no, I didn't think that... I just didn't think. So as is tradition, I was going to insert after the word "segue" some comment like "(which I will pronounce 'segway' in memory of my dead sea monkey and/or grandfather of that name)," but all that would come to mind, all that would noticeably differ and "pro-**gressss**" from the comments of this form of the past, comments that must be there to demonstrate a consciousness of the operations being performed (in this case using speech), consciousness of self — an actually *human action*... All

Tripe

that passed through my mind were vocalized sound-bytes of the word in various silly voices. 'Nuff said.

After the Nuff has been said in the 69,482,180,086,753,093 silly voices generally available to humans and other lower beings: So obviously the required change, the new attitude and consequent actions resulting in the achievement of a proper balance of competing viewpoints, and hence sanity and health, would be attained by knowing when to stop reflecting, or at least stop having to state what has been noted in such reflection. You know as well as I do when I have done something new or questionable with the punctuation; you are as good a Tripe-producer as I. You must fill the gaps; you must remember that I know when I have slipped up, that I have considered your criticisms as best I could. Please, reader, You must have faith in Me, and I will try to believe in You, that You would not betray Me and laugh any more viciously at Me than I would at Myself.

But I will tell you things that you don't/can't/couldn't know, like the fact that I just violated one of My own secret laws, which I must not do, for you were supposed to be guessing at its content. I capitalized Myself against My standard form, and though I feel that My doing so is still lawlike in some way, I do not know the law any more. I will therefore have to reveal to you the old law and its justification (for all things have a justification from some point of view, if only a poor one). To do this, though, I must stop with the mambo jambo and tell more of the story. Trust Me, Reader Love.

I didn't go out because I wanted to, but only because the other options seemed worse. I mean, the first time We ran there it was just cold... and long... and we ran down trails which had been made for cross-country skiing but which were obviously unsuitable for such at the time we traversed them because, as my mother *always* told me, you can't ski in a marsh. The

Tripe

trails also didn't go anywhere near where we wanted to go, so while we had hoped to end up at the nearest supermarket, we ended up somewhere slightly closer to... say... Spain. The good thing about that trip was that we did end up shopping, spending perhaps more than I have spent in my life, which meant that even though it was only the day after that whole Boyfriend-finds-out-and-annoys-everyone incident, the likelihood of my moving out soon had been reduced to about zero.

The second time, which occurred two days later (imitating the every-other-day exercise schedule that She/We had used to keep in more energetic times), We had no such destination, unless you count loss (which is different from "Land of the Lost"). ...Or so I felt... But I was brooding, because I had broken the golden rule, which says don't go to sleep brooding, or your dreams will twist it all out of proportion and deposit it in the follicles of the stubble you wake up with. (It's an ingenious system, really...) Why was I brooding last night? Same stuff, naturally, except at that point She was too tired to sit with Me the required long long time until that magic number disappeared. Jeez... all She would have had to do was ram her tongue down my throat for a few weeks, and I'm sure I would've felt just fine...

So I was brooding, and my options that morning were to either lie around half-asleep brooding, run with Her (which might knock Me into some kind of sensibility), or play Atari. Her roommate's boss was setting up homestead in a cabin somewhere, which at that point did not have electricity, so many of this woman's appliances moved in to take up space in *my bedroom* during the latter portion of my stay. Among these was an evil Atari 2600, much like the one I played incessantly 'round (guess when!), oh, sixth grade or so. And many of the same games... It even had its own little TV attached, so one could play Combat and watch *Saved By the Bell* simultaneously, producing a generational Crud clash. This evil item was never turned on during my stay; it just loomed there in the corner being symbolic, filling my

Tripe

dreams with Janus (Roman god of Arches)-knows-what and encouraging me to revert to infantility.

We determined we'd bring a DOG on this trip, and She of course wanted Duke, him being the favorite and all. Yeah... I've got pictures... Her and the DOG, havin' a grand old time, asserting their master-slave relationship, conspiring to get my socks all covered with spit. I seen it. "It's because I'm such a naturally affectionate person," She said. Hmmm... DOGS is DOGS is DOGS. I growled. "He fought for Me," She said. Why I oughta... I think it's 'cause I'm white.

So it was Me and Her and Yellow Dog (great spirit of sky and sea) traversing many moons through the forest, or rather on the way to the forest (so's not to get ahead of myself). I held Him very close by a short leash clutched tightly and wrapped multiple times around my wrist. Fat guy trotting along... Doesn't pull on the leash like Merc, but doesn't know "heel" either... If he does heel by accident and you praise him, he gets all excited and pulls ahead, thus ceasing to heel and so *deserve* the praise... Annoyed at myself for reading this metaphorically. We pass the "lake," which is really a dirty little pond, which is presently pretty much iced over and so not suitable for beaver-catching activities, unless they're dead under the ice, in which case they don't flail as amusingly when you bite their necks. I'm wearing way too many layers of clothing, I can tell already. If I had self-control, I could make just the right amount of heat escape from my large nose, and this wouldn't be a problem.

And then I loose control on Him. Off into the woods, He never loses sight of Us, always vigilant, always protective, and always happy. "Awww. I love Duke. He's so swell." But I, too, will be shiny to bursting. If I lose that, what advantage do I have over He who whines from a distance? And I *am* losing it... I can't keep up; I can't run with Her like She needs... I'm not enjoying It. Yes, I'm only doing this to myself, being self-absorbed. Again. She looks

Tripe

fine: reasonable and happy. She runs ahead a ways, then back to circle around me with a pleasant hello. But would She stay that pleasant? Should She? It fascinated Me sometimes that even though right then I was not being very exciting or funny or even interesting, She still seemed to like Me... as if I had actually built up something, done some things that actually had lasting effect. Strange. I pushed ahead again, but soon slowed to a walk.

But it won't stay... Not if I keep this up. She gives Him slack to no end, but He had more time to build up a reserve of good behavior, and She will resent Him later... or maybe just pity Him... the closeness, in my case, will not stay; there's only so much bad breath one can stand until it leaps out to alienate, isolate, and otherwise get in the way. So even if We want to be nice and say no, love's certainly not an economic relationship... it's... My God, I've gone through all this before, haven't I? Repetitive thought, lack of connection with oneself... this is no equilibrium, baby, this is a rut! The barriers don't have to even be struck anymore, for they've made their impressions in my mind, and I can now reproduce them myself, tailored by abstraction and cumulative force to install a permanent frown, an actual bit of a notion of what I am, and so what it's appropriate for me to do... And by this fabulous equation I find it is appropriate for Me to get the heck away from Her, because I *will* drag Her down eventually... No need to put them through trauma to leave Her exactly where She started with a different *brand* of canned meat product for a boyfriend.

But no, this kind of self-pity is only worthwhile if it spurs action, and so it will... And so I did what I could do: I smiled and took off again. I will go even if I bust a gut...

I busted a gut. Well, a leg actually, sort of. After We passed the scary guy cutting down trees, after We decided to turn back because We had no idea where this trail was going and how long it would go, after We passed the scary guy *again*, my knee decided to take upon

Tripe

itself the pain I was repressing. I kept running anyway... Even though She's totally cool about it, even though She cares about me now, *if I stop running I will lose.*

“What’s wrong? Why are you galloping?”

I was galloping. I was lumbering. I was running like a bipedal Duke. Pathetic.

“You should stop.”

“No, I’m okay... are we... uh... there yet?”

“Whatever. I could go for a while.”

By this time We had reached the road again, though at a point further away from home than the one We’d left from. “I guess I’d better go back. My knee is not happy.”

“Okay. I’ll catch up with you.” She bounced back into the woods.

Dang it. Why do I have to react this way? Why is it *so* important? Why haven’t I gone running *by myself* more often? Here goes, kiddies: The Capitalization Secret, The Obvious Secret... You see (and you should see ‘cause it’s bee-leedin’ Obvious), being locked up in a room of your own creations isn’t too fun. I mean, it can be, I guess, in a narcissistic kind of way: it’s all you, no one is in any position to judge it... You can feel... maybe... *powerful*. But not really... I mean, power only makes sense if you get to affect something that’s not you (in some way), and this not you thing has to be, well, formidable in some way... It has to be not you to the extent that it’s a little bit against you in a way you can’t just write off as lending to its aesthetic perfection... People need — what? objective criteria? ...Or... well... (George’s brother Earl) ...I mean... what’s the point if you’re not getting any feedback, well, heck, **just say it, boy**: She gives it all meaning. So when I am near Her, I am Me, but when not, I’m just me, and I’m affected the same way to a lesser extent by association with Him, because He’s the part of Her that’s set against Me. Besides, “Him” is His name, and He has no other, the numinous bastage, so He’s got to be capped; He should get a fricking capitalization *medal*. So

Tripe

there it was: the original Law, but I've broken it several times now, and going back to edit just makes it worse because dammit I just can't decide what the Law should be. What kind of creature am I? What is it hence appropriate for me to capitalize, hence treat with respect and/or pseudo-religious connotations? god, I miss her. No! I will not write about the present. I will have no more of that reflective insanity, that worrying at the time about what should be private or dramatically effective or... just NO!

I've got to believe there's some meaning behind this, that there *is* some sense in the capitalization that I have engaged in through a mixture of instinct, habit, foresight, and whim. These are the four pillars making up my emotional life and they must be working for the same ultimate purpose, even if I'm unaware of it. And foresight (my angelic minion Ted) will guard against the tricks of Mr. Lucimephistobeelzadmodesatan.

...All this I was not thinking of as I walked back down the main road to Her place. The ground was significantly higher leftwards toward the road, so I was walking on a slope, which did not help my hurt knee, which was also leftwards, and resented having any weight put on it at all. This is what I was thinking about, that and ways in which I'd better start to break away from Her. If I was poison, which I am, and I could never make it with Her in the Long Run (which would remain similarly Long, i.e. infected by Him-of-the-Longest-Legs, for at least the rest of my stay, probably until Christmas when He had just made plans to visit, and maybe forever), then I'd better start distancing myself so as to ease the separation, which will be final when it comes. So time to click in the defenses, accentuate the negatives, assert my independence, push my limits, and get cold...

"Hey!" I turned and She was there on the other side of the lake/pond/whatever. Duke was swimming in the water, which obviously was less icy over there, as She stood on the shore. And She stood — stood out through the haze of my own breath visible in the cold,

Tripe

through my sweat induced by too many layers of protection, through my cold thoughts... “Wait!” She called. “Duke! Come’ere, Duke!” He lumbered out of the water and followed as She disappeared into the woods... but not disappeared: I could make out through the scape of trees a moving form, the glint of Her hair that to Me looks blonde though it’s as brown as mine — I also think of myself as blonde, as I was blonde as a child and only gradually gathered darkness... I blame dust. I blame genetics. I blame my parents. I blame God. I blame myself. As I blamed I chucked rocks as hard as I could out on to the lake, trying to shoot them straight through the ice but usually skipping them out along the surface with an interesting eech-eech-eech-etc. noise. Cool. Soon She joined Me in this activity, while Duke prodded curiously though apprehensively at the ice which did not quite reach the bank, but instead thoughtfully provided a little greenish trough from which the DOG, after a few aborted attempts to skip himself across the frozen sheen, could drink.

Forty-Third Sitting

Yeah, whatever. I was perfectly happy a half hour later, of course. I just decided to stop moping, and told Her so, which made Her ask Me what specifically I was moping about, which made Me fumble around and try to relate a lot of the preceding neurotic babbling so as to make it sort of seem to make sense, which it of course didn’t, so I was happy again. All this as We traveled to downtown Fairbanks for to see the plentiful sights, like for instance drab desolation, plus twelve dozen over-priced gift shops full of crap. My favorite site by far was the storefront adorned solely with a sign saying “cards;” visible through the tacky decaying Venetian blinds was only a single card table and four folding chairs. Scary. And as We

Tripe

sprinted across streets to avoid being struck, my knee would once again cry out in pain. As We sauntered through shops in which there were far far more breakable items than customers, I resisted the urge to begin flailing about in a Godzillan campaign of destruction. As We made Our way into the combination art gallery/health food restaurant that Her apartment-mate had recommended, I was entranced.

...Not by the art on the walls, which was okay — mostly photographs of fish — but the placemats, which were made by laminating pictures done by children from the local kindergarten. And not all the placemats... Some, in fact, were just your standard flowers-in-the-sunshine sort of pablam... but there was one, which was not originally at my table but which swiftly migrated there, which I found most interesting. It was a story of sorts, a comic, but the setting was unclear and the characters less so. It seems there was this DOG, or wolf, or maybe a small dinosaur, that was looking into a window at some people eating. And then... well, the rest is unclear. Did the people change into cats, or was that a picture of cats where the window used to be? Why by frame three was the DOG-thing sitting at the table being served by a waiter, or was that a cat? And what was with the table being scribbled out in the same frame with a different waiter, one with knees that bent both ways? It seems this second waiter entered, and the DOG (who by this time looked much more like a weasel) somehow hid itself as the subject of the painting hanging near-by (a wily ruse), and then escaped carrying many bundles of food. Then there were various scenes superimposing wilderness imagery with more windows with images of, perhaps, the angry Lamb of Revelation gone about with mighty horns to destroy the world in an orgy of fury, and at the end, the DOG-thing lay asleep while other, smaller DOG-things feasted upon his booty. I knew at once that I had come upon some truly archetypal material.

Tripe

Yes, too vivid and universally applicable to have come from such a single young human, these images must have come straight from the Collective Unconscious, that theoretical entity posited to explain the regular occurrence of patterns that are so prevalent, are so stretched across a variety of disanalogous contexts, that (absurd as it may seem) they *must* a common source. Yeah, whatever. Forget about the source for a moment. Who cares. There, right there on that placemat, was a message sent directly to Me that will be a major turning point because well, hey, the “plot” just can’t go that much further in this direction: Yes, DOGS compete for human affection. Yes, they howl for loneliness and all. But this is basic: **FOOD is the DOG-GOD, dickweed.**

Of course I had known this. I had known this from age five when I dropped a chicken leg on the floor and Maia (X-She) instantly devoured it whole. I knew this in the recurrent conversations with my sister about how I betcha that if you cut off the DOG’s leg and put it in her dish, she’d eat it. I knew this when Gorbachev came into Her apartment and acted very very very affectionately for the sole purpose of getting a cookie or six. So how had I forgotten? How did I get my symbolism totally wrong? How could She seem *that* important? The Form of the tragedy, the Love Triangle in its particularity presenting itself to Me as the abstraction and objectification of the common tripe that unites us all, does eat... I mean... If the symbols lose their peculiar sort of clarity, they lose their ability to inspire religious fervor. Power o’ myth, ya know. And without that to instill with purpose and direction... and self-destruction... I am Me, I had always thought; and I was Me before [whatever Chick was at issue] even entered the picture, and that was fine: I could breathe, I could eat. Why should now be any different? *And* it’s true... *And* you know it so well you can taste it, which means *you’re doing it to yourself*. Why? Because on some level, probably several levels, you love it. You love to bitch; you love to have something to bitch about.

Tripe

I, of course, never do that but do only what I must do given the pressure of external circumstance and internal drives. So He's doing it to Me. And I don't know what you mean by intimating that I'm getting sort of confusing with pronouns, because I *told* you I would, and this is all part of the fun, so SIT. Good boy/girl/God.

I desecrated some Jung just now, so I should say that at this time in the story I was about two days prior to beginning to read bits of the only book besides the Bataille (and this one) that I'd brought to Alaska: *The Portable Jung*. Specifically I read the last selection, entitled "Answer to Job," which seemed so immediately relevant as I thumbed through that I started to read its whole hundred more pages, which I have now finished. If I may now make a *suggestion*, I think you should go read it right now so as to have an advantage over the remainder of this book, which will steal and pervert many ideas from it. Plus you'll know what I was talking about with that "four pillars" crap in the last chapter, which I'm not going to explain. If you're not willing to do this outside reading for me, then you're lazy and I want nothing to do with you, though I will conveniently forget this desire out of loneliness and hunger: I will take you in as confidant, friend, and lover, and while you are asleep, I will eat you.

What is the point? How does it all connect? What does it mean, or may I say, *symbolize*? I don't know any more, or yet, or whatever... and that's good, as far as I'm concerned. Now go to sleep brooding and feel my magic work upon you. Yes. Yes! YES!!

Tripe

Forty-Fourth Sitting

Hmmm. No. I mean... No. I won't tell you where I am or what day it is. For all you know, I don't even know. I may be dead. No. No more of that talk. My mother told me I'm not allowed to die. "The hardest thing for a parent is to bury a child," She said. So no more selfish toying with that idea. No. And I had better put new windshield wiper blades on my car. This is what prompted the quoted utterance, which came after the fact, a few hours after she had a hissy fit at me for resisting her "suggestion" to stop writing Book (or whatever other definitionally-unimportant thing I might be doing) and go get new wiper blades right now... Because I could crash, you know, if I was caught in a rainstorm and my wipers sucked (which they do), and if I didn't do it right then it wouldn't get done. But I resist such "suggestions" categorically, as my sense of my own power and autonomy is shaky enough without military treatment... Which is what spelled the end of Boy Scouts for me after only a few months (during sixth grade, of course). The major purpose of this group for me was to provide social support for pyromaniac activities, and being turned para-military doesn't help this. So I can't trust authority (i.e. those with power over me); I have to see a reason myself; I have to take the initiative myself, to adopt the project as my own. You know... just a habit from household politics, like how much you talk at the dinner table and about what... There's no better, no worse in these issues, right? ...Though I guess some patterns are healthier than others. Still... it's nothing you can hold against someone, right?

It had been a great morning. You know... you were there: the end of sitting twenty-seven... when I recorded my song for her, when I told her in a lengthy outro that I loved her, when I sang it out loud, long, and many times. Yes, still cowardly, or shall I say non-

Tripe

confrontational, much like having Her read about it in here, especially since she was directed not to listen to the tape until I was gone. But I don't want to confuse her, do I, to make Her have to look me in the eye and face straight into the conflict churning within her. No, much better just to inject these things into her equation by remote, to give her a clear picture of the various paths and let her orient herself by the calm light of reflection. How many conflicting images were in that sentence? No. No more self-directed stylistic comments. I *trust* you.

So I was happy that day, two days before going back, because I loved her. Given this, I think it's safe to say that there's no way I would have consciously done anything to *hurt* her. And things were going *very* well, as you'll see very clearly to the extent that I further violate our privacy. I wrote in the afternoon, then met her for dinner at 5:00. We had brought the cookies we'd made together the night before, the muffins we sort of made together (I watched) the night before that, and the last of the lasagna we'd made together the night before that. She had eaten the lasagna at work, though, and I had sort of smashed the cookies, leaving the items whose only purpose was to use up rotting fruit. I forked over the appallingly-high \$1.25 Alaska price for two Hostess™ cupcakes and tried stuffing Us with sugar enough to a) in my case, attack this book with the full force of my final available few hours for working on it, and b) in hers, to recover from what had so far been a draining day enough to get through her evening class, i.e. drawing.

Oh my God, I am fairly sure Merc is right now trying to chew off her leg! False alarm. I guess I gave away where I'm writing from. No. Ignore the present. Ignore the staginess of the preceding remark, the fumbling attempts to be calculating, to construct an actual literary picture, in this case an attempt to show myself what? Receding from the reader? Concealing the self to end the book as it began? Damn it, I don't know, hon. I need to advance things between us, but it's hard, because you just sit there and don't give me any feedback... not that

Tripe

I'm pressuring you to... you do what you have to do, but you've got to know that I have needs too, and though I'd like to see you entertained... I mean, listen... I just can't tell you everything any more; it's just the way the plot is going... I mean I have a life outside this too, now. And before all that long, this book is going to end, so I've got to prepare for that, so as to ease the separation. Look, we'll talk about this later. I think I was in the middle of some psychoanalysis.

...So we were about to split up to write and draw when she pulled out this piece of paper and said, "Would you get this book out of the library for me?" Now she had just fifteen minutes before told me what a screwed-up, confusing library system they had here, how it had taken her half an hour to get at this video she needed the day before... And I was most revved to write. And so I was hesitant, and said we'd get it together after her class, or alternatively demanded a reason why it might be necessary or beneficial to anyone were I to take over the task at that point.

She was annoyed; I had hit a nerve; I had demonstrated some horrible vice that cut against everything she had been brought up to believe in, every rule of household politics that she now expected compliance with from the world. I was unhelpful and inattentive... no, make that insensitive. I, of course, didn't get this information at the time; it's irrational enough that I had to drag it out of her later that night when she was noticeably holding something against me, i.e. not talking to me. And of course after that, after we talked good and long, and she fumed a while as I laughed in glee about how overwhelmingly and wonderfully *her* she was being, she at least stopped being mad at me. But I did have enough of a clue at the time to immediately recant my hesitation and ticklingly try to grab the paper from her. But too late: another bad seed injected that could be usually ignored and generally understood into remission, but would take years to completely dispel.

Tripe

Whether through misunderstanding or spite, she failed to come get me when she was done with class, but we did coincidentally meet an hour or so later at the exact half-way point between school and home as I walked back on my own and she came forth to find me. Coincidentally, as always.

What is the point? What does any of this have to do with the *plot*, or the *theme*? What am I getting at, now that I have lost my symbols, now that I have no *stated* rallying point like SEX or DEATH? More pewlin' about varying contexts of teleology or something? How the whole bit about independent subjectivities being oblivious to each other demonstrated page after page in such excruciating detail is more screwed up than even I let on? How, on the one hand, we've all been stuffed so full of crud from so many directions that there's always more handy to bring up new and more stupid barriers between people, but on the other hand, the crud flows so damn deep that it may just (if you're a Jungian anyway) unite us all? And just like Mister Jung says that religions could reach mutual understanding by seeing all the parallelisms, and hence ahistorical connections, in their mythologies, in the visions of their prophets, in the underlying psyche their doctrines are trying to express, well... we individuals have to dig deep and convert crud to tripe if we're ever going to be able to stand each other at all the key moments that are sure to come up. Is that what I'm getting at? No. Well, maybe. After all, I am soooo clever, surely I will transcend all your expectations and do, well, *the most clever thing*. And oooo it's a secret from you, eh? And I won't tell because you are smaller than me, Mr. Book, Mr. pages showin' off your insides to just anybody that wants. Ha. Phooey on you. *I am the Wise One. I am the teacher. I AM HERR PROFESSOR.* And what I profess is what you need, my sweet, 'cause **I'm the Only One Here.**

Tripe

Forty-Fifth Sitting

I swear to (at) God I didn't write that conclusion. I gave the section to Ted, and I asked Him how I should end it and He wrote something. And if it sucked that's only because He's ticked at My trying to steal His woman. I wrote a song, and it goes like this: "I'm gonna steal your woman. Because I feel like it today. And after I've wrecked your life, maybe I'll throw Her away," etc. It goes over the backing track of "Cool Jerk," by whatever moldy stupid band it was that sang "Cool Jerk." I wrote the words as a joke when I was with her a few days before the end just to watch her get appalled and to crystallize my image of what I'd be like if I was a jerk... because I wasn't a jerk... technically... yet. I think if I were a jerk, I would be cool like Coyote. I could hear me singing and say "Fuck this" and leave; I could be offered various items of food and just walk away. So what in heck would I need? What does Coyote *want?* Does he *want?* No wants... not after the basics are supplied. If I could RELAX, I could be a jerk. I don't want His whole story, and if I read it I'll just laugh. I will savor distance between Us and do unto Other however will benefit Me, so ha. By definition, I am a jerk, and so am the sort of creature for whom it is appropriate to act like a jerk, and love it... and just not think too hard about much else. And so I do; and so I did. Mad passion is for fun, and just because *maybe* I'm slightly drunk is no reason to stop trying to read my handwriting 'cause it's TYPED in, ya You, or it will be, and fine if you don't like it. My public needs this finished satisfactorily so they can go back to struggling along pathetically. And so I'll tell 'em a story with more frigging SEX than the whole SEX section... and a lot shorter too. And the only one that dies is my soul. Oh, shut up.

Tripe

No, wait. That's the other way I used to end stories, before I was creative enough to have people (or DOGS) die... somebody would say "Shut up." Too much Cracked™ fucking magazine in Sixth fucking grade, I bet. So, shhhh.

I don't even slightly remember the rest of the day... It was the Tuesday after the Saturday that we went downtown and before the Saturday that I left. I don't remember anything bad happening so it was probably wonderful. I probably wrote a lot, and we probably talked really well. <<pause>> Oh. Yeah, well, maybe not. Go look at sitting twenty-eight. So I don't know if I should be cheery in describing this indescribably wonderful event or continue to portray myself as a jerk. I'm... dammit... I sober again, I guess... pretty much... which doesn't mean I was actually drunk before, because you don't know, you bastards. You don't know how long it's been or what I've been doing, because all you want is the STORY, right? The Story? You liked it when I changed the style near page fifty or so to actually employing *content*, didn't you. I mean, can't we just talk for Chrissake? Do I have to amuse you? Do you always need a *show*? *With puppets*?

Look. I'm sorry. No, I'm really sorry. And I'm going to stop being all pointlessly hostile, and I'm going to *embrace* the subject matter and give you your money's worth, by gum. And if I do that, if I stop and actually think about it, if I remember the point of *reliving* the way I'm supposed to... but it's hard, dammit. Right. Right. That's why I need to do it. I need to get the truth of the situation into me; I can't repress or shut out any part of it or myself; I've got to stay *whole*. It's all right... just relax now. Now read that part of 28, now. Read it with Me... come back to that time...

Tripe

She sat down next to Me, and started reading some of what I had just written, specifically comments about the ways in which We're wrong for each other... She couldn't read my handwriting on the word "everyman," and so I had to sort of explain some of what I meant, but it wasn't a lecture like it sometimes is, and I was sort of vague. She was very warm and receptive nonetheless. God, do I remember the details of the set-up, or am I making them up? I can't be sure. But I do remember the result: She lay on the couch on Her stomach with Her head at one end and Her feet at My end. I knew She was tired and worn, and Her feet were very accessible... and alluring... So I began, despite whatever We were supposed to have learned when He intruded, to massage. And I was thorough... and very gentle but very intense. I began with the feet, one by one, and moved upwards through legal areas... As I worked, both of Us fell increasingly under that spell; Her skin rose to meet me as I... well, you get the picture. This continued with increasing power until I was lying next to Her, touching Her face with Mine, with My arms around Her. We stayed that way for a very long time, our bodies fully pressed against each other. I heard myself whisper very softly in Her ear those three words that I have not *spoken* aloud to her since. She gave a little gasp, and We held each other tight. So so tight.

After that, though it was late, She insisted upon returning the favor, but because She's trained in the whole thing, insisted We move to the ground. I brought the couch cushions with... and after that blankets were fetched. For a revolution and a half of the first Enya album, She kneaded Me, gracefully, like one of Her pots, and all the pain and stiffness that I feel right now was totally washed away. Eventually We moved to Her room and talked more as I put Her to bed. No... those precious days were *not* wasted. Not that one, at least. My Love, can you hear Me? I know you'll read this section first because it's about Us. And I just want you to know, here in front of the whole world, that I meant what I said, and I want to

Tripe

say right now what I haven't been able to let myself say to you in any form, because it sounds reckless and absurd... but I now that I will always love you, even if you stay with Him and drive me mad, even if I end up happily married to someone else, I love you, and though I may not feel it in exactly this way ever again, it will never leave me; I will cherish these memories.

Very close now. No, not crying yet, not feeling the full push. Do I understand? *Do I UNDERSTAND? I may never see Her again.* And more likely, things may never be as good as they were then. If She stays with Him, if He really pulls against the odds and makes it work (which I hear He's totally serious about doing)... No, I can't get myself to visualize that. I can't believe She would negate what We have, even though I realize *She* hasn't given Herself anywhere near as completely, and *officially* not at all.

I am in Her dreams, though — many of them... and She liked the tape of the song. A lot. And... no, I guess I can't tell you, as that is the present, which will be included in this book only accidentally or in some short epilogue, and then only if it takes Me so long to get a publisher that there really has been time enough to need one. But I can think about it... the future, that is... the epilogue... If I totally lose Her, this book will be the only record I have, apart from this frail little mind and several dozen photographs (many featuring DOGS!) Ah, Book. I love you, I think. I think I love everyone and everything. That's what I think.

Forty-Sixth Sitting

No, I don't care how long the chapters are anymore.

Tripe

Forty-Seventh Sitting

I don't.

Twenty-Second Sitting Or if they repeat.

Ahhh! (That was a pleasant, good morning ahhh, not an ahhh I must implode now.) It is a beautiful morning (or afternoon or something) of a beautiful day, and I don't completely remember what happened last night, as my handwriting is too messy for me to read. I'm going over the little chart now, the one that I have written on the back of the envelope containing the letter She most recently sent, which lists all the various days of my visit and the major events that occurred on them. Perhaps I should just publish this in lieu of the book itself; it is much shorter and has a friendly bus-schedule-like quality. Obviously some major archetypal material there.

As I'm feeling actually sane for the moment, and nothing's grabbing my attention from said chart, I guess I should talk about Jung a bit, maybe so as to set just a bit of actual sort-of scholarly grounding behind the symbolic effluvia introduced early on in this book but not yet raised to mythological status over this part of the story. This should, or might in some diseased fantasy world, provide some direction and structure and all for the rest of the book, thereby providing it a last meal of sorts (consisting mostly of Saltines). Okay, okay. Now, first off, don't get me wrong: I'm not a "Jungian." I mean, I've got to say that while I find Jung to be a most wise and sensible fellow, I find most Jungians to be basically stupid. So there's that. Anyone who knows anything about Jung's actual therapeutic goals, though, should be able to see that they accord quite a bit with what has been advocated here. To be

Tripe

healthy, says He, is to be “whole,” whatever that means. So if in fact you are a smelly DOG who wants to devour the world, then damn it you can’t just pretend you aren’t; you can’t convince yourself that you love everyone and be virtuous in all thought and deed. “Irritability, bad moods, and outbursts of affect are classic symptoms of chronic virtuousness.” (p. 625) “...in the unconscious is everything that has been rejected by consciousness.” (p. 615) What this means is that if you’re a DOG, and you refuse to in any way *be* a DOG, then you’ll end up more completely DOGlike, because these undesirables will come out in ways that you won’t be able to control. My dreams, if I must tell you, are, on the whole, pretty mundane, except for... no, I can’t tell you yet about my ^{teeth}. The point is that I don’t dream about killing Him with sharp spikes, okay? But He, on His moral high horse alleging (so I hear) that there is no integrity in what I’m doing, what does He dream about? I’m frankly too scared to call Him up and ask.

But enough stupid, inept counter-pseudo-moralizing on my part. There’s another part to this Jung-thing. Completeness is basically a healthy thing, meaning that it’s a “purpose” that we as human beings “inevitably” have, or should have, or would have if we had a clue, but there’s also the more commonly held ideal of perfection. Now the reason I downplay this here, the reason I purposely don’t edit key sections, the reason I don’t take out the long boring parts of this book to make it more concise and worthwhile per page to read, is because it was such a pervasive (and kind of destructive) motivating force in my youth, one that needed to be balanced out. It’s quite possible that I’ve tilted too far the other way at this point; it’s far too easy for me in producing a product of any kind to stray from my original intentions and pronounce the result not as a failure but as a success in some different goal. So while I understand the origin of the concept of perfection, i.e. some things are better for some purposes than others, and you can imagine some even better, and better, etc., I don’t fully

Tripe

understand it as a motivating factor anymore; it seems a lame empty abstraction. I mean, if you want your room clean, *maybe* you'd want it perfectly clean, but in setting yourself to the extreme task you'd be violating the context in which your original desire arose, e.g. you want your room clean so as to keep clutter from distracting you from the projects you've taken on. So as soon as you spend too much time cleaning...

She, on the other hand, can't fully understand what I'm talking about with completeness, or how that contrasts with doing everything you do as well as you can possibly do it. I'm not even sure I can depict her problems with the concept, because I don't fully understand her point of view. But let's just say there *is* a contrast and draw a connection to my competing advice to RELAX yet to, well, not relax, to get moving and fulfill whatever purposes you have by whatever happenstance picked up. The point of relaxing is to free oneself from a certain conception of something as a problem or threat, which is what (usually) causes tension. So you gain a little distance, see the other side of the issue, gain proper ambivalence, and all is right with the world. Obviously the drive to perfection, the motivation to really do something all the way, involves at least a temporary suppression of outlooks depicting the desired goal as shit. So there you are.

So says Jung (p. 561): "...Completeness,... though imperfect by itself, forms the necessary counterpart to perfection. For, just as completeness is always imperfect, so perfection is always incomplete, and therefore represents a final state which is hopelessly sterile. 'Ex perfecto nihil fit,' say the old masters, whereas the *imperfectum* carries within it the seeds of its own improvement. Perfectionism always ends in a blind alley, while completeness by itself lacks selective values."

No, I don't know Latin either. Whatever. So if I'm in the mood I can justify why She and I are perfect for each other by reducing us to each being dominated by one of these

Tripe

basically incompatible but nonetheless complimentary goals. Of course, if I do this around Her, She refuses to fit into such a small compartment and makes me defend myself until it ceases to be worth it. Ah, My Love.

So what I'm *doing* in this section of the book, the kind of therapy I'm putting myself through to return to this stuff which undoubtedly had a great deal of effect on Me, but which out of fear of being totally psycho-lonely-suicidally depressed I've buried away in memory somewhat, what I'm doing is trying to, well, maybe, get so I can cope in such a way as to do right to both complimentary goals, to become whole unto myself without maybe requiring that I leap off into either Great Beyond. This requires converting the necessary Crud into Tripe, getting an attitude towards romance and culture and religion that is neither the bunk I was entrained with nor the pissy reaction of disillusionment. So I must spout: if It's all right there in front of Me; if I've really got My Own "whole story," then I should be able to come to terms with things (after the appropriate catharsis) and bounce back, ready to perfect myself in being an energetic, harmonious, cheerful, and otherwise cool guy. And then I can bamboozle my way into a high paying job that requires Me to do nothing but be My wonderful Self, and I'm set. Foody for Marky, yeah, Man! If She dies, buy Yourself another, yee haw. Upgrade even.

See, obviously I haven't yet reached the height of sensitivity, and am certainly much more out of touch with myself than, say, 100 pages back or so. Therefore, I just can't end the book quite yet, though I tell you you're free to pretend it's over and WALK OUT ON ME LIKE THE CALLOUS, SELF-ABSORBED BITCH/BASTARD (to be gender-cautious in my insults) YOU ARE. Ah, projection is a lovely thing. Now excuse Me while I go incorporate more objects as part of my ever-swelling SELF (i.e. I must eat). The waste matter will of course be deposited on these pages.

Forty-Seventh Sitting

It is night again, and I must push back the wrapper from my skull and do what has been written. There is an episode, or rather theme, that I have referred to but which has not yet been set to page for fear of my ending up too much like a *Northern Exposure* episode. But as I guess I have already blown this by bringing up Jung, I must state what happened, or rather started, one night about a week and a half into my stay. We attended... a cultural event.

God, no, I'm not going to drag you through that with ME, but I guess I can tell you a *little*: native dancers — “Keepers of the Treasures” they called themselves, keepers of the *tradition*: they bothered to learn move for move, beat for beat, moan for moan, the extensive song and dance-marathons of their ancestors. Yes, I felt the jungle (well, tundra) beat and foreign chanting stir my soul. Yes, I was somewhat entranced by the bright costumes and beautifully-carved masks. But *man* was it *long*. Eons. I remember a particular dance toward the end in which a single masked dancer steps about to a droning melody for about five minutes, then moves to the back of the stage, at which time an ornament is stuck on the nose of the mask, symbolizing one of various animals: once a beak, once a snout, once a whole fish, etc. Upon receipt of the new nose the dancer proceeds to do exactly what he had been doing as the song repeats itself. This continues until everyone in the audience is dead.

So I was frankly in no mood for a religious experience by the time the audience-participation finale came, during which we were ushered into a big circle which one and all were supposed to walk slowly around wiggling their hips. This was capped off by a presentation by the performing group of many cans of some lard-like goop to their university sponsor. The cheers undoubtedly echoed back through the halls of antiquity.

Tripe

The next day, the day the scary guy came up and talked to me while I was waiting for Her to get off work, I accompanied Her to the opening of a Native Arts exhibit in the university museum. While innocently mouncing the complimentary refreshments We found trapped by a presentation of sorts which included, of course, the same dancers, who proceeded to do the alternating noses dance again as the crowd moved to block all exits... Until, that is, She observed that We could escape through the gift shop.

So She... WHAT DOES IT MEAN? Am I supposed to remember how happy I was sitting next to Her in that auditorium, my shoulder brushing against Hers, and cry? Am I supposed to say that getting in touch with one's Crud sure might be therapeutically valuable, but sure isn't fun to witness when it goes on for two hundred and thirty fucking pages! ...Dammit I can't take it anymore... I've got to tell You. I've been cheating on you, okay? I've been writing to Her quite frequently and at great length. I've probably written Her about three times as much as I've written to You, and that's where all the stuff you'd probably with your voyeuristic tendencies would like to read, where I have declared my love a thousand times and mused over every small detail relevant to Our possible futures. I'm only doing this... well, for you. And for me, I guess... trying to make some sense of it, trying to gain closure when nothing has been closed. She's just *gone*, that's all, and until He gets up there for Christmas, nothing will be settled. I'm just marking time in limbo, trying to keep what sanity I have... If I let up for a moment, if I let my spirits drop too far or stop writing as much, I will lose. I know this. But if I get over-confident, if I start making plans about where to go to grad school based on where She might be willing to live, if I assume everything will be okay, then I am deliriously happy but prone to periodically get my bubble burst — and the biggest burst will be the End which I will not have prepared for. So I wait... I can't move forward; I can't move on. I wait and flail and consolidate. And I must talk to Her. Now.

Tripe

“I need you to help me remember Wednesday.”

“Which Wednesday?”

“The Wednesday before I left. I know that’s when we saw the Aurora Borealis, and... oh, I guess I do have it written down... the open mike night and before that annoying Jungian classical guitarist guy. Oh, well. I was just looking for an excuse to call you anyway.”

About an hour or so passes during which My spirits gradually lift.

“Don’t you remember? Wednesday was the Spiderman Pez night. I had to draw.”

“And I just watched you?”

“Yes. We were listening to music, and you were saying how much you liked the atmosphere. You just sat and watched me.”

“And I was happy... Thank you. Thank you for helping me remember Wednesday.”

...Which makes me think that maybe this kind of psychotherapy via relation of the event is unnecessary. All I need to do to remember, to be that past Me again, is talk with Her, be with Her. But of course that’s what I’m trying to render unnecessary, or, let’s say, less necessary. As She said in a note She hid in my suitcase, but which She had to tell me about before I found it a week and a half later: “Had such a swell time w/ you. Nothin’s gonna change that.” And it’s true. These experiences must be *mine*. That part of Me must be *Mine*.

So then... In My words, not Hers: Wednesday night was wonderful. No, nothing graphic, nothing striking (well, except the encounter with God thing), just warm and wonderful. After We say a professional classical guitarist speak about how we should all think more from our hearts and how musicians need to learn more about business to take control of their careers, and I played at her for the second time at an open mike night at the local bar, We just went back to Her place and savored the fact that Her apartment-mate had gone out of town for the week, leaving us alone and quiet. We made cookies. We let some

Tripe

DOGS into Her apartment (for a while *Queen!*). We listened to John Denver, whom I was briefly very excited about in 1981 and who “taught her how to feel,” listening until it became just too therapeutic to stand any more. And yes, I watched Her draw... an assortment of small objects propped up in a corner, among them, at my request, a Spiderman Pez, which may I say was another family heirloom, having been given to Me a birthday ago by My sister. We went out to look at the sky, and yes, finally it opened up with shifting color. First it was just far away to the side: a few stripes blending into each other and alternately into darkness. But then I looked straight above My head, and holy frigging night. And I did not even *think* of pointing at the sky and saying “It’s a bird.” Any savage knows, after all, that that was God.

Forty-Eighth Sitting

Hey! Isn’t it time for Jesus? That’s what a billboard asked Me as I drove back yesterday to Ann Arbor, a day later than I had planned at that, as I found that it really didn’t matter where I am — I could write in an airport (wait... I did) — plus, you know, my DOG was there.

Hmmm... Should I be writing about the present? Like how my determination to stop obsessing about Her has set me to the opposite extreme, wherein I’m focusing more on other projects and frankly can’t even picture her all that clearly? I tell her this every day as I write her a lengthy letter. But well, at least I’m not miserable, and overcounterreactions *do* swing back to center once they have their say. Well, heck... I can at least talk about my DOG. ‘Cause, well, you can never have too many DOG stories in a philosophical essay. Here’s the rub (eew.)...

Tripe

After experiencing all those wonderful Alaska DOGS, I began to have doubts about my own. Does Merc really care about me? Sure, She *acts* happy when I come home, but She does that for total strangers. Does Merc care if I live or die? Now most of the DOGS in Alaska didn't have to be kept on a leash; they didn't try to escape. They seemed more friendly, more affectionate, more fawning and worshipful. My DOG is an independent entity, and it requires a full-body harness and a short leash to fool oneself into thinking otherwise. Having kneeling subjects is good for One creating into the Void.

Duh. *Obviously* I'm back to religion, specifically back to Jung on religion. The point of the Jung at this point, for me and all those other bitter but intellectually-distanced-from-their-bitterness individuals, is to swing back the overcounterreaction which started 'round the end of sitting thirty-one. My reason for bashing Him (as opposed to the rationalizations which I made up after the fact), which is largely the same as every disillusioned Christian's reason for bashing Him, is because He acts like such a jerk sometimes. Here He is (according to that world view) setting us all up with a strong sense of right and wrong, both inherently and through scriptures, with a sense that if we do right, we should be rewarded, and then He randomly takes the innocent and turns their lives to shit, whether through war, famine, poverty, flood, etc. But if the damaged then take the least bit of offense at their ill-treatment, hell time! What an ass! If it's Satan (His first-born son) who keeps sneaking around and planting the seeds of evil in man and nature, then why doesn't He just upbraid that guy instead of punishing His feeble little creations? Always and forever, then, we are told that His ways are good, yes, but too mysterious for us to comprehend, let alone judge. Either let me be a moralist, or don't... none of this selective ruler-above-His-law bullshit.

This is what Jung goes about in the selection I assigned (which I'm *sure* you've now read); his example is Job. If you don't know the story, I'll summarize: Satan makes a bet with

Tripe

God that His faithful servant mortal Israelite Job will certainly turn against Him the second anything bad happens to him. So God says “sure” and kills all of Job’s crops, and animals, and family members, gives him various plagues, and turns his neighbors against him. Job doesn’t curse God for this, but He does finally come before Him to ask for some actual justice, for an advocate within Him against Him. But no, He doesn’t feel the least bit sorry, or even have the decency to explain Himself, but instead blames Job and rags on for seventy-one verses about how powerful He is, not that Job doubted this for a second. So Job realizes that He’s just a jerk, or more precisely a DOG, and there’ll be no justice today, so he gets all meek and apologetic... What else could he do? So Yahweh calms down. “The therapeutic value of unresisting acceptance has proved its value yet again.” (p. 547) So God gives Job new crops and animals and kids and cures his plague, but still doesn’t say He’s sorry. What a jerk.

So the rest of the essay is more or less an attempt to give the rest of the story, to get one to understand that God, being the totality of incompatible opposites, that Creator in the Void, that guy who incessantly feels the need to split Himself into trinities and things, to “fail to consult His omnipotence” from time to time... well, He’s got His problems too, and... well... after it all He’s an okay deity, as impossible to judge, as fully wonderful if you look closely, and ultimately as tolerable as anyone else. Now, granted we’re only dealing with symbols here, with the character of a particular mythology as described in its main text, but that’s the only way we can get a grasp on “the real thing” anyway, so We’d better be okay with Our symbols and not think they’re scum.

But enough of Him; I want you to come with **Me**, as I am much more entertaining at this point, yes? More entertaining than the dark little room He has given you, furnished by your gnawing insecurities and a general blahness (Well, maybe this is only true if you live in downtown Fairbanks, which come to think of it is a much better target for abuse than

Tripe

Vancouver, seeing as I have some actual knowledge of the former. “Cards.” <<wince>>
Now, where were We?

Ah, yes, We were contemplating Our love for each other, You and I. I hold Your picture here beside Me, and I am not alone. I regain My strength, My insight, My poise, and My sense of humor (I was going to say “a stiffo.” You’re so *cute* when you wince). No more will I villainize, criticize, encroach, manipulate, and steal. I will get beyond self-indulgence, being through You My own reader, and finish with grace and closure. You are with Me, We will know each other, and We shall be as One.

Forty-Ninth Sitting

“So why does it feel better when I do this?” You said as you touched My bare foot with Yours under two feet of 80° water.

“That’s exactly what I was talking about with all that existential crap about separateness. Whatever makes that feel good, that makes it feel good to just sit here knowing You’re not going to drown Me, that We understand each other... if You take that to its logical extreme It’s a push to get rid of Yourself as a separate entity.

“Hmmm...” You closed Your eyes and leaned Your weight against My shoulder. “I guess that makes sense.” But You remember that, don’t You, the night before I left, at the China (pronounced “Chee-nah”) hot springs... moving from pool to hot tub to very hot tub located outside, alternately baking and freezing the skin. But none of it desensitized Me to Your touch, which I experienced so consistently and elaborately that evening.

“Ah, but that’s not what you dream about, is it?”

Tripe

Well... I don't usually remember my dreams... probably because I wake up and fall back asleep several times before actually getting up these days.

"I dreamt of you again. This time we were in the back of a pick-up truck and I was lying with my head on your lap until... my father, who was driving, looked back and gave me a very stern and disapproving look."

Pretty blatant. Hmm... Maybe I'm just dealing with things about You more directly or something... what with writing You an eight page letter every other day, usually with a crappy sonnet in it. I remember dreaming about You more when things weren't so explicit.

"But you do remember some of your dreams now... You told me..."

Well... yes. But...

"You've got to talk about It."

Hey, look, your roommate's home; I guess We'll have to talk about it later.

Las Vegas pushed the door open and attempted to pull His key from the lock. This effort was largely unsuccessful, but after being verbally abused to its satisfaction, the key decided to comply. Las Vegas looked up to find two figures sitting at the kitchen table watching Him, one visibly relieved at something, the other sparkingly beautiful... but not His type, really. Besides, ya shouldn't hit on anyone you share a kitchen with. She might take it upon Herself to eat all Your cheese.

"How was Tibet?" She asked.

"Oh, it was great. We got to sleep in a hotel with these beds that... when you put a coin into 'em, they vibrate! And I ate dinner with God's girlfriend... And... oh, the best part! There was this shop, and we went in it, and it said on a big sign outside 'cards.'"

Oh, my. The Visitor spoke up: "Oh, Wise White Male, We were wondering something: Why does it feel better for Her when She touches Me with Her..."

Tripe

Las Vegas cut Him off: “Because She wants Your bod, Obviously. But more importantly, what did You learn from those native dance-a-thons?” Las Vegas looked with profound expectancy to His two disciples.

“Um... that I can actually be bored enough to make honest and involved attempts to individually sense each drop of sweat on my body, however small?”

“That He can snake His arm around Me in very affectionate and familiar-looking ways without My noticing until after the fact?”

“I mean besides that. What I’m asking is... well, were the dancers doing it right?”

“Huh?” the Visitor intoned. “Looked fine to Me. Besides, they said that if anyone screwed up they had to add on this propitiatory dance to the gods... which I guess they might have done, for all I know.”

“No, no, no... Was that the *correct* way to deal with one’s Crud?”

“Oh... more of that. Well, no... You take this one, Love.”

She smiled. “It all depends on the individual. There was one youngish guy, for instance, who chanted mostly, who was doing really strange things to himself. You could tell by his expression that he was trying to adopt a deeper voice, a more cliché “tribal” demeanor, than was in any way natural for him. I’m tempted to say that he didn’t realize exactly how weird he was being, which means he was probably less exploring parts of himself, trying on masks to see how they fit, as turning back to participate in something that he still unquestioningly believed to be a central good and appropriate thing to do, despite the fact that the rest of his apparently typical American upbringing left him pretty removed from it, to the point of having little more than a literal understanding of the texts, the dances, the ceremonies, and the myths they revolved around.”

“He was the chief’s son, right?” Las Vegas prompted.

Tripe

“Right. The chief guy was much more natural with it, and smiling. I got the feeling that even though he had a very deep and thorough reverence for what he was doing, he somehow had more of a clue... He understood more what it was about, and so what he was about.”

“So it’s not bad that he had a ‘deep and thorough reverence?’ You don’t think He should have said ‘fuck that’ more often about his culture?”

“Well, it’s hard to say... it’s such a delicate line to walk. I mean, if Mark here is going to love me, it better be deep and thorough — I’m terribly jealous — but it shouldn’t be obsessive; He should still be a whole person without me. My mother has this saying: ‘Love is not two halves coming together to make a whole; it’s two wholes coming together to make a relationship.’ And, well, the chief... he seemed to have that sparkle in his eye. Health. He was well-fed first and foremost, just a guy sharing his ‘treasures.’”

“Wow. That was good,” the Visitor said, squeezing Her arm.

All this I watch as it flows out of the pen which, though it sits in my hand, I have exerted no pressure upon. Better to let it decide what is best for it, and if it cares about me, then it will doubtless produce something which I may hold dear. But I, here in my mundane world of bulk foods and graduate school applications... I feel removed from these deliberations, for I am caught within myself, passing back through my open mouth to days when in a single evening I might wish upon a star for everlasting happiness with a girl who I barely spoke to and make a detailed list of terminology describing obnoxious people, e.g. an “asshole” is a mid-size heavy-set guy with a gruff voice, while a “shithead” is much bigger — less talk, more pounding... This way I could insult people with precision. As Shaggy (see sitting fourteen) can tell you, everything seems bigger when you’re smaller — more important, more intense, scarier, *longer*.

Tripe

Fiftieth Sitting

Chapter One The Long Night

It was only 8 o'clock at night, but I was trying to fall asleep because I had to wake up at five in the morning to go on a Boy Scout camping trip. The last trip was in November, and it was horrible! Now it was December, and I was really prepared. I had brought everything I could possibly need, and some things I didn't need at all.

Anyway, I couldn't get to sleep. I was thinking how fun the trip would be. I got out of bed and started walking toward my parents' room. I tripped over my duffle bag, and yelled some things that I shouldn't write down in a book.

"What was that?" my dad said, as he came into the room.

"I can't get to sleep!"

"Well keep trying, and don't get out of bed!"

"Oh, all right!" As I got back into the bed, my dad left the room. It was about 9:15 by now.

So, I sat in bed, trying to think of nothing. Finally I got out of bed again. I got to the door of my parent's room, and knocked. I heard by mom's voice saying...

Tripe

“Go back to bed!”

I shuffled back to my room, and got back in the bed.

It was 10:00. I tried thinking of a blank piece of paper, But it didn't work. By 11:30 I started fading off to sleep.

Believe you me, I will not make the mistake of the nose dancers and include chapters two through nine of that fine essay (“The Great Camping Trip”), which I *did* warn you about, after all. This should be enough for psychological purposes. Let's see... the handwriting is about the same (take my word for it) except larger, the style is about the same except less redundant, but what of the content? Look at it: “I *had* to wake up...” Since when do I *have* to perform a leisure-time activity? What was my internal commitment to that activity, to that organization, that made me accept it as an imperative? I allege that my role was purposely ambiguous, that I let myself be pulled by peer pressure, parental expectations, etc. to whatever seemed to be the obvious next step, whereas in fact I clearly had a good deal of power in shaping my destiny had I but exerted it... By relinquishing responsibility in this way, I could enjoy the luxury of whining about all the travail I had been “pulled” into.

And the tragedy throughout is expressed as “things going wrong,” the frustration of my desires. But therein lies the comedy, for no one takes these desires too seriously... certainly not my parents, who express no sympathy and ultimately just want me and my whining out of their hair (“...and don't get out of bed.”) Neither am I my own real adversary: my torment lies in “thinking how fun the trip would be.” And even as this is obvious foreshadowing of a tortuous adventure, so too is it ultimately a pretty accurate description given my self-deceptive *ambivalence*. Despite the hyperbolic gestures at immanent doom there is displayed

Tripe

here a lightness, which one could describe as a lack of passion, covering itself up by grandiose gestures. Everything is exclaimed! Fraught by this limbo, this disturbing relation with my unconscious, I turn repeatedly to the only other human beings present, despite the all-too-clear indications that they will be unreceptive. But more than that.. look at the images I use to try to fall asleep, to perform the dictates of society... Nothingness... a blank pad of paper, this latter reflective of the manner in which modern education ignores any systems of thought that children might have worked out independently and blasts these away with a so-called unified curriculum, forcing the kids into the state of *tabula rasa* that moldy dead guys with jolly socks thought they possessed. I, luckily, somehow circumvented this, endowing myself with “some things that I didn’t need at all,” but retain the dictate of the super-ego which Urges towards nothingness, to escape from the torment of uncertainty and ambivalence that rightly make up the stuff of life.

The most puzzling thing about this selection, though, is its conclusion: When all hope is gone, when all strategies run out, only then is there sleep, and it must creep up from behind without warning or explanation, as fickle as the Grace of God, or whatever other slightly cheaper and more ad hoc symbol you want to dredge up. I embrace this life as My Own, yet am Man apart from it, well fed with obvious parallelisms that aren’t so much a result of poor writing and underestimation of the audience’s perceptiveness, but more an account of the repetitive, sort of annoying character of entrained thought... specifically *patterns*, which, like the endless strains of a song one has been listening to over and over again to the point of recreation (that’s ree-creation, not wreckreation), like the bass part to that song which the lover of a well-practiced player might feel played by his hands on her (X-her, that is) flesh as he sleeps at night, which squeeze the brain into the shape of their dialectic until it becomes difficult to even conceive of the world as being any other shape... And yes I know I said I’d

Tripe

stop making self-referential comments, because I trust you, but I can only heft you so far. Let's compromise in a way that hopefully will let you know I trust you without My really having to do anything that even slightly shows it: From now on in lieu of a lengthy explanation for what might appear to the unwarned to be "just stupid," I will merely <<wink>>. <<Wink>>

Fifty-First Sitting

Friday morning, the day before the end, I awoke. Obviously. The long night was over and the Very End was patterning my mind like there was no tomorrow. We had reserved a rental car, and She had gotten the day off of work. So all We had to do was get through Her single class, and as the afternoon broke We would run to the House 'o Cars and soar the width and breadth of the state until the following evening, upon which I had a date with a plane.

I woke to Her alarm, which, though it was in Her room and not where I was sleeping, I could hear, as We had been leaving Her door open the past few nights as Las Vegas was away and, well, We liked to breathe each other's exhalation. She hit the snooze as I hit the coffee machine and moved on into Her room to shower Her with good mornings and collapse on Her bed. This former is a bad habit I picked up from my father, who for some whole years would burst in upon me morningwise singing some kind of good morning sea shanty, but at least I had the decency on *this* morning to stop doing it fairly quickly and fall into unconsciousness. She got up and We mutually wondered who was going to take a shower first, arriving at the conclusion that We were going running soon anyway, so there was no

Tripe

point. So We ended up with all this extra time, see... Did I suggest then that we could get a good thirty-six hours of necking in if we started right then and there? No, I think we just started getting our lives together... I did a little packing; She cleaned up as much of Her room as was possible. My presence represented a tolerable because temporary infusion of clutter in Her life, but She generally likes things at least neat-*looking*, and while I have argued that if a table has lots of random crap on it, merely pushing this into piles and aligning everything at nice-looking perpendicular angles doesn't make it any cleaner, and in fact makes it harder to find objects among the crap one might need, but these gestures only make Her laugh at Me in the same way I laughed at Her irrational resentment at My not getting Her that damn library book. I felt... well, strong... ready to suck as much joy and as many chapters out of these last two days as possible. Freedom of the open road! Yeah! Why, We could *go shopping*, or, well (St. Augustine of the Circle), go to more cheesy gift shops (I had to get stuff for X-Her, you know), and do the stuff We had actually planned, i.e. to the hot springs this evening (a popular recreational attraction recommended to us by the venerable Mr. Vegas as well as several visions in Our (collective) dreams... We had some fine (unrecorded here) swimming memories from the Midwest... Me holding Her around the waist as She swam great underwater distances in Chicago, I very sensually (for Us, anyway) burying Her in the sand, rubbing it on Her neck and face, at a beach in Indiana, Us floating with Our backs pressed against each other in the same inner tube... water is a swell excuse to get barely clothed and physical, I think... It's an elemental thing...) and to the North tomorrow... just North, on a road that's supposed to be fantastically beautiful stretching into the highest mountain peaks. From there, you can see the world! (...well, part of it, as there is this world-roundness thing... but you can see more if you bring a viewmaster viewer or something.) Can I say that I was "thinking how fun the trip would be?" Always the optimist, even if I'm predicting (as I am

Tripe

now) that the world will end in a ball of fire that won't be *that* painful. Hey, did you know that according to the startling revelations of Pope John Paul II, the next pope will be a betrayer of his church and Jesus Christ in that he will preach the tolerance and understanding of other religions and *even* probably not forbid birth control to the starving and clueless underdeveloped nations that frankly don't need any more people in them at present? If I order a special two hour video tape for \$39.95 plus postage and handling, I can learn more about it.

“So John Paul, do you believe that crap about all religions possessing parallel mythologies that reflect the same underlying Psyche?”

“No.”

Just so we're clear on how the Pope and my bastardization of Jung differ... just so you know. I'm of course keeping in the tradition of making Jung look more simplistic and hence silly than he is, all the better in getting *me* a higher Wise Man class rank. Buddha would be winning right now, but He seems to have disappeared from the four realms. Mohammed got last, but that's 'cause He failed English. But what self-respecting religious figure wouldn't when they make you learn all that *pagan mythology*... Why, I remember having to write all twelve labors of Hercules on my pencil just to pass a quiz. But it's just not supportive of a solid rote religious faith, you know, to have to read all those outlandish stories which you can't fail to notice are *mighty* similar to so much of the Bible...

“Now in Proverbs we encounter a symptom of Greek influence which, if an earlier date is assigned to it, reached the Jewish sphere of culture through Asia Minor and, if a later date, through Alexandria. This is the idea of Sophia, or the Sapientia Dei, who is a coeternal and more or less hypostatized pneuma of feminine nature that existed before the creation: ‘The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before the works of old... when he established

Tripe

the heavens, I was there... when he marked out the foundations of the earth, I was by him, rejoicing in his habitable earth; and my delights were with the sons of man.’” (Jung, p.550-551)

So God had a girlfriend, and while if you want to get technical She wasn't actually a separate entity, but just a duality within Himself, you can understand how He might feel if She went away somewhere... which She did, disappearing from scriptural literature by the time Job was written, at which point God had gotten “married” to the state of Israel. Now, Sophia was pictured as Wisdom, which is important, as it helps explain why Yahweh (we should be on a first name basis, after all) might “fail to consult his omnipotence” in such a dufus-like way. Making bets on how a mere mortal will react to something! The Man obviously didn't know the future, and hadn't thought much on Tripe either, for that matter.

But let's give Him some slack. He was upset at losing Her, He felt insecure (Why else would He feel the need to rag on about all His power? ...You only do that if you're answering some sort of *doubt*, in Yourself or another.), He had had little chance to develop any kind of sense of self, what with His being essentially *all that was there*, given that his “duality” was shaky enough for Her to disappear off into nothingness (or was it off into “the habitable earth,” maybe messing about with Dionysus or something?) for a while. No challenge, nothing different enough from Him to be a little bit against Him... One doesn't develop values in such a situation: “He saw that it was good” doesn't mean “...morally correct,” or anything — how could the blind forces of nature be “good” in such a way? No... the Universe starting in chaos means *Everything* was Unconscious, and so He was primo DOG Alpha One.

Isn't it time for Jesus *yet*? Almost. So anyway, We especially should just give Him slack because He did try to improve... that incident with Job left Man one notch higher on the moral scale than God, and doncha think that would cause Him some amount of reflection and remorse *eventually*? Yes it did. And at that point, said Jung, God started to consciously

Tripe

pursue an effort that had already been cooking since Adam was created “in His image;” He decided to *become Man*.

No, I refuse to end a chapter sounding like a wacky Biblical scholar. Yes, I did *start* to read the Bible straight through in 5th+1 grade, but I only got to Leviticus before it got *way* too boring. All those laws and laws and laws, half of them clearly insane — God telling ‘em to Moses and Moses repeating them to the people. Rules, rules, rules. *Suggestions...* as if We didn’t have Our own shit to worry about. Now Zeus and them... they were cool... just fork over a calf every few weeks and they’d leave you alone and continue seducing young women by transforming themselves into tampons or something. Those were the days...

I think We *need* another DOG story at this point, don’t you? Oh, it’s not really relevant, and it’ll only get you mad if you’re just waiting for advancement of the actual plot, but it’ll let me talk a bit about kids. I mean, I’m not going to make a big theme out of ‘em or capitalize ‘em or anything, but they do pretty much represent all adults’ crudliness staring up at them, probably with thoughts of lighting stuff on fire. This is another Wednesday story, as I now remember Wednesday just fine. It happened before the Pez and the open mike night and the Jungian dufus guitarist...

Fifty-Second Sitting

We left Her apartment out the back, already late to the aforementioned musical events. The ground was covered with a beautiful coat of snow, and it didn’t symbolize *anything*. We were skipping about merrily in this fluff when She noticed that Brandy and Lucy Lou weren’t in the pen. We headed towards the road and <<flash>>, there went Brandy, decked out with

Tripe

a full-body harness with an eleven-or-so-year-old kid chasing after her, already a good distance behind, yelling “Stop! Stop!” Having a good deal of experience in stopping running DOGS, I leapt, and she was mine. The kid mumbled, “We were having them pull us on sleds and she got away.”

“They are strong, aren’t they,” She said, as We transferred possession back to the kid. At this point Lucy came racing in Our direction followed by another kid of the opposite sex, and a repeat performance took place. The kids disappeared, pulling their oblivious slaves, with as little communication with Us as possible. We were confident that the DOGS would escape again within minutes.

Ah, kids today... Don’t know how to control their pets. Now when I was a kid, well, my DOG Maia was basically a little mop who ate her own dung, but dammit I could point it out to family friends when she did so, and later chase them around with her as she tried to lick them all over, and dammit that’s *utility* from a pet. Ah, but love was a different story. Irrelevant, even. From an early age I was a hopeless romantic, periodically playing the secret or not-so-secret admirer to some unsuspecting damsel. Yes, this need started early, which sort of undermines what I said about things having always been swell even before Shes entered my world... Come to think of it, that crap about food over affection is sort of undermined by that experiment whose name I can’t remember but which you should look up at your earliest convenience in the aforementioned psychology book by Charles G. Morris (‘cause *nobody* tell it like Charlie do) wherein baby monkeys chose a warm and soft fake-mama-model over a hard and cold one, even though the latter also included a functional fake nipple! (i.e. it dispensed food) But whatever; I ain’t no baby monkey. Nor am I a DOG. I’m beginning to get a sense of what I am (and so what is appropriate for me to do), but I don’t think I can tell

Tripe

you that yet, as it has not yet fully reached consciousness, despite umpteen thousand references toward it starting around sitting nine. I can tell you about my dream, though.

No, not *those* dreams. Last night. I dreamt that She and He and I were all in Alaska a month or two from now. We were all sitting at a table together, but She got up to do something, leaving Us alone. He turned to Me and said: “You realize that if She stays with Me, I’ll have to ask you to get lost. I have some serious plans for Us.”

I responded, “Yeah, I can see how this situation might cause you to react by getting drastic. I think I’ve pretty much done the same thing. I mean, yes, I do love Her, but would I have been driven to say it, to realize it, to think about the possibility of spending My life with Her, if it weren’t for the fact that I have to prove Myself worth losing You for? You were probably taking Her for granted; now You’re not. You needed the stress to really know where You stood, what you are.”

And then We talked, like civilized Human beings, about matters emotional and theoretical. She returned and... well, then it gets fuzzy, but... I think I turned into a lion and ate Him... possibly.

Now any junior high gym class member knows that kids are generally mean little bastards. The strong pick on the weak, and the weak pick on the even weaker. I tried introducing white dog to the other DOGS, trying to get them to look at each other, bringing them over to his little airlock thing, but to no avail. They were generally oblivious, and sometimes even growled. Even Sugar Dee, when I picked her up and held her near white dog’s face, let out a long low (for her) snarl. At that moment Teddy Bear committed the act for which I will always remember and characterize him: he threw up and ate it. I couldn’t help but see this as a sympathetic response to Sugar’s reaction. I mean, I would have seen it were I not running away in fear. Now, do I forgive the kids and dogs and God and myself for

Tripe

acting in this impolite manner? Do you? Is it even important? What the hell is *forgiveness* anyway? I've been through this before, so I won't again, but consider: I said that it comes down to whether you see fit to rage against something you can't do anything about, or just relax. Obviously then, the sane fellow relaxes, unless of course raging has some purpose, e.g. in making the wrongdoer reform, or at least apologize and promise to never never do it again because he loves you yeah yeah yeah. I doubt that the human or DOG or kid race is going to do *squat* on my account, and I doubt God will either (enigmatic <<wink>>). But the "forgiveness" that results from this attitude has almost nothing to do with the victim of my judgment... I haven't make peace with it so much as not bothering to show up to the war.

But the fact is that we tend to judge everything anyway, to develop an affective attitude towards it, despite all efforts not to, and it may be possible for me to just ignore these orientations within myself, placing no importance upon them and basing none of my actions on them, maybe there's some other way to vent this tendency. And I don't mean by loving everyone, which is a farce, or even just chillin' and giving everything a mild thumbs-up, as that contradicts what I said about perfection. The obvious solution, then — the only solution — is to focus all of this evaluative energy on the most important thing, the only thing that matters anyway... the condition and straightness of your **TEETH!** There! I said it! In **BIG** letters! I've... never... done anything... to... hurt them! Why... sob sob... should they... sob... torment Me so! They are so central, so much a part of me, yet a just a little bit dead, and wanton! Yes! In junior high I got braces (one of the most grueling ordeals of my life), and, well, I'm the first generation of patients for whom orthodontists have decided that orthodontics must be a life-time ordeal, so yes, even now I possess both a thin, curved wire on the inside of my mouth, connecting my lower canines, *and* a very thin wire on the top

Tripe

connecting the two front incisors. All I want for Christmas is my front teeth free! And so I walk the earth fettered by that which no one can see (without looking directly into my mouth, which people tend to be shy about doing). This latter wire was acquired only recently after the ancient traditional practice of gradually ceasing to use my retainer, a clear plasticky thing covering most of the top teeth which many people in high school mistook for a layer of slime, was overturned, because I was gaining a sizable gap between the two front teeth... and so the horror began, with the construction of one of those “normal” retainers (they are all equally affronts to nature), which I had to (correction: was told to) wear all the time for months, then the construction of another plasticky thing, and then this little perma-wire, which I guess might come out around retirement, but maybe not. And even now I’m supposed to wear the plasticky thing (specially altered to fit *around* the perma-wire) once a week or so...

No! I can’t talk about it any more! You’re getting too aroused anyway. Go relax, and I will feast. Same old, same old.

Fifty-Third Sitting

...So We walked out on the now only paper-thin layer of snow on that last Friday morning, hurrying in our running gear to the class that We would have been early for had We not spent so much time restoring neatness to Our respective lives, which of course dissolved into sentimental banter about this fact. So We pranced; We jaunted... So happy just to be there together, throwing (very small) bits of snow at each other... Hey, you know... I should write

Tripe

this scene from the point of *snow*. No, silly. I'm actually getting comfortable writing sort of normal narrative, I think. Scary. Cards. Need I say <<Wink>>?

So after the eighteenth bit of sharing and caring and physical humor, We arrived at class, the same class I had attended earlier, that being art history. Two things occurred here (besides my coolly and objectively noticing how many attractive women there were in the class — my eye twinkles so!): First, We saw a spooktacular movie about the pyramids, about how mysterious they are and how you can predict the end of the world by them and ease dental pain and get rich by sensationalizing shit that frankly just happens. I'm sure La Professora had a point in showing it, but I don't really know what it was. The point is, it was movie day, which is always good even if they're showing a movie about golf (I've seen at least two of these). Second, I received an *assignment*. Well, not just me, but everybody, and each person's was different, because each person was given a different picture to write about. Now, I seem to have lost my picture, but I do have the directions, from which I will quote:

1. Study the attached reproduction very carefully.
2. To the best of your ability and according to the quality of the reproduction describe the object. Identify material and technique, possibly function. (What is it? What is it made of? How was it made? Why was it made?)
3. Identify subject matter and explain content. (What does it represent? What does it mean?)
4. On the basis of your observations try to identify when and where and by whom the object was created.

Tripe

5. Consult references and assess your observations and classifications. Identify possible problems or difficulties you may have encountered.

Let's see... How can I say this without sounding cheesy? Oh, I can't. The reproduction I will be using is the picture I stole of Her, from Her apartment, of Her doing pottery. She said She was going to send it to someone, but it just sat and sat right there next to where I was sleeping in Her room, repeatedly enchanting Me with its proof that She existed before She met Me. ...So now that part of Her is Mine too, or more precisely not mine in the same way the rest of Her is. Plus it's a damn good picture; it really stole Her soul, you might say (if you was a noble savage). The "original," then, is the work of art. God, She is beautiful.

1. Study it? What have I been doing for the last three-some weeks? I know every nook of the foreground figure, and I care not that She is covered in clay... She's all the more beautiful for the (Can I say it?) elemental quality. A half hour passes and I'm still studying it, drifting in thought, mouthing soft adoration...

2. The object is my She. My beautiful, wonderful She. It appears to be a female figure sitting at a potter's wheel, left hand resting on a sort-of-spherical lump of clay, right hand pointing diagonally behind Her at a finished pot, cylindrical at its base, then bulging out, then returning for the brim. She wears blue jeans and a green sweatshirt, both spattered with clay, which is mostly whitish but very brown in some places, especially in a fist size glop over Her heart. Her hair is dark brown with lighter highlights, and it hangs down in strands, having been secured by a barely visible green and white scrunchie (Her word) to keep it out of Her face. Her head is tilted to the right and slightly down, so that both eyes are visible, but only the left ear. A few strands of hair follow the curve of this ear, one of them streaked with clay. A few other strands are also streaked, adding highlights to Her highlights. Equal portions

Tripe

hang down visibly in front of Her soft but firm-looking shoulders, coming down almost to the level of Her armpits. The left hand is fully visible and clay-covered, while the right hand, pointing away from the viewer, betrays only a blur of fingers. Her right shoulder stands slightly higher than Her left, leaving on the left a good expanse of appetizing bare neck, and Her jawline is smooth and natural, ending in a chin with just the right level of pointiness. Her eyebrows are rich and dark, but not overly bushy, while her cheeks grow to a beautiful round bulb on each side of Her perfect nose. Her smile is like the Mona Lisa but happier, while Her *eyes...* Man, the eyes are riveting. Her gray combined with the pupil black comes off as a rich brown spark set in the left half of each eye, looking straight out at Me. The combined effect is devastating.

What is She made of? Why was She made? Beats Me. At this moment, I hardly care.

3. The subject is Her, and She means everything to Me.

4. This question again... She is of Anglo-Saxon descent... Her dress could be anywhere Western, and fairly timeless. But I'd have to guess that She was created on December 30th, 1968. No. Forget that I know that. I would have to say... Can I say *this* without sounding *cheesy*? **Definitely not.** She was shot straight out of heaven, up in a clam shell from the brimy sea, down from the sky in a shimmer of gold... break down, feeling totally hazy, lack of oxygen, the collarbone tingles.

5. References? I only have a few books here, as you know, and little attention to reading them, rapt as I am in this effort. I'll work on it. The same with... problems. I'm just... so tired...

Fifty-Fourth Sitting No. I've got to keep going.

Tripe

Fifty-Third Sitting, Cont.

...So the class ended and We moved outside, through the drab parts of campus, out to the same road We had walked after running to go shopping, and before long We started running once again. And again My leg acted up, so She made Me walk. I did not get all shattered and symbolic over this, but merely sang... the song We shared, other songs from that album, by the same singer, his brother, anyone living or dead... As before, She ran ahead and back, then behind, then back to Me. Be free, My Love. Just come back someday, okay? Please?

Have I not the strength in me to upbraid myself for being so consistently mushy, for parading on like a (“reproduction” of a) Shakespearean sonnet, when you know damn well that nobody’s going to die in the end? No, I think I’m going to have to give that task to you, unless of course you go for this sort of thing, in which case more power to ya... there’s more to come.

But not now, there isn’t, as I’d like to finish up this sitting by telling you a joke. Knock, knock. I said knock, knock! Knock! Knock! Play along, ya toads, please? Fine. See ya.

Fifty-Fourth Sitting

I was talking to my left toe, telling it how this has become kind of like a Love Boat episode, with multiple themes instead of plots, that take turns getting “developed.” He

Tripe

suggested that I do an actual Love Boat chapter with me as Gopher and what's-her-name as cruise director Julie... I thought this might be pretty neat, as long as all plots revolve around tooth loss. Tom Bosley, Carol Channing, Florence Henderson, all those buggers... teeth shattered; jaws falling out... the works.

Ach. Man oh man. I can't deal with the Crud unless I deal with television, but hey, that's a long-term project and too personal to really talk about. But cut the stallin', gent! Back to the streets!

...Sooooo I walked and She ran, and sometimes as She passed by I should stop singing long enough to trade witty banter... or rather real banter that has been trained by years of watching people in TV and movies trade witty banter... but not even that, which goes on in offices across the country to the pain of all concerned... this is banter aware of its genesis, conscious of its Crud, and I think it's essentially new to our generation as a wide-spread phenomenon. So I told Her this; I told Her that I had been having doubts as to whether this book was worth anything, what was soooo special about My life that anyone would want to read about it. But there it was: I could be the first person that I know of to actually catch this sort of dialogue for what it is... I mean, crappy movies today tend to still show people actually being (in the demented minds of the screenwriters) clever, while those that try to be realistic just show people talking without effort, while the truth is that most people are always trying to be clever and come out with pretty demented results.

The flaw in my logic was two-fold. First, I wasn't taking into account modern literature, which frankly I don't read much of. So it's probably been done many many times behind my back. Secondly, I can't remember two verbatim lines of any one conversation and can't remember *any* of this one with Her in particular. Oh. The rental car agency loomed close, and

Tripe

We moved in for Our capture, dealing with the many colorful Alaskan characters who worked there, ho ho, and climbed into *Our* car.

Yes, short and sweet scenes in which nothing happens... But couldn't ya feel the mood, that mood of anticipation of high adventure leading to separation? No? I understand... yes... You couldn't concentrate either, not after that **unnerving tooth dream**. My left toe (I only have two) told Me that everyone has tooth dreams, dreams of them corroding and shattering and smooshing and hijacking a bus and all. Anyone that doesn't have 'em's a dork, defined as "*medium build, kind of stupid, bug nose, and no teeth dreams.*" I bet Jesus had tooth dreams... And no, you damn jumping-to-conclusions reader, I don't think *I'm* Jesus. Heck no... or his Messianic successor, or the anti-Christ or Captain Stubing. *You* know who I am... *You know Me!* And know means know.

<<author's break period in which proverbial doughnuts are eaten and profound emotional changes occur>>

My sister called Me up immediately after skimming the first installment of this book because she thought it was a cry for help. I told her it was very much over-dramatized and I made lots of stuff up. The former, *at least*, was true. Now I hadn't intended this work to cry anything except the battle shouts of my forefathers, but I'm wondering how, if I did want to cry for help, I would actually go about it. I have no real idea. Likewise, my sister didn't really know how to respond if this was in fact such a cry. Hmmm. In spite of being really weird, then, even members of my own family expect each other to be normal enough to take the heat. And so We are, We Titans. ...or Olympians... something like that.

Oh, let me update you. Last night, after I wrote all that stuff about Her picture and all, after I talked to Her and realized that even She assumed that I was being more normal that I

Tripe

actually was, I wrote to Her, and somewhere in the midst of this the big breakdown came. Actual tears and all... you know, like a normal human who's not repressing these things. Cry and move on. So I wrote during and through the whole incident, but to Her not to You. So sorry to deprive you of your gluttony for obscene sensationalism. So this therapy stuff is working, I guess... I mean, the <<narrative>> did say that profound emotional changes have occurred. Maybe that should have been "proverbial profound changes." Whatever. If this keeps up, I 'spect I should be in ship shape about the time you shove off.

Okay, the task of the day is to get revved for the bitchin' fire-and-brimstone mega-climax that'll be coming your way after the soup or salad (your choice). And what could be better suited for such revving than more stories about teeth? Despite this obvious truth, this value of the collective aesthetic, I'm not going to tell any, though I will tell you the most recent and least scary of the three scary dreams, which is not a "story" because it does not involve DOGS, and what's a story without DOGS? (What is merely habitual to Me swift becomes natural law, no(ron)?)

In this dream my bottom retainer falls out, leaving a chunk of jagged cement with a touch of wire in it growing out of my left lower canine. I am sort of upset by this, and tell Her so. Mostly I'm just struck by disarray; the surprise annoyance leaves me not knowing quite what to do. That's all.

What to do, of course, in such a case, is obvious to the waking individual (which is another name for you, thanks entirely to Tripe, the most pretentious substance in the world available on wheat bread), namely to lick at the metallic fragment until your tongue bleeds, so as to taste from this the sweet chill of self-inflicted misery. Damage, that is. Bleak gold. Auto-cannibalistic tea. What's a poor fool to do?

Tripe

...Well, we can see what He did, according to questionable interpretations of a questionable text and funky psychology magic, if we turn to Healthy, Happy, and Jung, page 562 and onwards: In Job, Yahweh “comes up against a man who stands firm, who clings to his rights until he is compelled to give way to brute force. He has seen God’s face, and the unconscious split in his nature... [The Man is] an amoral force of nature... that cannot see its own back... God was now known, and this knowledge went on working not only in Yahweh but in man too. Thus it was the men of the last few centuries before Christ who, at the gentle touch of preexistent Sophia, compensate Yahweh and his attitude, and at the same time complete the anamnesis [(which is a kind of lung disease)] of Wisdom. Taking a highly personified form that is clear proof of her autonomy, Wisdom reveals herself to men as a friendly helper and advocate against Yahweh, and shows them the bright side, the kind, just, and amiable aspect of their God.”

Yeah, yeah, yeah. So archetypal Sophie comes back in the new incarnation of Mary, who is God’s daughter and wife and mother and gets Assumed in a glorious Assumption that humans surely won’t mind if organisms are specifically created for the sole purpose of rotting their teeth until all they can eat is applesauce, creamed corn, and mama-bird pre-digested worm parts (which is a kind of pot pie). So under Her creative juicing, God wants to be man to see what it’s like, and so does the Jesus thing, which enables Him to do stuff like entreat Himself not to lead Us, His poor little sheep, into temptation (which would be a pretty sacrilegious thing to even *infer* that an all-good deity might do, say, by entreating it not to do so, if it weren’t The Deity Himself doing it in what gets called “The Lord’s prayer”), and hang about on a big stick saying “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?”

So with this most sensitively-described sacrifice of Himself to Himself, He supposedly satisfies His bloodthirsty Urge and is now ready to treat Us nicely.

Tripe

Now I realize that somewhere 'round the end of sitting forty-eight that I promised to be nice Myself, and I realize My characterization of this God fellow, and thus my treatment of all those readers who for some really fucked-up reason take aspersions against this dude as personal insults to themselves, has been, well, less than sympathetic, even though this was supposed to be the section wherein I related the way in which Jung depicts Him as really underneath it all extremely okay. I guess I just don't understand Him yet, though I have an inkling. I'd like to make up to You for any offense taken, possibly by treating you to some creamy delicious frosting straight out of the can, a favorite treat of the toothless (who are a kind of Damaged). But later; Halloween is fast approaching, marking the almost-a-month anniversary separation celebration. The holiday itself is on Sunday, or rather will begin Saturday night at midnight, but the "official" holiday, the one featuring 1 1/2 hours of daylight during which kids are allowed to go around begging, is today, i.e. Friday, and I consequently must go to a party at the house of X-She (who had one comment upon seeing my extensive photographic record of Alaska: "She looks like you.") dressed in a clever disguise called "jumper cables with hat." This involves my wearing whatever I happen to be wearing, plus a hat, and wrapping something yet to be determined around my neck and shoulders. Probably jumper cables.

Fifty-Fifth Sitting

A Man passed I while stalking pale shadows on this an October the 30th morn, and His name... His name, He said, was Mad. He pointed to the sky and spoke of the full moon lying just out of eyeshot. I gave Him My book, at which He took a look, whilst I stood and

Tripe

examined My shoes. They were there, but kept changing, dissolving and fading until I forgot whose was whose. And as He finished He started to curse Me out of a terrific enraged jealousy, for He too would expose His pent-up Tormatos (<-His word), if He only had not lacked the skill to compose enough surrounding textual fluff so as to make It palatable. “Well, heck,” I said. “Write a chapter or so, and I’ll edit It down and use It.” At this He was overjoyed. He gripped Me lapelwise, lifted Me up, and kissed Me, so glad was He. Yes, He said, He *would* write, He said, and use *Me* to do so, He twitched and said...

This is a nasty actual dream I just had, with exactly that amount of verse, I swear to Sophie. (Ah, My Sophie. I saw Your face last night — probably the alcohol, though *I* couldn’t feel it. Are you Her incarnation or Her rival? Both? Read on, Sophia; have a taste of My flesh made word, for this is the only chance You’ll get, as My heart is taken, You know, if that wasn’t already grotesquely obvious.) I’ve made this dream offering to several different actual people, but no one yet has written My ending. “Everybody wants a eulogy, eh?” you think? No, actually I wanted something totally irrelevant. Mayhaps I’ll get a parking ticket or something that I can copy the text from and call it “Epilogue.”

Ah, but I forget there is more “logue” to relate, and I must bring you up to speed, up through all the events that took place until this time one moon ago (yes, it is still Saturday morning), even if I have to lie in bed all day to do it. Sorry: It. Hey, now... stop objecting to this gratuitous mystic vaguification. As Jung would say (p. 577): “What [the bleedin’ heck] is the use of a religion without a mythos, since religion means, if anything at all, precisely that function that links us each to the eternal myth.” As My mother would say (in that nasty parental confuse-the-child way): “You’ve just got an excuse for everything, don’t you?” Yup.

Tripe

We drove east. Well, not immediately, as We first did a bit of minor shopping, showering, packing lunches, and gazing longingly into each other's eyes (Well, maybe that was just Me. Narcissism, you know). But eventually, We drove east. The road was beautiful: lots of rolling hills, open vistas, great forests, and just the coolest snow and sky phototechnics ya ever did see on a sunny afternoon. I played with the radio for a while, forcibly switching the station every time a commercial would intrude, but She soon put a stop to that, leaving Us — thankfully — having to talk. I made a point of turning on to any random side road that looked like it might lead up a mountain. The first attempt of this sort nearly got us stuck in mud on a path that was obviously intended only for plastic Malibu Barbie Dream Machines, and not Our... what was it?

That was exactly the question We argued over as We continued driving after getting ourselves unstuck, a maneuver that involved driving well over 300 yards in reverse and a lot of bemused low-volume screaming: What kind of car was this? I could have sworn it was a Saab or Subaru or something, but She said Mitsubishi. But I was damn sure it wasn't that; I don't even think Mitsubishi makes cars... TV's, Yes, VCR's and stereos, but not cars. It's like driving a Magnavox. Why We couldn't just look somewhere *in the car* to settle this dispute I don't know; I don't think We wanted to... We said We'd check at the next stop, so as to declare a winner in what I now proposed to Her as a *bet*. We weren't sure what to bet, but eventually She came up with the idea of having Me vacuum the whole apartment if She won...

“Okay, well... if I win, then You have to kiss Me.”

“What? You can't bet things like that. I can't do that. I am *so sure*.”

I thought some more and finally came up with Her having to read the whole book and write a report on it. She was none too pleased with that option either... So when We stopped on a dirt road that seemed to be going no place save the continued circumference of a small

Tripe

circle just off the main road, but yet was still within clear view of some hills, a lake, some empty forest service trucks, and a *large* pile of gravel, it wasn't clear if a bet had been made or not. I claimed no, of course, as I lost.

"I thought you'd try to weasel out," She said.

"Tell me that *you* wouldn't have if you'd lost."

"Yeah, well..." She shrugged as We climbed up on the gravel, which seemed the most climbable of the aforementioned nearby structures. "I'll read the book anyway... eventually."

"So if you had lost, would you have written the report?"

"No... I probably would have kissed You."

I was frankly appalled by Her shocking licentiousness, and remained so even as She insisted that She would have merely kissed Me briefly on the elbow or something. Mitsubishi doesn't make cars... What was I thinking?

Oh, no you don't. Get back in the car.

Like all the other times We stopped mid-route, We didn't initially stop, but passed the spot, then sort of braked, slowing right in the middle of the road for a look behind, then put on the brakes hard, debating as the shoulder straps tightened whether or not We had time for this, then sped back in reverse so as not to miss what We'd missed. This time it was a beautiful and no doubt extremely cold river surrounded by the fixin's of a national park, with the exception that, like the last stop and the stop before, there were no people in sight. Just Her and Me alone together in a vast expanse featuring many opportunities to hurt ourselves. The latest example of this was a sheer cliff face rising some two or three stories to the

Tripe

woodlands above; this I immediately proclaimed My intention to scale. She suggested ascending via the gradually-sloped grassy area immediately to its left, and I wisely agreed. And though My knee hurt like a bitch, need I say I was having a good time? Need I say I was so happy I could burst all over the side of that hill? The slope wasn't so gradual at some points, so We had to make handrails out of the many small trees, and failing this, reach into the cracks between the rocks. Hey, I haven't drawn any lizard analogies yet, have I? No? Good.

She reached to the top before Me and coached my ascent: "Don't fall," She said. She gave Me a hand up the last step and the vista was Ours. We looked down at Our small rental car and mutually wondered what We would do if someone right then leapt out behind a bush and started to steal it. We determined that there weren't any compellingly interesting paths to follow at Our new plateau, so We descended once again to the riverbank and joked about the possibility of pushing each other in.

Oh, let's cut to the chase. What did I do to deserve this? Oh, not Her presence, which is totally wonderful, or Her present lack of presence, which generally sucks but is probably best until She gets Her stuff sorted out... I mean the *whole* thing: the messiness, the ambivalence, the part that seems from a certain basic pint of view to be totally fucked up... I can trace it back, yes! (I've really got to if I want the whole dredge-up-my-youth therapy to seem even mildly sensible), to a time when I flirted with simplicity and rejected it... sort of. And this time is rushing headlong into NOW.

Fifty-Sixth Sitting

First through third grades were easy for me. I was the tallest, the smartest, the fastest reader... not to mention the loudest. Little else mattered. I was for all intensive purposes king. I even had a girlfriend, not that she ever acknowledged herself as such, but, well, you know... She was freaked out enough to tell others *years* later that she thought I was following her around. I wasn't. So when fourth grade came and I was poured out from my "open education" classroom, which featured a randomly-selected group from all three grades that stayed basically consistent from year to year (beyond one grade disappearing and another joining up) and had little interaction with the rest of the rabble, into the melting pot, I was taken off guard. Athletics suddenly became very important, obscure fashion standards began to be enforced, and a caste system arose that left me only two notches above untouchable, which was nice in that it still left me with people to pick on. Not only could I not throw or catch (I became notorious for playing the "out-out-outfield" where no balls go), but my parents had given me the genetic and environmental gift of being absolutely clothing-oblivious (It took me a full year to even figure out what "where's the flood" *meant.*). Yes, yes, you know these stories from your own life (or the life of some poor slob friend of yours); I won't dwell on them. The important element here was the recourse to which one could turn to right such wrongs, to gain prestige and power as well as... well, I'm not sure what, exactly. This was the forum: the after-school arena, the place by the bike racks or behind the trees on the far side of the playground, or wherever, where kids of all ages would gather to beat the crap out of each other.

Most matches were one on one... I had heard of a few group brawls and fantasized about more, but by and large it was every man for himself. Now of course to a sane child like

Tripe

myself this all seemed mind-bogglingly stupid — savage and pointless. So on more than one occasion I accepted a challenge and didn't show, usually with a later excuse that there had been some misunderstanding about the exact location and dammit I had been waiting for him all that time, so *he* must be the chicken. This backfired once when my route home happened to pass within the line of sight of the location where my current adversary and his audience of thousands were waiting for me. At this I simply ran.

As little as these incidents did to help my reputation, they didn't hurt it much either, as my place was pretty much set in stone so long as my own group of friends didn't abandon me, which was pretty unlikely given that I was their *de facto* leader. But this didn't help much come fifth grade when I was put in a classroom with none of these friends and virtually everyone I despised. That year was painful, and I was forced to adopt a whole slew of defense mechanisms designed to set me apart and above the madness I could not escape. What they said didn't matter because I was much smarter than them; my teachers liked me because I told jokes that only they could understand, everyone else being too dense, you know. I learned how to make most of the girls in the class feel sorry for me, and so at least be that far on my side. I reinforced this by starting to hit on some of them, usually by note or more often by third-hand account, with limited success at first but eventually getting one of them to write me back on occasion... and sometimes even talk to me. By this time sixth grade was well in swing, but despite my maturity I still couldn't figure out what we would actually *do* on a "date," and so didn't know how to respond when She (pre-She) asked Me this question. But no matter... to the extent that I was capable of a "relationship" at that tender age, I had myself a better half, and so was pretty much happy.

But you know, there are times when a man just gets pushed too far, and it had to happen eventually. This was no minor enemy, no squirt with a theorem to prove, but a full

Tripe

fledged bully, a bonified USDA-approved shithead. His eyes were mean; his thoughts were mean; his *hair* was... well, you know. Who created this monster? Some Bastard, for sure. And I don't care that he was and probably still is an intricate network of concentric teleologies, because he's *not*. He's just evil... and bad and awful and everything I am not.

We saw a moose. We did. It was right there off to the side of the road, which at that point was kind of a bridge, so when We stopped the car and got out, looking slightly down upon It as It ate, the experience wasn't entirely unlike being at a ZOO. Wink wink wink wink wink wink wink wink wink wink wink wink wink wink wink WINK!

The second tooth dream involved death by shattering. One by one los dientes grew brittle, developed cracks, and crumbled at the mercy of some inner turmoil. My reaction, both asleep and while remembering in the waking state, was made up of horror and disgust. Nausea, that is. But enter Bataille (p. 92,86,87,92,83,91) to prance gleefully, around yet dangerously near the issue:

"We have to imagine a sacrifice as something beyond nausea... We are not always strong enough to will this. We come to an end to our resources and sometimes desire is impotent. If the danger is too great, if death is inevitable, then the desire is generally inhibited. But if good luck favors us, the thing we desire most ardently is the most likely to drive us into wild extravagance and ruin us... As far as they are able... men seek out the greatest loss and the greatest danger... Which of us has not dreamed himself as the hero of a book?... Following upon religion, literature is in fact religion's heir. A sacrifice is a novel, a story, illustrated in a bloody fashion. Or rather a rudimentary form of stage drama reduced to the final episode where the human or animal victims act it out alone until his death... Nowadays sacrifice is outside the field of our experience, and imagination must do duty for the real thing.

Tripe

"The victim dies and the spectators share in what his death reveals... This sacramental element is the revelation of continuity through the death of a discontinuous being to those who watch it as a solemn rite... Men as discontinuous beings try to maintain their separate existence, but death, or at least the contemplation of death, brings them back to their discontinuity."

Yes, Mr. French person. I know you are weird. But what is your point?

(p.90:) *"The act of violence that deprives the creature of its limited particularity and bestows on it the limitless, infinite nature of sacred things is with its profound logic an intentional one. It is intentional like the act of the man who lays bare, desires and wants to penetrate his victim. The lover strips the beloved of her identity no less than the blood-stained priest his human or animal victim... With her modesty She loses the firm barrier that once separated her from others and made her impenetrable."*

Gosh, Georges. That's a really diseased excuse for a dream interpretation. I think you'd better rest.

Jung, p. 603: *"Although it is generally assumed that Christ's unique sacrifice broke the curse of original sin and finally placated God, Christ nevertheless seems to have had certain misgivings in this respect. What will happen to man... when the sheep have lost their shepherd, and when they miss the one who has interceded for them with the father?... He promises to send them for the father another advocate in his stead, who will assist them by word and deed and remain with them forever... This Spirit of Truth and Wisdom is the Holy Ghost by whom Christ was begotten. He is the spirit of physical and spiritual procreation who from now on shall make his abode in creaturely man. Since he is the Third Person of the Deity, this is as much to say that God will be begotten in creaturely man... [Says the] 82nd Psalm: **'You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you.'**"*

Tripe

Fifty-Seventh Sitting

One hour until zero hour (the four week anniversary thing, i.e. midnight *Alaska* time); I don't think I'll have you all updated by then, but I guess Halloween night, i.e. tomorrow, should work just as well for dramatic effect. Yes, many things are supposed to magically coincide without too much real effort on my part. I trust this effort to Someone, though, although I don't know who exactly. I just know everything will work out okay, or at least work out, or at least end. This I know. I think.

You already know the hot springs story in just about as much detail as I'm willing to relate. I didn't mention the point at which we were standing outside alone, our lower bodies at 95°, our upper bodies at 45°, sort of pseudo-slow dancing, and I swear to God She kissed Me on the neck. I decided then and there that within the next twenty-four hours I *would...* vacuum Her apartment.

And that night, after fighting off an angry goose, after the long dark drive home in which the tranquillity and sense of immanent envelopment by the unknown hung out in the back seat while our sense of not knowing quite how to act towards each other grew to such epic proportions that our Mitsubishi Dream Machine needed no fuel of its own, after being snapped back into social mode to deal with Her roommate, then Her bedroom door closed and the combined weight of several eons of evolution overcame us... sort of.

God my little room is *cold*. I stand in this breeze from the closed window, as myself. Possibly for the last time. The lunar month has elapsed, and all I have to show for it is a lot of writing and a small pain just behind the middle of my forehead. I have met another

Tripe

“prospect,” someone whom I can talk to, but would turn that direction only out of a deep despair. Nothing has changed for my She since I left, nor will it soon. So I must put myself on hold, try not to change a bit, until the New Year. I must define myself here and now and use this as a base for all activity. And ya know, I might as well kill two birds with one stone and use this opportunity to finish off my grad school application.

Statement of Purpose

Name: Linsetc. Marky Too complicated to explain Major: philosophy
Legal Family Name (surname) First Name Middle Name

The statement of purpose is required of all applicants. If your major department requires a different format, you do not need to use this form.

I am a human being, which means I possess no detailed intrinsic purpose, but am provided with a complicated jumble of purpose-generating systems (e.g. my digestive system, my libido, my “instincts,” etc.) with which I cannot help but deal with if I am in the least bit conscious. Among these is the drive, the need maybe, to adopt a purpose or two as my own, i.e. to use this to generate consciously-held goals. To determine what purpose to pick, to decide which will feel most natural or fulfilling to me and so continue to engage me as “worthwhile,” I must use whatever Wisdom, however slight, I may have somehow acquired.

Wisdom does not dictate paths, exactly, but merely tells me that some paths are best avoided. And by God She tells Me to RELAX, but not to SLEEP, never really SLEEP. I don’t want to miss anything. I don’t want to wake up and find I’ve spent eighty years of my life eating and watching television. I want to feel, by God. I want to feel it all, except whatever might keep me from feeling later... I guess I’ve got to figure that out as I go along...

Tripe

And I know to be awake, to be really alive, I need Her, or someone very much like Her, to watch my back, and give me fuel, and take my gifts, and be a little bit against me... tightly. As chance or fate would have it, I love Her, so My purpose is to keep Her in the best possible way... not so that She feels imprisoned, or is forced to give any other parts of Her life short shrift. It is my purpose to stay in Her heart and mind, and keep Her in mine. I hereby let Her into my heart, in a most deep and permanent way, so that even if I hear the cries of my own panic or the Call of the Wild, I will not falter, for She will call me back. And if this proves impossible for Her, for whatever reason deep in Her heart, I will forgive Her and move on; it is part of my purpose to change my purpose should this prove necessary. I must retain that glint.

Oh, and also I want to study some stuff... probably philosophy... I guess.

That should get me into heaven... Oh, yes... did I mention I already have a reserved seat there? Yep. It came just before sixth grade, at an insidious summer camp I got sent to in Wisconsin where for a week I was barraged with nature walks, bizarre team sports, and Jesus. And yay! did I accept the Lord into my heart on a hot summer night when the singin' was strong and the preachin' was stronger. And ooo ah was I told that I was saved, that God would never let me go, no matter how far I twisted, that He would always be inside of Me with a hand around my heart...

Let me explain a Jungian term for a moment, something that I realize I have to this point made no attempt to do, preferring instead that you be just slightly baffled at his erudition and feel *that* much dumber than me. The term is (pause while I look it up) **enantiodromia**. It is introduced on page xxvii of the editor's (Joseph Campbell's) introduction of *The Portable Jung* in the context of a discussion of Introversion vs. Extroversion. "Each attitude, however, is

Tripe

susceptible to *enantiodromia*, and when that occurs there emerge all the other unconscious contents, containing, reinforcing, and bewildering one another in such a pell mell of feeling-toned complexes as to put one, literally, 'beside oneself.'" So for instance, when God decides He's going to be all good, all that evil that is just as much Him has to have somewhere to go, so it first seeps through in subtle ways, and then totally rages out of control in all that apocalypse-stuff in Revelation, with the Lamb running around slaughtering everyone, and all but 144,000 elect getting thrown into hell. Once an ass, Eternally so...

The third tooth dream was by far the worst. I have had nightmares *about* this nightmare; I have started screaming in crowded restaurants; I have felt all my clothing flee in fear from the possessor of such mighty visions. I told you how I'm still supposed to wear that retainer, right? And how I haven't at all, really, or hadn't before that dream anyway. Well, I dreamt one day late in the summer that I woke up in the same bed with Her, and felt something strange. And whether I looked in the mirror or didn't even need to, I'm not sure, but I knew what I had become... My left rear upper incisor had moved all the way in front of and over my left front upper incisor; my right front upper incisor had moved in front of and over my right rear upper incisor. I would draw you a picture if I did not fear it coming to life. I did draw Her a picture, in a letter written to Her during My boring hours of summer work (i.e. all of them, few though they were). She knows My pain, and laughed. Ah, My Love.

Did I fight the shithead for Her? ...for my Her of the moment, that is. She thought I did; I heard it straight from her friends. She flatters herself. There was much more to it than that, much more buried down there that had to be let out, much more to prove...

Tripe

Well, as midnight Alaska daylight time hits, one twenty-nine day (for the purposes of this revelation) month since my plane took off and made Her tears flow long and hard, the revelation occurs. Well, actually it's 11:00pm, Alaska time, as an hour ago daylight savings changed to standard time... but I guess it hasn't happened there yet, as it's before 2:00am. Or does it happen simultaneously across the country? Doesn't that screw up TV scheduling? Would I get to see *two* late-night Dukes of Hazard episodes, if only I would stop having revelations?

Oh, that... the revelation is that I am God. Hey, now, you really should have seen this coming; I did give fifty-odd obvious foreshadowing clues. Yes, this was the secret thing that I said mentioned near the end of the second paragraph in sitting forty-four. (And I didn't even have to look that up; I just *knew*.) I couldn't tell you about it because I was constructing an actual sort-of literary device (this one is called "pretentiofication"). So I did, and I'm God now. Surprise!

You see, I've been slowly realizing that were I to achieve Enlightenment, the plot would speed up considerably. Plus I could take this arrogant asshole thing that's been surfacing all over and take it to its logical conclusion. Yes, I am arrogant, and this book is pretty damn self-indulgent, and consequently weighed down with lots of excess fat, but that's okay, because I'm *God*, ya see, so nyah. I am so powerful that I *could* make Her totally drop Him at this point, but I won't because I'm going to endow Her with free will, and dammit by my command that term magically does make some kind of sense. Anyway, if She tries to cross Me, I can always threaten Her with eternal damnation. So whatever. I'm omniscient, and I know the future, which in this case holds that She'll pick me and get assumed, so now you know and can just stop reading now.

Tripe

Hey, you stop stoppin', you very tiny speck of a nothing of a reader, or I'll smack ya good. There's still more tale to tell and dammit you're gonna read it because it's not even *slightly* under your control anymore. So what hey... lie back and enjoy it, baby.

Well, Geez, where to start, now that I have all the resources of the five thousand realms at my disposal? I could tell you about the Creation, or Life Beyond Black holes, or about a lovable smart-alecky red puppet from outer space that makes its home with everybody's favorite family. Or I could whine about getting hurt in sitting 26... Ah, yes! To satisfy what I said before about wanting to relate realistic dialogue, and so what makes this book worth reading, I'll grant you some actual, verbatim dialogue from the Last Day, which I possess thanks to my omniscience plus the fact that We taped it. Throughout about twenty minutes of that day (not in a row), I had my little tape recorder running, filling up all the space after my song with Us talking and/or Me muttering affectionately. She was nice enough to send a snippet of this to me by mail, which I requested She do, but not until after She had done it... spooky, eh? So I got it in the mail yesterday along with lots of relevant music and even a bit of *Her singing*. I say a bit because the tape cut off after only a verse, and She's glad of it. But whatever: I could hear Her sing any time, if I *really* wanted, 'cause I'm God, that's why. Hey, there's a mosquito on your back... oh, it flew away just before you turned around. See? I

know everything about you. 'Cause I'm

God.

Tripe

Fifty-Eighth Sitting

S: “No it’s not.”

M: “Whaddaya mean?”

S: “No... it’s not.”

M, interrupting: “All modern, sensible, civilized cars have anti-lock brakes.”

S, quick and long: “No... It’s an extra feature, and if it doesn’t have cruise control, it doesn’t have anti-lock brakes.”

Pause, then simultaneously M: “Duh.” and S: “Like the one time we saw the..”

M, interrupting: “Yeah... And it’s also we’re in a Saab...”

S: “...the one time—no,” S laughs, and simultaneously S: “Mitsubishi.” and M: “You wanna bet?”

M: “Wanna bet Mitsubishi doesn’t make cars; they don’t make cars; they just make TV’s.”

S, interrupting: “Yeah... yeah, I think you already did your vacuuming on this one now *listen.*”

M: “Okay.”

S: “The one time you...”

M, interrupting: “Besides, you already kissed my neck.”

S: “No... the one time...”

M, interrupting: “You did!”

S: “No, I didn’t.”

M, interrupting: “You did!” and simultaneously S: “No...” and M: “the one time we were in the in the in the...”

Tripe

S, interrupting: "I did not kiss your neck."

M, finishing: "water."

Simultaneously M: "It was very light" and S: "It was not... a kiss."

M: "It was."

S: "It was not."

M: "Well, what was it?"

S: "It was *water*... and your imagination."

M: "You're just totally lying." Simultaneously M: "You're just totally lying." and S: "I am *not* lying."

M, softly: "You kissed my neck."

S: "... what?"

M: "You kissed my neck."

S, interrupting: "I did not... kiss your neck."

Pause, then S: "You are wanting to believe that..."

M, quickly: "No, you did... while we were..."

S, interrupting: "No. I know what you're thinking of..." then simultaneously M: "okay." and S: "...and I know I thought you thought that's probably what I did, but it was not what I did."

M, interrupting: "Well, what did you do, you went [makes gross hacking noise]..." She laughs and S: "Yes, it was water."

M, interrupting: "Yes, it's a hairball."

She laughs longer "*Water noise*... choking. It was choking."

M: "...totally lying."

S, quickly, laughing: "No, I'm *not*. You're just..."

Tripe

M, interrupting: “Well, then you’re just giving me wrong signals like that; that’s why everything went astray, and we did that [slight pause for emphasis] *horrible, demented thing*.

Pause. S: “Well. You should have verified what you had...” She trails off.

M: “No, I didn’t want to break the mood of the moment. You know... It was...”

S, interrupting, laughing: “Well, it was water suction, not a kiss.” She really laughs.

M, after a pause: “Oh, yeah, okay... well... So were all mine. You know... All this suction of spittle; ya gotta do somethin’ with it.”

S, interrupting: “No, no, no.”

M: “Yeah, yeah, yeah.”

S, forcefully: “No!”

M, feebler: “Yeah.”

S: “Yeah.”

M, after pausing to briefly hyperventilate. “Don’t you try to confuse me! You’re so wily, dammit.” She laughs while M: “Stop being wily.” It ends almost plaintively.

Whew. Now I know why I don’t write realistic dialogue... One minute, thirty-nine point twenty-nine seconds of dialogue (maybe a bit more; my walkman runs fast) = what? two and a half pages? Hey, I could figure out minutes per page... of course I could; I’m God! And I can say it as many times as I want and be as big of a bore as I want ‘cause it’s my cosmos and I’ll cry if I want to. And I guess I did last night, as I set my Godly sophisticated recording equipment to play that one verse of Her singing again and again... Yeah, I guess I officially missed reaching the climax of this book by Halloween, and the day after for that matter, so now it’s an actual month after I left, but fuck that. I’m uncertain (because I choose to be) whether it’s the month or the lunar month or the Halloween in between that makes for

Tripe

significance, but I decree that the significant temporal point will be whenever I get to the climax, which has really already started but it's kind of slow so you might not have noticed. And I guess I did know that daylight savings time started Saturday night, and *not* Sunday night, which means I purposely rushed away from eating with the hypothesized-rival Woman of Deepest Despair on the pretense that I was late for something that I really wasn't late for, which I guess is why I got there before anyone else...

And I thought that by getting the situation really in my head enough to cry over Her, it would be such a relief, and it is, but I know now as God that it's a relief several times in succession, i.e. I cry, but then feel very peaceful, but then cry again, etc. And I would know how this continued through My sleep, but I didn't get very much, as I had to get up for My first day of an actual Forty Hour/Week job, which thank Me will be over with forever come Saturday, after which I will once again be stocked up with 89¢ pizzas and 45¢ pot pies (which are a type of lard) and so can have enough energy to worry about what to do with all my time now that I'm done with this book, which I will be by then, I know 'cause you know why. And I am God and God is Love and I Love Love Love Love Love so much over such vast distances and to such high heights that I'm going to have to beat the crap out someone, and don't think I didn't walk through His (X-Their) neighborhood yesterday, because I did, and I just may again for the book! For the book! For you, Sophia and minion Ted and my left toe and the fifteen faces of Las Vegas and all of you! I love you and if you let me into your heart and head I will never leave you (even though the lame-o author will probably be too busy chewing his cud or fornicating or wanting to do so {chew his cud} to give you so much as the time of day 'cause he's such a lame-o), for I have always been a part of you, which *I did say* somewhere in the first or maybe second sitting, and you should be way satisfied by now that there is unity to this manuscript, because I decreed that it be so even though in fact the entire book was

Tripe

written by having DOGS fight over a sea of papers, and then shaping the bloodstains into the nearest possible letters.

I am good and it's time to grasp that bastard Evil by the roots and kick His silly butt till His ears bleed. And then again and again and eat off all the limbs in order of weight like an animal cracker, and then spit 'em up and make Him eat them, then throw Him into the big 'ole Lake of fire to burn for an eternity of burning, which is not even the teensy weensy fancy-feasty bit fun, and I will not be silent until my city rises bright and clear among the rubble of Fairbanks, which I declare here and now to be *in* British Columbia, **I DAMMIT!**

It came to a head in gym class. Of course gym class. And this was just pre-junior high, too, so there were actual females to get embarrassed in front of, among them the fabulous pre-She, incarnation of the Great Seductress who incidentally I saw just last year... She's done some pretty swell paintings, many of them life size, with very deep, piercing eyes...

The argument and harassment had started somewhat earlier... I don't care over what... It could have been any of a hundred incidents of humiliation inflicted for the simple crime of not knowing quite what to do or say at any given moment, of being out of touch with the group pseudo-teleology that makes systems like digestion and even the Department of Motor Vehicles look like smoothly-working perfectly sensible miracle wonders... and so they ARE! HA!

We were sitting down in our "squads" at the end of the class, those little regimented little fricking little lines that people sat in alphabetically which actually were totally ineffective to repress our little wonderfully sparking shining fricking brilliant little minds, but retained that para-military-looking form nonetheless, the intention to keep in line, to *suggest*, that just

Tripe

makes me want to take two mountains and just smash them together with my head in the middle and then laugh laugh laugh.

So as I was walking I remember being tripped, not by the shithead, but by more of a pecker, one of the Big Man's toadies with little beady eyes and an attitude problem (obviously). So he tripped me, and It was the second-or-third-to-the-last straw. I had been tormented for far too long, and the evil must be put to a STOP. So it escalated, and Captain Mean of course set Himself in the front, having the most to lose. And I remember the bastard on some completely different day making definite sexual jokes at and with Her, now that I think of it, at least as sexual as we were capable of, calling Her simply by the name Wah-Man. And I don't care if this wasn't in the equation at the time, I am psyched, and the Man must go down.

And so the bunch of us moved gradually outside, as recess was starting, and there was pushing, and the pecker wanted to fight me himself, but everyone knew what score needed to be settled. And I remember seeing Her on the side of the hallway, and I just said "Hi" as the punches began to throw themselves about. And I don't know whose fists were whose, but both were traded around a bit just before we exited out into the fantastically beautiful sunny day that rained down upon the schoolyard. And the crowd pushed us out, and told us to save it, and we moved down, across the vast sheet of black black blacktop, with more anger growing in me than I had known before or have known since. We passed through the smaller area decked with playground equipment, and I saw my own caste members just swinging on the swings. Because We are alone, By God, when it comes to the end. And behind the trees, punches swing. And I couldn't feel them as they landed on my face. No pain at all... just pressure. And I know I landed some good ones, though I don't remember those; I don't remember my individual fists striking in upon in that fucking evil bastard, and I don't

Tripe

remember being happy with His pain, as I really doubt He felt any either. And I refused to use any of the karate moves that I had learned in the previous two years of classes two times a week, because we weren't supposed to, and I was not an asshole who goes around bashing people; no, I fought on His terms, and threw those silly-ass rounded punches that come in from the side, so much less efficient than a direct and straight piercing smack right between the eyes and back through the frontal lobes into inches of awful squish, dammit. I make myself cackle with the ineffectuality of even trying to emphasize the moment with a "dammit," or graphic imagery, or even a Goddamn Butt joke, but that's how distracted I was. My body was moving, but my mind was free, and I distinctly remember even throwing a comedy punch... one that purposely missed and left me spinning around and around and around. And yes, they laughed, but I don't think that mooted my performance, which that bastard He actually complimented later, though He might have just been in a good mood. In any case I was on much better terms with Him after that for the most part, though it fell apart again when we hit junior high and didn't have to see each other as much... he had to use what precious time with me to use me like a bonified enemy should, to make fun of my walk and my face and whatever uncreative, stupid thing came to his so totally average mind so charged with hostility. And then He moved away, as all my enemies do (I have no idea why), and only our sixth grade teacher, probably the wisest man I ever met, gave us news of him (as it seems the bastard moved away from my neighborhood and into his...), and then only on the rare occasions when I stomped back to that place of my past, back in days when I wasn't as sentimental, though I admittedly used up just as much film, through just the sheer need to record it before it all slipped away.

The aforementioned teacher came and broke it up, and I was like two men my mind was so far from my body. And as we walked back in the way we had come and down to the

Tripe

principal's office, I passed Her again and let out a merry "Hello" with a big suave grin. She just stared. I have no idea how I looked; I just felt numb. He walked silently beside Me; there was no need for triumph, no need for despair, because no one had won. I feel tempted to say that no one ever wins, but in doing so I would obviously be trying to get across something sixty-five thousand times more subtle than that, so whatever. When we got to the principal's office, the resident authority figure asked what had happened and I just started crying and saying "I don't know. I don't know. I don't know." He was much more suave about it, as He had obviously been sent there about sixty more times in that week alone than I had. They asked me about His hand, which had two marks in it a couple inches apart. They thought I had bit him, and did I? Should He get a tetanus shot? Neither of Us could remember that happening, though He said it did, and I remember swearing that of course I didn't bite Him; My teeth just weren't that shape... I had incisors, fer Chrissake! I was not just a mass of canine! Do not blame my teeth, for they have done no wrong. Please, don't blame my teeth.

We were set to stand against this wall outside the gymnasium for the rest of recess... I think that might have been the only punishment I got. I calmed down somewhat as I was there, and We got to the same level. Being knocked around takes something out of you, even if you are a rabid DOG who doesn't care whether He lives or dies. I tasted that. I tasted that simplicity. And I tell ya... it never happened again.

Fifty-Ninth Sitting

No, Mad, your time is over. You have to leave now. My god, I was really in a frenzy there... not at the time — I mean writing the previous section. And my eyes are still very wide, and they do not blink. And the tape She sent has gone on in My ears, Her voice

Tripe

powerless to calm Me down because I did not wish to be calmed. Intensity is just intensity, and the “good” or “bad” part of it is just an afterthought. And sex and battle are furious, not that I would know from recent experience about the former... you didn’t think I... “That horrible, demented thing?” It was just more massage... much more intense than ever before. It was enveloping, but it was calculating... Unlike certain times before, I could see very clearly what I was doing: where Her body was in relation to Mine, and where were the various landmarks on that Body, so as to get just as close to those borderlines as I dared, and yes, I must say, ever-so slightly over. But I was so so sensitive for any sign of discomfort, of disapproval, and though She said She couldn’t properly enjoy the ordeal what with all the internal strife, She did not stop Me, could not make even the slightest gesture of protest, as the intensity built around Her thighs, as I converted Her stomach, the one area that She was sensitive about, that made Her giggle and flinch, into My headquarters, stretching out straight up the solar plexus to Her neck, reaching fully around Her to pull at Her back, making an effective very close and active embrace for as long as I could drag it out. And God I loved Her, and could feel It rending at various places around My eyes, tiny explosions moving progressively back into my brain. But just as in the fight, a part of Me was not dwelling on such sensations, but acting... a body with a mind of its own, concerned with where and when and how hard in the same manner as whatever automata took over my fists and rained down blows without the slightest effort on My part. And now writing (righting), with My eyes smaller but still never blinking, with part of Me so pulled into this and an outer layer sitting back and watching, analyzing, noting patterns and laughing about them, searching with cheer for the unifying themes to cap off the book and put you to rest.

And at the end there were long strokes... proper massage technique, I was later for the first time told... from head to toe, very lightly, but very complete. And I rested very close

Tripe

against Her, and kissed and nibbled at Her ear, which is when, after about five minutes of it, She whispered, “Now, don’t get carried away.” Too late, babe. Way too late.

And Her tape nears the end now, with a song wishing Me goodnight, wherever I am sleeping. And She hopes that if I dream, I dream of Her. I don’t know how it will end; I don’t know how I will end; I don’t know how We will end. I just don’t know, you know? You dream of Me. Goodnight. Goodnight. Wherever you are sleeping. And I hope that if you dream, if you dream, you dream of Me. And Her voice comes through My ears, pulling Me from Your arms.

But there’s always more, and life goes on way after the climax, and the book needs its fat to feed off of. I am not yet on the plane, though I am pretty damned gone. But definitely alive, though. No question about that. Wow. And still God, for the moment, choosing as I do to keep up this shortish *long run* instead of pulling another half-time show... although that *was* just a wily ruse, something to distract You from what was (and still is) really going on during the breaks. I am a Mighty God and consequently (it’s a logical consequent ‘cause I say so) require sustenance in order to be placated. Keep up the good work.

In return, I will give you as a kindly Godly gift your first denouement, which in this case is true. You didn’t think I’d let you off without tellin’ ya more about the DOGS, now, did you? And I don’t mean about Brandy getting away from those meddlin’ kids, ‘cause Zelma found Her pretty soon after that. I’m talking about after Brandy got put back, and Bear was, according to Zelma, “too rough with her,” so as of Friday, Bear got ousted to the “airlock,” while white dog, who is a She and is coincidentally named China (pronounced “Chee-nah”), finally gained admittance to the pen. No more howling and groveling for her... only loud and powerful barks. The legend will live on in the hearts of whoever: Within half an hour after

Tripe

the switch, Zelma heard the sounds of viciousness. She rushed out to witness China holding Buster down to the ground in a DOGGy version of “mercy.” Within another hour, the same was done to Brandy, then Lucy, then... well, Queen is meek enough to not even require it. Within the day China had made all the DOGS submit except Buffy, who presumably she could not get near. Strangely enough, after moving to the pen, China began to avoid Me, like Samantha usually does, like she’s mistrustful and afraid. Maybe I represent too clearly her former lowly and desperate state. In any case, I had to leave before I could regain her trust. Ah, had I only been as all-powerful then as I am now!

Bear, on the other hand, became whining and dejected. She told Me that when a week after I left She took him out for a run (during which he behaved like a perfect gentleman — just as well as Duke), he really didn’t want to get outside so much as *get back in the pen*. Awwwww...

We took all this in on a Saturday morning while we waited for a convenient point in my quest to tape all of her albums (on Las Vegas’s equipment; “It don’t have Doubly, but it’ll do”) to go for Our final drive. During this morning time the gathering of lives continued. I vacuumed (very quickly) the whole apartment, we did laundry, and before that, as soon as I woke up (7:00am?) on the couch that I had so reluctantly climbed on to the night before, I simply moved myself into Her room and climbed in, arm and eventually leg draped over Her just as usually happens in such a situation. About two hours later, My head resting on Her shoulder, She finally said: “Hmmm... I’m finding this hard to rationalize away as an act of friendship.”

“Don’t even try, Wah-man... Don’t even try...”

Tripe

Enantiodromia... Roll it on the tongue... There's definitely some new stuff coming up here... or maybe not so new... Last night, for the first time in months, I called up X-She's roommate (this X-She not being the one with the Halloween party, and not the one who said She looks like Me, but the one I haven't had a single nice thing to say about)... now, I didn't get hold of her, but I did talk to an unfamiliar voice... twice... someone strange living there... which probably means someone moved out... or something. And I got to thinking that I had no idea if X-She was all right or not; there could have been a terrible accident at some point, and no one would have called to tell Me... and it worried Me... a lot... because as much as I rag, and even though She won't speak to Me, I still care about Her a lot, and obviously not at least completely in "that way," as I am otherwise occupied.

...And then I woke up this morning on the edge of tears. I had dreamt that My Father was dead, that I and My sister and mother were home grieving together. They were for some reason arguing about how to properly raise me, how someone needed to cook me fancy things like macaroni and cheese, and I shouted "Stop it! That doesn't matter, and you both know it." And they did; we all started crying and holding on to each other for dear life. My sister said: "I know I miss my daddy... I'm sure of that. The only other thing I'm as sure about is that I love you guys." And we all embraced, crying, and I started regressing, cursing that it wasn't fair, asking where He was, and what had happened to Him anyway? My mother said that He was driving on ice and went out of control. "The ice! Dammit! It's always the ice that brings Him down." I was referring to some earlier incident by this remark, but I don't remember what.

What I realized through these things is that my life is just a fragile shell made up of other people. I mean, I knew this before, but I tend to concentrate it on just one person, or

Tripe

maybe extend it to past She's that I'm still on good terms with... There's still a lot I'm missing...

Sixtieth Sitting

...Like the fact which the Woman of Deepest Despair, the one who will read this first, pointed out, concerning my characterization, or lack thereof — not in general, but specifically of *Her*. It's not that I haven't *tried* in this respect, but my impressions of Her are so... well... “non-cognitive?” Overwhelming? ...that it's hard to convey them... I guess “wonderful” isn't really a descriptive adjective. Plus there are privacy issues, and issues of thematic presentation (i.e. She should remain just mysterious enough so that You can posit *Your* ideal Desire-Other qualities on to Her, but a lot of it does come back to my feeling too self-absorbed and/or isolated to really... my *Me* I'm enjoying this coffee! But perhaps that's because I'm writing at work (my last day). Hmmmm... there's a thought. She the work-a-holic and coffee and the world of work (which Bataille says is fundamentally opposed to the presence of eroticism)... Unless a “thought” has to contain a predicate as well as a subject... Hmmmm...

She was called up to join him in the second of two songs that he played. He was very good — older, reserved in manner and visage, but his songs had a soft poignancy that rolled out over the quietly-seated audience that the lights were too bright in his eyes for him to see. His last softly-strummed chord faded, and he stammered a bit, peeking out over dark-rimmed glasses and muttering in a low voice: “For my next song, I'd like to bring up my friend She...”

Tripe

She walked down the short aisle to the stage and stood apprehensively behind a waiting microphone. As She waited through the instrumental introduction, it was clear that She didn't know what to do with Her hands. After being softly clenched behind Her back, then folded in front, they finally retreated down into Her pockets... large pockets of what might have been a kind of green overalls. Her face was pleasant, and Her voice was very soft and wispy, harmonizing with a very slight hint of a lisp in a relaxed alto range. Her eyes tried to focus somewhere above and beyond the vague outlines of watching figures, but kept slipping down to Her shoes.

When I spoke to Her afterwards, She was shy but friendly. She had a certain openness about Her... maybe it was the way that She took in what I was saying... It was so... relaxed, and focused, with an interest that was genuine but not contingent, it seemed, upon Her “purposes” of the moment (e.g. “wanting to be social”). But to get beyond these appearances, and to avoid having Me analyze them to death in idiosyncratic and probably objectionable ways, you've got to meet Her now, or more recently, at least. At last, with My generally inaccessible omnipotence, which makes up the rest of the iceberg of which certainly I, according to My present ontological status, am... and maybe, according to some models of the Unconscious that sprinkle through a number of different religions and *might* be helpful to you... so are you... At last because of this power, I might be able to fit just a little bit of Her on these pages, though I hesitate to really show you that which I hold so sacred... Please do not abuse My trust, or I will have to destroy you.

Tripe

We were heading north, on the road that was supposed to hit all the beautiful heights from which you can look down on the rest of Alaska, hold hands, and simultaneously surprise each other by rubbing snow in each other's faces. I drove; I was the only one officially insured for Our car.

She spoke:

“Yeah...” The word was drawn out by a smile somewhere near Her chest that made Her eyebrows scrunch up in a low-key rendering of something between mischief and wonder. “I could dig the idea of summers off, or something like that. Like my father and step-mother... But...” The word was staccato, leaving in its wake tiniest gasp and a quick movement of the eyes that regressed Her ten years and brought Her back again. “...I don't know if I could handle being a teacher... I mean, *they* totally got burned out, which is mostly why my father eventually went into customs year-round. But it would still be swell to have a few months a year to just *get away*. I don't know...” this last with a quick disassociation, a shrugging off of Her train of thought, which for Her constituted the swift act of pulling Herself back to earth. “...get a cabin up here maybe? I don't think I could deal with that kind of arrangement *all* the time,” Her eyebrows rose considerably on this last italic. “I guess I've just been...” melodramatically: “...spoiled by modern conveniences.” A slight chuckle got Her face straight. “So that's why I did the natural resources thing for school. I probably would have gone straight into art, though, if my parents hadn't been so down on the idea.” The last was spoken without trace of irritation, but only a grim acceptance, which then dissolved as She began to defend Herself: “I did a lot of drawing in high school, and I did get into art school, but I wasn't really encouraged to follow through on that... so I didn't really do any for

Tripe

my first few years in college.” Her confidence increased to more confidence. “But I’m really glad I missed it enough to start taking classes in it again, especially the photography and pottery... I hadn’t really done those before.” Her jaw dropped in mock terror as She remembered: “Ah! Don’t remind me of that weaving! I wasted *too much* time on that thing at the beginning of the summer... but you know me... I *had* to finish it, and I *had* to do it right. Always the perfectionist.” and that’s why...” —These words drawn out like the resolution of a cheese-dip murder mystery. “...I haven’t done anything artistic for you, or Him for that matter... recently, that is. I did start writing that song to him, which you so treacherously looked at... though I guess it was only four lines... but I know I’m not going to like what ever I do to it.” A short gasp of frustration and disbelief, then: “It’ll be months until I do anything that’s perfect enough for my standards...,” but then that smile began to grow back... “and, yes, I’m worthless and... a bad person and...” She laughed. “I know. I’ve been trying recently to ‘merge my intentions with those imposed by the medium’ as you suggested...”

She began an exposition which She knew sounded like a grump old person lecture, but pressed it home despite this, or maybe *because* of this: “I remember when *I* started pottery, and was having just as much trouble as you were. So it became this big challenge, and I pulled this twelve-hour session just trying to get the first few steps of the throw, really just trying to get it centered in the way you couldn’t. I was so ticked by the end... Finally I just asked someone to show me and guide my hands and tell me what I was doing wrong, and that eventually worked, so... So...” Here came the moral. She relished it: “you should have listened to me...” Distracted without the slightest pause: “You know... we’ll get better mileage if We shift out of low. I know.” With erudition and increasing cuteness: “I did a report on it for this energy demand class I took. I think I was the only undergrad in that...” And, you know, we won’t skid as much if you pump the brakes...”

Tripe

It was soon determined that the north pass was going to get increasingly snowy, and that even if We could get through, We probably wouldn't be able to get back... not in time for My flight anyway... not that this seemed like a horrible thing to happen.

“But I don't think I could be a teacher anyway, 'cause then I *might* have to deal with kids.” She snickered. “I'm sorry...” She wasn't. “They're just little monsters. I mean yes, some can be very cute and nice... Did I tell you about the little granddaughter of one of the presenters at that native American hat-making seminar? Wellah... She made me look at her cold sores... She just turned to me completely out of the blue and said 'Have you seen my lumps?' I honestly replied 'no' at which she then took great pleasure in grabbing her upper lip with both hands, turning it up and inside out, then showing her exposed gums inches from my face and half enunciating, 'see...see?!' I was totally shocked and mortified by this point, but I *did* see a canker sore and told her so... foolishly. 'But there are two... do you see the second one!?' ...She was only appeased when I formally recognized the second one, which was much further back. I guess I could have just pretended to see the second one, which would've ended the matter much earlier, but somehow I thought that would've been... what? *morally reprehensible???*

“...So...” She reoriented Herself for another moral. “...even *she* was from outer space, even though she *was* a sweetie. Most are worse. Boys. I bet *you* were totally unbearable... Hmm... Now, I'm sure if I did have kids, I'd be a very good mother, because I would have to do it right, but gosh... Once you do that, your life is pretty much over... You can't just take off... It's worse than a DOG. There are just so many things I want to do... I guess I'd just press my biological clock and try to do it as late as possible.”

“Yeah... I don't mind being a hermit for a while... I mean not *totally*... I would like to share my life with someone, though I don't think I get as worked up about it as you do...”

Tripe

Her face reacted as if to a bad taste as She thought. "...well, sometimes. As you say, 'I have the anchor' now, with Him, so I guess I can't tell. God..." Her bad taste turned to a bit of real anguish. "...you don't understand how bad that year was when He and I were broken up... I just got totally psycho, and did things that... no, I'm not going to risk that again. But I've told you all this..." She looked out the window for a while. We had reached the beginning of the northern road and were now just driving around semi-randomly... going wherever We hadn't been yet... which was just about everywhere... We passed the Alaska pipeline; We turned on to snowy back roads in the forest with little cabins in them.

"Yeah... I could see living here. Location is key. I think I would have gone insane at school if the Arb hadn't been there. I would *never*, never live in a city, not after living in Washington DC for that summer, and *driving* there... getting traumatized by having to parallel park every day. Whatever... I know it's irrational. I just need to be somewhere like this... or maybe the American Northwest. Definitely not the East. You know..." as if speaking of preparation against some inconceivable tragedy, "we should try to engineer going to the same grad school... God, it'd be *depressing* if I thought I'd never see you again. It's depressing anyway. But I need to deal with this thing with Him on its own terms... I've said so many times that I'm not going to make a choice between you two... and that what I decide with Him has to sustain me even if there are no ready alternatives. I wish you were giving me more space to do this, and not trying to force yourself into the arena for a show down. And I don't like this great build up to my big decision at Christmas... you holding your breath 'till my statement of intent. I don't think it's going to happen like this. I will neither devastate you or elate you overnight... I actually never want to devastate you... What-ever. You *do* have *a lot* of influence over me, but I just can't let it affect this decision. I just hope you can understand the complexities of the situation. God... I don't think I could deal if I were in your situation..."

Tripe

“But no... I I’m not going to have anything to do with jealousy any more. I think I’d prefer to die an old maid than to fight and compete for someone’s attention and devotion... which I realize is unfair, and I can’t and won’t ask you to wait for me... but... I don’t know... *Don’t* say that you’re going to wait or something unless you really will. I hate that... people who say they’re going to do things but don’t It’s probably better that you just don’t say anything at all... If you want to wait, you will.”

She thought for a moment, then: “You asked before if I might be willing to sacrifice location so that we could end up in the same place... I was thinking about that. Yeah... I think that I would be flexible in the face of true love... if I was convinced it was so true. ...I guess that’s probably the most important pursuit of my life...” She said it in sort of a glib, offhand manner, but couldn’t help the gushiness flowing through.

“I’ll probably end up an old maid though... I just have these very high romantic ideals: that there should be someone out there who will find everything they need and could ever want in me... that’s why I can’t deal with competition... the fact that someone else might become an issue would violate a core requirement of mine... That’s what makes me wary of you... how do I know I’m not just the next in a long line of people you get hung up over? I just... I’m very committed. Obviously. That’s why I’ve got to give this thing with Him every chance it has... and as much as I care about you, and as many latent feelings as I have for you locked within my subconscious... feelings that would generate unbearable dissonance if they surfaced... I *want* things to work out with Him. I’m bound... no, *devoted* to working things out. I feel as though I’m trying to save a marriage... does that offer you any perspective? I know it’s not a marriage... if it were you would not have visited me here, as in I would not have asked you to come. But I care so much about him, and I trust Him completely... His heart is golden... She had been getting more uneasy by the word, and finally expressed it: “You did

Tripe

tell me before that you wanted me to tell you more of his good points, so as to make him seem more real... I still don't know if I see the point in that...,” but quickly snapped back into her defense: “But He's so down-to-earth, unpretentious... and really does what he says... like with the environment... He actually obeys all those environmentally-sound directives, even if they *seriously* inconvenience him... even moreso than I do. I has... values... He looks for the best in people, which makes a good foil for my critical tendencies...”

“I know... I hold things against people too easily. It comes from my father... who is basically a control freak, though he has mellowed out *a lot* in recent years, mostly from living with my stepmother, who's also a control freak. Yeah... the divorce didn't bother me, I guess... I was pretty young... but getting the evil stepmother... that created some major turmoil and rebellion. Ach... I just never want to deal with that kind of mess. I've made a commitment... maybe I did get back together with Him out of weakness, but it didn't fell like it at the time... Look! A mountain!”

It was true. There in front of us was an honest-to-goodness mountain, and Our road was climbing up it. And yes, the snow was getting thicker, but manageable.

“I don't know...” She began again while I concentrated on not needing to invoke the aforementioned auto-insurance. “I just don't operate socially like you...” Her tone was not critical, just slightly baffled: “I mean, I don't feel compelled to launch into some story about high school unless it comes up. I t just seems like a lot of the ideas you come up with... like that whole existential anguish thing... Millions of people get through life perfectly happily without ever thinking things like that.” She smiled in reassurance, and the car grew noticeably warmer... maybe it was just me sweating. “...but I do like talking to you... I just don't read as much, because... well, it always just seemed more fun when I was young to go *do* something, like a craft. I did win the young author's competition in junior high, though...” This was

Tripe

much to good-natured to sound like a boast. “So just don’t you get *too haughty*... Hey... I have a joke. Do you want to hear it?”

I grunted and nodded as the car swung in and out of a skid.

“Wellah... My sister told me this, so I guess it’s, like, a *family heirloom*. There are these two calcium atoms like... hangin’ out, and one says to the other: ‘Oh no! I think I’ve lost an electron.’ And the other one says, ‘Are you sure?’ So the first one says: ‘Yes, I’m positive.’ Do ya get it? You took AP Chem., right? When she told it to me, she actually screwed it up and said ‘ions’ instead of ‘atoms,’ which doesn’t work, but I corrected her...”

There was a silence as I failed to react, being somewhat occupied with not careening off the great white snowy cliffs as I was.

“Awww... I was just inking’ of Duke. We should have brought a DOG... You know, you’re obviously not from the north... You don’t know how to drive on ice.”

“Really?”

“Would you like Me to drive?”

“Please.”

“Okay, *friend*.” I stopped the car.

Sixty-First Sitting

She took the wheel, and We continued Our ascent. It was at this point that the previously-related verbatim dialogue occurred, during which We were obviously conscious that We were being taped, but this served only to exaggerate the aforementioned tendencies

Tripe

of showmanly self-parody mentioned earlier. How can I describe the ascent? She has gained Her voice, and the romanticization of distance is shattered, but I love Her nonetheless. I look at the way I've thrown Myself into Her... what I hold to be at stake, which is at very least the last breath of romanticism in Me... It's not that I'll never love anyone else, but after this there's no way I'll be able to pull it off wholeheartedly, without feeling cheap and DOGlike... there's simply no further room to upgrade toward My ideal... to act out of anything other than a sense of futility, of nihilism, of a battle against the immediate threat of anguish and pain. The fact that this sounds fairly irrational and stupid, and probably not *entirely* inaccurate in describing the present, does not lessen its grip upon Me in the slightest... When I think of this, and of Her analogous stake, which is all the greater for Her feeling less tainted than Me in the first place, that She's not *used* to having immense baggage from past relationships the way I am... I don't see how She can break it off, not seeing how much He loves Her, how devoted He is.

In short, I feel closer to Her than ever, recognizing as I do the agony of Her ambivalence, this weight that is now wearing Her down and deflating Her spirits... And what can I do? That part of Me that connects Me to Her, that God, that soul, that fricking miraculous connection between systems of teleology that simply don't connect... That string pulled Us up the mountain with a tremendous smooth and steady action (She did know how to drive on snow after all), and as said parenthetical snow shipped at the windshield and the roof and all, We felt quite safe and warm, though exactly how warm was questionable, as We kept resetting the thermostat when We thought the other wasn't looking... which We were always wrong about, seeing as there's little other place to look in such an enclosed space. I fed Her the remainder of our cookies and drank gallons of the nasty blue raspberry drink that would simply be wasted if I didn't drink it before I left...

Tripe

We had a grand old time, She chanting Bob Dylan lyrics (not the social commentary ones, but the ones that came later) and I making fun of passing furry mountain forest creatures. Perfect complementarity, if I do say so Myself. Finally, We reached a point where the trees on Our left were low enough that We could see the expanse of land beneath. Unfortunately, the snow flurries were so thick that visibility was about twelve yards. And a fine twelve yards they were, receding into a thick white mist...

Here's a question: *Why* am I God? Or why is God Me? And no, it's not (just) to gratuitously offend people *more*, or to facilitate an absurd climax and its aftermath. No, no, no... it's 'cause I (God, that is) screwed it up the first time... this business of becoming Man, that is. 'Cause you know why? 'Cause you know why? It's 'cause I came as a child of pure light last time, which is one-sided, and so obviously against My omni-everything character, which means that... well, you read the Jung stuff... because I so bonered, I'll probably also have to spring forth as an anti-Christ and lay waste to the cities and yammer yammer yammer blah blah blah gibber... That's sort of already started (though put at bay for the moment by Her sweet voice), at least within the confines of this book, which I guess must be Gospel in these-about sections, 'cause, well, *do I have to say it?*

So I was trying to be like Job before, to be consciously and willingly moral, and not just a beast, but this, as you should know, is only the first step... Getting lost... heading in the wrong direction for a long time... all these things make the man consequently recovered that much more... well... wise?

I see clearly now the car heading up the hill, but frankly they weren't ready for what they'd find if they actually made it... And the government wouldn't allow it either. A large gate loomed, with a sign saying "Government testing site. No admittance. Use of this

Tripe

property may result in serious injury or DEATH.” This last was in glowing red letters, and though the whole set-up looked pretty old and rusty, it didn’t seem worth the effort to ram the Mitsubishi through the gate headlong or otherwise get past this barrier mutually confronting Us. Down again, down again, past the same furry forest/mountain animals, which I again cursed, recording now and again, singing now and again (though seldom doing both), pulling apart some of the same issues, further acquiring each other’s mannerisms, breathing each other’s air, and feeling very weird about this immanent Very End.

I have been trying... I put my retainer in for about fifteen minutes almost every day... but then it... well, doesn’t hurt, exactly, though I can feel the increasing pressures as each root of each upper tooth tries to reassert its particular ideas about where it should be growing... It just feels *wrong*, and I can never fall asleep if it’s in anymore, even though it was molded on those very teeth what? a year ago? So I always take it out, and use my lower jaw to push all the other teeth back where they were... maybe even further. And *oh*, that feels good. I can finally sleep.

We made some kind of wrong turn on Our way back, and ended up in an area We didn’t recognize. A number of ski lodges appeared, and an “*Enchanted Gold mine*” hotel (*with Haunted House!*). At least there were other cars here. We stopped at a cheesy gift shop and I bought X-She some sub-gifts: a button saying “High on Life” next to a brightly colored balloon, a refrigerator magnet (which I lost somewhere before it got back to the states proper), and another Alaska postcard. (Her main gift, incidentally, I didn’t buy until after My return: I got Her an electric massager-thing with a head that vibrates at *five* different speeds! Share your revelations with your old flames, kiddies... It’s just good manners.) I wouldn’t have

Tripe

bought anything at all but for the social pressure I felt coming from the old man at the counter, who, obviously bored out of his mind and obviously delighted to at last have some actual customers who were not merely delusions of his most ancient and addled mind, but otherwise unfathomably scary, was obviously paying all of his attention to Us, immobile though He was, as he kept bursting out with answers to questions that we had not asked but were merely softly wondering about to each other. She laughed at Me a bit for reacting as I did, but not in a bad way, a way in which someone takes hold of the vulnerabilities you set before them and runs them through with multiple large blades while cackling uncontrollably, but in a way that caresses them, opening you up further for examination and cuddling of the internal organs...

Several miles past this, on a road that We could tell by Our map eventually led in some direction back to Fairbanks, fuel running dangerously low and no gas stations for miles and miles behind Us, We decided to stop for coffee and ask whether We were, in fact, traveling in the right direction. We stopped at a lodge of sorts, the only establishment We'd seen for three ski lifts, five hills, and two enchantingly beautiful valleys covered with a thick sheet of snow. It was very decked up... lots of dollar bills tacked to the ceiling, and license plates, and chairs carved out of tree trunks. It looked like it was all made up for Christmas already... which up here I suppose would come very quickly for one working in a bar day after day, with the seasons changing only in the duration of the sun's visit during these days... thankfully I would be safely away before the sun disappeared indefinitely. As I got Our coffee, She chatted a bit with the friendly bartender, who told Us that We were in fact heading away from Our destination, out into nowhere, certainly nowhere with gas stations. I daresay had We not stopped here, We would have been in a bit of a jam... Our closest brush with death, I suppose. Though We traded stories of people We had heard about freezing, some mere yards from

Tripe

shelter that the white mist made it impossible to see, I will downplay all that here, as real death of *that* sort had nothing to do with Us. We had made it to the last outpost before the end, and the Northernmost point of My travels to date. We drank.

I drove Us back, very slowly, being very gentle with the accelerator lest We run out of fuel in the fifteen miles before the expected station. We didn't. And We didn't even stop at that one, but ventured closer to town out of sheer arrogance and inertia... We felt that safe.

Ah! God fear even one more paragraph with cheezy chapter-ending sort of ending! Ah! God fear He must go for walkees now, lest He run out of fuel before finishing Book. Oh, Book! Oh, Reader! Will ya miss God when He gone? Or will You have acquired His mannerisms, His Tripe, His silly-butt delusions of grandeur? You cannot come into what will come after this book is over, whether orgy of despair or orgy... much too personal, too graphic... *Stop* You living vicariously through others and go do something noteworthy, will ya? Like a craft. Something expressing Universal Dram, unlike this, which is obviously only about lil' old Me and My obscure and puzzling intellectual/emotional reactions that probably have little or nothing to do with Yours.

Ah! If We can just get to the airport, I have all the rest planned out, for It is written, It is foreseen, It is obvious if You know the CHEMISTRY... the same goes for how We've been coping since separation... Initial sentimental bliss, slamming against those barriers that even a cessation of Our physical distance would leave intact, a wish to savor this time before New Years when all may change, despair and elation alternating until an uneasy balance is reached. Yes, this has been complicated by the idiosyncracies of distance: Our different rates of writing, Her needing space and time and Me not being able to bear either, etc., but these have mostly resolved themselves and leave the circumstance intact. So I don't need to tell you how things will go in that Very End, because you can use your immense powers of abstraction to

Tripe

see it yourself. There will be no showdown, because there is no evil, just people doing what they think they gotta do... what? Did I just almost sort of quote Steinbeck? Shit. Can't even be original when yer God...

...But that is now and this was then, when the concept of villainy was ever creeping farther into My soul, when despite all My attempts to be understanding, to care about Her concerns through caring about Her, there was (and probably still is) a part of Me that just didn't care, that couldn't see all the barriers in the way of fresh meat, that would simply take if it could not effectively request... whether it be evolution, or the Book, or just Me bein' a jerk like normal...It was not appreciated.

Sixty-Second Sitting

This is what It looked like: China was running up and down the length of the pen barking powerfully at everyone and no one in particular, asserting her mastery but avoiding the people that it entitled her to. Lucy and Brandy were gathered around Her, being affectionate in the best ways they knew how, which in Brandy's case entailed repeatedly trying to jump up at Her face even though She was kneeling within easy reach. Queen was leaning flush against the fence that separated us, coming as close as she could to purring as I scratched her absent-mindedly with two fingers sticking through the mesh. Buster was visible within his DOG house looking meek and slightly shivering, and Buffy was creeping up upon Her from behind to sniff without being noticed (and so threatened). Bear was barking with a viscous, jealous excitement from the "airlock," and outside Teddy Bear, Gorbachev,

Tripe

Samantha, Coyote, and Sonny watched with interest, which for them doesn't entail "watching" so much as running around making noise. When Brandy scratched Her face, I moved in to protect... just a tiny scratch on Her lower lip. I mentally kissed it (I do *everything* mentally, or have you noticed?) to make it better ("A sure method, when regularly applied, to increase the chance of infection," She said once.) I just... Ah! Tension was and is building, I tell not show, and I dread writing through these times as much as I dreaded living them, for My last hold on them of this particular sort will be gone... unless I go back and edit every once and a while for the rest of My life... I don't know if I've ever heard of anyone getting addicted to therapy...

I said goodbye one by one to the DOGGies. China wouldn't look Me in the eye, but I caught her and petted her anyway. Buster seemed too messed up to even care about getting attention anymore. Buffy still wouldn't let Me get near Her; any advances I had made in this respect weren't in evidence now. I hadn't really gotten to know Lucy Lou or Brandy well enough for them to be distracted from Her for more than a few seconds. But goodbye, My Queenie! Goodbye, poor evil Bear with stitches in Your Head. And grody ole Teddy Bear, and Sonny, you big wus, and wise though indifferent Mr. Coyote — write a book sometime, good man, and I will proofread it for you... Goodbye Gorby and Sam, alike in all respects except the color of your fur and the fact that one of you is completely affectionate towards Me while the other is afraid. I had seen Duke earlier that day, and so wasn't devastated that he wasn't around to see me off, and of course I would sort of like to see Louie shot, but I was sad at Sugar Dee's absence, at not being able to say goodbye... which does haunt Me, at least in that I had a dream last night that I adopted Sugar Dee and took her to a farm where there were two other DOGS that looked just like her and could actually run her speed... Awww... I didn't know at the time that earlier that evening a couple from the local military base had

Tripe

stopped by and adopted both Sugar Dee and Duke, a fact that would later depress Her a great deal and spur Her to hound Zelma into finding the phone number of said couple, which was and still is lost somewhere in her apartment... there was hope of a reunion at one point, when the couple underwent marital strife, and the female called up to say that she was bringing the DOGS back, but alas, no one showed up at the arranged time, and Zelma still couldn't find the number...

...And now, as of last week, Bear is also gone, finally adopted by a (presumably) wonderful family. It's nice, but I hate to see Her lose Her friends. She did take Buffy for a run recently...

Oh, if this were Disney, all the goodbyes would be stretched out much more agonizingly than they are, but these DOGS didn't talk, and their eyes aren't nearly that big and round. If this were Shakespeare, or the Bible for that matter, all these DOGS would have to die. But I really couldn't afford to squander energy on such drama; everything was frankly getting rushed and neglected, not because there wasn't enough time, but because I was so preoccupied with the One I would miss most. I finished packing and made My nasty-fake-Oreo lunch. Las Vegas was watching *Last of the Mohicans* on the Magnavox, pausing every few seconds to scream out "I love this movie! It is so touching! And the cinematography is wonderful!" or somesuch, so We retreated into Her room.

I played Her a few final songs; We again talked about the future, and about how much this visit meant to Us, how beneficial it was. All these familiar themes came out a few new angles on them, as always; We never bore each other. As She looked away for a moment, I shoved the Spiderman Pez under Her pillow, but She saw clearly that I had done something... I made Her promise not to look until I was gone... a time bomb waiting, carefully calculated to win Her heart. And yes! I was getting hyperactive, and My terrible secret was slipping out in

Tripe

the form of the Spiderman theme song, which I sang lovingly to Her as I had at least one and a half times before... I was rapt with pure joy to stand in Her presence, especially since We were sitting, and was unable to keep My hands off Her — they had to go somewhere! She described this later as the beginning of a phase of communication breakdown... understandable given that that particular world would be reduced to rubble in about two hours.

This is what it looked like: That part of Me that abstracts from past experiences demonstrating what I generally value, specifically in this case that I have a concern for the concerns of those that concern me, which means that I should promote their projects as My own, felt itself to be intact and generally in control, though the world *was* spinning a bit too quickly to really engage it... The part of Me that reacts to others with an “Awww...” and so may induce behaviors that could be called sympathetic, dependent in its accuracy on the similarity between the Awww-inducing characteristic and the actual characteristics or stance of its possessor, was very keyed on to Her eyes — and other parts of Her, catching it all in an Awww-inducing Gestalt that commanded Me to hug Her incessantly, and what could be wrong with that? My scheming libido was in overdrive mode as it frantically struggled with a fish that looked like it might soon get away, doing so by the sneaky, underhanded trick of endowing Me with a bottomless source of energy, and what could be better than more energy? The part of Me that *actually* understands Her, as much as anyone really can given the relative brevity of Our acquaintance, that can relate to Her via all Her extensive communications and a liberal application of and abstraction from My own experience, was in its DOG house looking meek and slightly shivering. The part of Me that revels in joyful sentimentality was bounding around in high spirits, but was in fact being used like a

Tripe

marionette by that part of Me that is desperately afraid of another six month bout with depression and the will to be dead.

Only inches away, sitting outside but breathing into this mass of pulsating psyche, was that part of Her analogous to the first-mentioned part of Me, but which tends to let fewer immediate considerations into its calculation, preferring to be guided more or less by whatever She had previously decided to do, which was in turn heavily rationalized by some fairly basic so-called ethical conceptions. This operation enabled it to perform much more smoothly, endowing it in this case with near-total control of at least Her overt movements, but left all the other many and various DOGS frothing away outside, sticking in a few fingers here and there, making Her a bit too slow to say “no,” and generally getting increasingly worked up.

What resulted was best described as the machinations of two huge and ridiculously-complicated contraptions designed by someone who obviously had a good head on His shoulders, but who was nonetheless clearly insane. She emitted a calm, too calm, acceptance. He held up His crushing sentimentality by getting more weird than usual. She grew slightly annoyed at this. He responded by pushing further into overdrive (and ever so slightly beyond), using humor as a shield, batting repeatedly against Her and rehashing in more reckless forms all the overt mock-innuendoes about still having enough time to comfortably get to third base before take-off. Their eyes fixed on each other's, but not in the same places, choosing at one moment to contemplate where the pupil meets the iris on the top left when everybody knows the *soul* is behind the lower right part of the cornea, and then switching the next moment. We meant the words We said, about missing each other, and being freaked out, and hoping to stay in touch. We probably meant the things unsaid, too, but wouldn't have phrased them in exactly that way if given another chance. ...But then someone knocked over

Tripe

the pillow to reveal the Spiderman Pez, and this would have made things all better if She hadn't already repeatedly told Me that She hated that thing. We laughed anyway, hugging cluelessly in the midst of Our cluelessness.

We left in such a daze that I didn't even say goodbye to Her roommate, who had shut himself up in his room to contemplate cheese or something. I passed the DOGS again for a brief last snippet of a verse of a song to say goodbye, and loaded My heavy bags (now lightened by the stuff of Hers that I had brought up and left there) into the car. As We walked around Her building I muttered a few last words into My walkman, telling Her, of course, that I loved Her, just before the tape ran out. We drove in silence to the university where We knew that the bonfire-building contest was going on. As Her building faded from sight I felt My spirits slowly sink into an inexpressible something-or-other, which, naturally enough, I did not express to Her, as much as I wanted to. From there they checked the plane tickets, removed the tape from the walkman and set it upon the dash, and watched Her as She flipped Her turn signals, checked Her mirrors, and delicately applied the gas pedal.

Sixty-Third Sitting

Her motions became mechanical, or so it seemed. He grew immobile, or so it seemed. The tiny foreign little VCR of a car seemed very large, too large for Her to comfortably parallel park. She consequently did this uncomfortably, which is more Her style anyway. They could see the faint glimmerings of an immense blaze down a largish hill and beyond a building, but couldn't see any way to park anywhere near it, which They really wouldn't have wanted to

Tripe

do anyway, seeing how cars do tend to explode if set alight. They simultaneously pressed the seatbelt release buttons; the straps whizzed back. Doors opened: Hers quickly, His delayed. He lifted Himself as if burdened; She checked to make sure all the doors were locked. She pulled Her coat around Her and shook off the slight hint of iciness in an otherwise pleasant evening's air. He looked at the full moon and thought about how best to write about it. Best not to, undoubtedly. She glanced in His direction: Who is that? What does He want? She fought back a very slight hint of sorrow which answered Her question by focusing on Her ambivalence... Between being concerned and annoyed, that is, with the way He had been acting. She shook it off and smiled. It came back. They walked across the narrow university street they had parked on and on to a path which would lead them through a short patch of trees, and then on to a large... no a *great* field. He thought again, on and compulsively, about the structure of this passage, and its relation to the structure of the events, and the relation of that to current socio-economic trends, and to the evolution of the species, and the formation of planets, and the proper arrangement of spices in the Platonic Ideal Spice Cabinet, existing as the abstraction of all that is truly and essentially SpiceCabinetty. Weirdo.

They came upon the field with Him at least twelve yards ahead, bounding down the increasingly-sharp descent, just *daring* His knee to start hurting again... She named all the trees as She passed them... there really wasn't a lot of variety in this part of the country. Some song went through Her head, but She couldn't place it. She made a point of being relaxed and cautious in Her descent, so as not to step in a hole or twist an ankle, or lose this moment too quickly. No. She pushed that thought, or at least the sentimental, extreme part of it, away, and with calm deliberation moved forward in His wake.

They at last reached the building between them and the fire. After a five foot drop (apparently humans weren't quite meant to tread where they had been making tracks), He

Tripe

landed on concrete and moved forward to pull at the locked doors. They could hear the sounds of the crowd now, and the fire itself — a crackling with a low moan swirled around in it. She let Herself gently down onto the pavement and followed the rear of the building. He tried to cross through an area under construction, through which the fire was plainly visible, but found it to have no actual floor. His hands were cold; they acted like that far too often. He rejoined Her on the walk. “Very Big,” He said. “Yeah,” She said.

As they passed around the building and approached the fire, the smell reached them, and the heat... To Her It was a thick, dangerous smell, caressing Her face but at the same time making it tingle and flinch in little places. To Him it was a tremendous gust that caught Him in the chest and straightened His posture. His eyes fixed on it, while Hers darted away. They approached, moving past the ready-to-hand emergency vehicles to join the crowd on the side closest to them of a ditch about twelve feet wide and six feet down, sloping on each side for easy passage. There were a number of people on the other side, and from there stretching around the perimeter of the blaze, which was, I'd say, about five houses with standard suburban yards wide and three across. Through It they could faintly see the outlines of more people, and more, and the valley beyond, and that big, incredibly fake-looking sky with the silly-ass moon hanging in it all bloated as if it had something to be bloated about. Words were spoken, but more words were overheard, as various members of the crowd mocked the reckless people who ran through the blaze and mocked each other. “I bet if somebody just walked in and committed suicide, that'd be the end to this school tradition,” someone said. I bet if one of those blazes just puffed out a bit, engulfing that group of people standing less than thirty feet away, that'd be the end. I bet if that fire arched up and filled the dome of the sky, raining down on houses and DOGS for miles, that'd be the end. He put on His sunglasses and beckoned Her across the ditch.

Tripe

She followed, watching Her step, and shying Her eyes further from what was already too much smoke. “Cool,” He said. “Yeah,” She said. More was said, but with less memorable content. They just stood there, side by side, staring into, away from, and beyond the blaze. “We should have brought those marshmallows we bought. We forgot to make S’mores.”

“I’ll feed them to the DOGS later.”

“Don’t give ‘em heart attacks.”

“Okay.”

He stared, His eyes fixed on the structure right in front of Him, shaped like a house, complete with door... He merely nodded when She said She had to retreat back to the other side of the ditch, that It was just getting too hot. He held out His hands, rotating them in interesting patterns until at last they were as bloody hot as the rest of His front side. He took a step forward and thought about the climax of the Book, how He could dress the thing up to look like His visit to Hell, how the figures He saw, the shapes shifting in the blaze and spitting various substances into the sky and on His skin, were His demons... something like that. ...Some punishment for taking what was not offered. He wondered if She would at least let Him kiss Her before He left. More precisely, He wondered how Her doing so or failing to do so would cap off the many and various themes of various levels of inanity that have been and would be introduced. For a moment He could actually visualize the whole bloody thing, the intensity with which He must endow this scene, capping off everything simultaneously. He moved slightly forward, shielding His eyes for a moment, but then releasing them. He shifted slightly to singe His *other* shoulder, the one which loved Her. A part of Him collapsed, but the rest moved forward another step, and He realized that not only was He scraping the bottom of immanent despair, but that He had not even reflected upon that fact, exactly, for,

Tripe

well... *minutes* of the high intensity drama which is normally fraught with that certain glint that makes Him not regret it later no matter how bad it gets. He took another step forward and realized He was the only one for at least twenty feet who was still on the inner side of the ditch. He turned around and let it roast His back. He couldn't see Her anywhere. He turned once more to look straight into what tends to burn one's pupils if one looks too long, hacked up a largish hunk of phlegm, and spit. The fire crackled back with one mightily outreaching tendril, but too late. He was already headed back to the other side.

She stood at the back of the crowd and waited. She felt pulled off and strangely disassociated from Herself, boredom flirting with irritation flirting with sensibility puffed up by a large, no *great* underlying pressure. She saw Him finally move through the crowd, removing His sunglasses, and approached. She saw the very sad look in His eyes and softened somewhat. "Are you okay?" She said.

"Yeah... Uh huh."

They stood for a while longer in the warmth, no longer even glancing into its depths, but merely letting it affect them. He felt like hugging Her, or felt like He should feel like hugging Her... was there a difference? But She still seemed somewhat distant. Slowly, they pulled themselves back up the hill together.

Sixty-Fourth Sitting

Slowly, as We drove to the airport, We began to talk it out, to reestablish what might have been overlooked. All this weird behavior was perfectly understandable given the situation. She understood. I understood. She parked while I checked in My luggage; I

Tripe

hassled the woman at the counter about trying to get Myself on the flights that wouldn't require Me to sleep in any airports. She checked My bags on to them and put Me on the proper wait lists. We had about forty-five minutes to blow before boarding, but damn it flew by quickly. We watched as some little kid ran around bumping into things; he looked like he was having a swell time.

“So would you rather be like that,” I said pointing to the kid, “or like that guy there.” I pointed to an old grumpy-looking guy that was sitting nearby, just awake enough to snarl at the kid, who didn't notice.

“Is that supposed to *symbolize* something?” She asked musically, Her eyes looking as if over dark-rimmed glasses.

“Whatever. I *will* wait, you know...”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah.” She smiled and pressed My hand. Neither of Us let go. I took out My camera and used up half a roll, catching Her from a number of different angles, and Her catching Me, and Me catching Us both, though this last was much harder, as My camera is equipped with some kind of quality control feature that, among other annoying things, somehow senses whether someone's head is behind it or not. The thought of asking a stranger to intrude in Our fun did not even enter Our minds. Do I even need to explain all the emotions built up here, making their last ditch effort to exert themselves, but all wrapped over with a calm acceptance? I told Her again how I felt, or rather mentioned that She already knew how I felt, and clutched Her arm a little tighter. She smiled a fairly sad smile at Me and bit slightly at the back of Her lip. Boarding time came, and She suggested I wait until the last second before getting on the plane. I replied that I sort of had to go earlier to get my guitar into an overhead bin before they all filled. I held Her, or rather We held each other... At first

Tripe

only with one hand on My part, but I soon dropped My carry-ons and flung Myself into Her, kissing Her lightly again and again on the ear.

“Watch it,” She said *very lightly*.

“I’m a good boy. Doncha worry.” We moved apart slightly, but with one more look at each other embraced again. My lips found themselves again near Her temple, and then rapidly down and over in centimeter-jumps until one was planted, *very lightly*, on Her lips, or sort of teeth, actually, as She was totally unprepared. “I’m scum,” I explained, and shrugged. With a last wrist shake I moved off to have My ticket torn. She stood there watching — very, very, completely beautiful, standing up straight with one arm clutching the other, hair draped over the left shoulder, and the eyes locked to Me — and I mouthed the three words that I had only alluded to earlier.

And though I couldn’t see it at the time, She began to cry... wrackingly, tormentedly, wave upon wave, watching My plane take off, all the way to the car, all the way home, and then some... And so She will continue to do so until I am once again by Her side.

I’m lying up a storm, aren’t I? With that very last part, I mean... No, I mean I am *lying up a storm*...

BLACK CLOUDS BEGIN TO GATHER, FIRST JUST ABOVE ME, THEN BELOW ME AS I SHOOT UP ABOVE. THE NORTHERN PACIFIC OCEAN GROWS RESTLESS AND BEGINS TO CIRCLE, RACING AROUND THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE, BARELY MINDFUL OF THE LANDMASSES IN ITS WAY. VOLCANOES SPEW OUT FROM THE GROUND... AND ERUPT TOO. A GREAT FROST MOVES DOWN OUT OF THE NORTH, CURVING ITSELF INTO A TORRENTIAL WIND THAT SHAKES BUILDINGS AND

Tripe

KNOCKS OUT LINES OF COMMUNICATION. PARAGUAY AND URUGUAY SWITCH PLACES. CATS BEGIN TO EAT THEIR YOUNG. ...THEN OUT OF THE BELLY OF THE EARTH COMES AN ENRAGED GROWL, AND THE HOUND OF HELL BURSTS OUT SOMEWHERE WEST OF SASKATCHEWAN, ROLLING OVER ICE CREAM TRUCKS, CHASING PEOPLE OUT OF LOCAL BARS, BEING EXTREMELY RUDE TO PIZZA DELIVERY BOYS. THE NORTHERN LIGHTS BEGIN TO GLOW AND SPREAD, FALLING DOWN OVER THE LAND IN THICK GLASSY SHEETS, SCARING THE CATTLE AND BADLY DENTING THE ROOFS OF CARS. AND I HEARD A BELLOW AS FOUR ANGELS CAME FROM EACH OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS, WHICH IS STRANGE, AS I THOUGHT THERE WERE SIX AT LEAST... AND THE FIRST ANGEL BLEW UPON HIS HORN TO REVEAL THOSE WHO WERE SAVED AND THOSE WHO WERE TO BE CAST OUT, BUT IT DIDN'T ACTUALLY WORK, AND IT WAS SUNDAY, WHICH MEANT THERE WAS NO WHERE OPEN TO TAKE IT TO GET IT FIXED SO DAMMIT EVERYBODY WILL BE CAST OUT, WHICH IS MORE FAIR ANYWAY DON'T YOU THINK? AND THE SECOND ANGEL BLEW HIS MIGHTY TRUMPET GOOD AND LOUD, HIS CHEEKS SWELLING UP IN A MOST AMUSING FASHION THAT MADE THE HOUND OF HELL STOP FOR A MOMENT IN HIS PILLAGING TO HAVE A GOOD CHORTLE AND PICK THE LIMBS FROM BETWEEN HIS TEETH. AND THE SECOND HORN, WHICH WAS NOT A HORN BUT A TRUMPET, WHICH I GUESS IT A KIND OF HORN, BUT NOT A FRENCH KIND, WHICH IS WHAT IS USUALLY THESE DAYS DENOTED BY THE WORD "HORN..." WELL, THIS SECOND THING CALLED IN SOME HORSEMEN WHO WERE VERY POWERFUL AND SYMBOLIZED THINGS LIKE DEATH AND SEX AND GUANO AND SOMETHING I CAN'T REMEMBER, BUT THE SYMBOLISM WAS RATHER LOOSE AND REALLY ONLY SUGGESTIVE, SO THEY SORT OF IGNORED IT AND WENT ABOUT

Tripe

HACKING STUFF WITH SCYTHES, WHICH REALLY DIDN'T DO MUCH, AS ANYTHING IN THE AREA OF THE SKY HAD PRETTY MUCH ALREADY BEEN GROUNDED OR KILLED BY THE STORM ANYWAY. OH YEAH, AND THE STORM WAS REALLY GOING: 100% CHANCE OF DEATH, I'D SAY, NOT THAT YOU SHOULD LET THAT STOP YOU HAVING A GOOD PICNIC OR SOMETHING. AND THE THIRD HORN, WHICH WAS IN THIS CASE DEFINITELY A FLUGAL HORN, TRIED TO HARMONIZE WITH THE OTHER ONE, BUT ENDED UP DOING ALL THIS PARALLEL FIFTHS STUFF THAT REALLY DIDN'T WORK ACCORDING TO THE MUSICAL TRADITIONS THEY'D BEEN BROUGHT UP IN BUT UNFORTUNATELY HADN'T STUDIED ENOUGH THE PAST COUPLE HUNDRED YEARS TO PULL OFF DECENT COUNTERPOINT. AND AT THIS CACOPHONY THE SEAS BECAME BLOOD, AND NOT JUST BLOOD BUT HEMOPHILIAC BLOOD, WHICH REALLY DOESN'T RESPOND WELL TO HAVING ALL THIS FISH AND SHIT LIVING IN IT, SO IT SPEWED OUT ACROSS THE LAND, RUINING MANY A FINE PARADE AND CAUSING HER DAD TO GET PRETTY P.O.'D BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER, BECAUSE EVERYBODY HAD TO RUN TO THE ROOT CELLARS ANYWAY LEST THEY BE TORN LIMB FROM LIMB BY THE PLENTIFUL GARGOYLES THAT, WELL, DANG... WHERE DID THEY COME FROM? WELL I DON'T REMEMBER... THERE IS A LOT OF STUFF GOING ON AFTER ALL. AND DURING THIS GOD IS TREATING YOU TO THE BEST MEAL YOU EVER HAD SO AS TO MAKE UP FOR SWEARING AT YOU AND KILLING YOU AND KILLING YOUR FAMILIES BEFORE... OH, DID I MENTION THAT THING ABOUT YOUR FAMILIES? SORRY. WELL, SMELLY UNCLE AL IS STILL ALIVE, SO YOU CAN STILL GO OVER THERE AT HOLIDAYS AND LOOK AT HIS CARPET SAMPLES. BUT MAYBE NOT BECAUSE SPACE AND TIME ARE NOW COLLAPSING INTO A SWIRLING VORTEXY KIND OF THING, LIKE A BIG SORT OF MUFFIN WRAPPER

Tripe

WITH ALL THE LITTLE MUFFIN CRUD ON IT, WHICH THE HOUND IS EATING AND FRANKLY ENJOYING NOW THAT THAT RAGING SEA OF BLOOD THING MOISTENED IT UP A BIT. AND THE FOURTH HORNIST ANGEL-PERSON IS BLEW OR IS BLOWING OR WILL BLOW DEPENDING ON HOW YOU LOOK AT IT HIS BASS TROMBONE, WHICH IS KIND OF A PECULIAR INSTRUMENT TO ROUND OUT THE COMBO, BUT WILL SUFFICE AND CAN ALSO DOUBLE ON TUBA PARTS IF NECESSARY. AND THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO REVEAL GOD'S HOLY CITY IN ALL ITS GLORY WITH SHINING PILLARS AND COLUMNS AND OTHER VERTICAL THINGS LIKE STALAGMITES. IT KIND OF LOOKS LIKE THAT PLANET THAT SUPERMAN WAS BORN ON, IF YOU SAW THAT MOVIE... AND EVIL IS CAST DOWN INTO A LAKE OF FIRE, WHICH FRANKLY HE DOESN'T APPRECIATE, BEING NOW ONLY A TWENTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD AUTO REPAIR PERSON, NOW KNOWN BY HIS FRIENDS AS "MATT," OR ALTERNATIVELY "MEAN MATT," WHICH IS THE CLEVERER FORM. SO HE'S IN A LAKE OF FIRE, WHICH MAKES IT A LITTLE HARD FOR HIM TO REALLY GOVERN WHAT'S GOING ON IN HELL, WHICH PRESUMABLY IS ELSEWHERE FROM THAT LAKE OF FIRE, SO ALL THE HUMANS THAT GET THROWN THERE SORT OF FIX THE PLACE UP A BIT AND MAKE IT INTO A PRETTY OKAY PLACE WITH LOTS OF STORES THAT SAY "CARDS" ON THEM AND HAUNTED HOUSES AND DIRTY MASSAGE PARLORS, WHICH ARE NOW LEGAL, AS MORALS GET KIND OF MORE RELAXED WHEN YOU AND YOUR WHOLE RACE GET THROWN INTO THE PIT OF ULTIMATE DARKNESS. AND NOW THERE IS, OH JEEZ, WHERE'S THAT JUNG: I HAVE TO QUOTE REVELATION HERE... OH, I'M SORRY... THERE ARE SEVEN ANGELS, NOT FOUR. BUT THE FIFTH AND SIXTH SEEM TO BE AWOL FOR THE MOMENT... I THINK THEY WERE PLAYING SOME PAID SYMPHONY BAND GIG IN MIDLAND OR SOMETHING... SO THE SEVENTH ONE

Tripe

BLOWS HIS MIGHTY OBOE, WHICH IS I GUESS NOT A HORN BUT HE'S KIND OF BIG ON PROVING THAT HE'S COMFORTABLE WITH HIS MASCULINITY AND SO REALLY WANTED TO PLAY A SORT OF WIMPIER INSTRUMENT AND WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO AN ANGEL ONCE HE'S GOT SOME CRAZY IDEA IN HIS HEAD? SO HE BLOWS THE TUNING A, TO WHICH ALL EXISTENCE LINES UP, OR WOULD IF IT WEREN'T ALL BLOWN TO SHIT, BUT ALL THE SHIT, OR SHALL I SAY "CRUD" LINES UP IN A SPLENDIFEROUSLY SYMBOLIC ARRAY, AND THEN THE FINAL THING HAPPENED, WHICH IS ACTUALLY FROM REVELATION VIA JUNG, OR MAYBE THE OTHER WAY AROUND: OKAY... WHEN THE ANGEL... WE DID THAT... THERE WAS IN THE SKY A VISION OF A *SUN-WOMAN*! UM... "WITH THE MOON UNDER HER FEET, AND ON HER HEAD A CROWN OF STARS." (REV 12:1) SHE WAS IN THE PANGS OF BIRTH, AND THERE WAS A DRAGON THERE WHO WANTS TO DEVOUR HER CHILD. UM... ACCORDING TO JUNG, THIS VISION IS INTRODUCED BY SOME STUFF SYMBOLIZING THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN AND ALL THAT, WHICH MEANS THAT THIS SYMBOLIZES THE BIRTH OF A UNITING SYMBOL, THE FINAL FRUITION OF THE REUNION OF GOD AND HIS OLD (NEW?) CHICK... AGAIN, I'M REALLY SORRY IF THAT'S AN OFFENSIVE TERM; I ONLY USE IT 'CAUSE IT'S IN SCRIPTURE, I.E. THIS TEXT. WHATEVER. SO... WELL, I'M NOT SURE WHAT THE DRAGON HAS TO DO WITH THAT, BUT IT'S PRETTY COOL, DON'T YA THINK? SO THE KID IS BORN, AND THOUGH THE WRITER OF REVELATION SEEMS TO CONSIDER IT JUST ANOTHER METHOD TO KILL EVERYBODY OFF, JUNG INTERPRETS IT AS THAT UNITING SYMBOL FOR THE TOTALITY OF LIFE, AND THAT IT "WILL REMAIN LATENT FOR AN INDEFINITE TIME AND THAT ITS ACTIVITY IS PRESERVED FOR THE FUTURE." (P. 614) SO THERE'S THAT. DID YOU ENJOY YOUR MEAL? WOULD YOU LIKE A TOY

Tripe

SURPRISE AS WELL? BECAUSE CONTAINED IN EACH OF THESE “MEALS TO MAKE YOU HAPPY” IS ONE OF A NUMBER OF CHARACTERS FROM EVERYONE’S FAVORITE MOVIE, *ALADDIN*, BUT I GUESS YOU GOT A WEIRD ONE BECAUSE IT JUST CONTAINS THE AFOREMENTIONED MUTANT HELL DOG WHICH IS NOW CHAWING ON YOUR FACE LIKE SO MUCH MAYOR McCHEESE...

Forty-What? Sixty-Fifth, Is it? Okay.

Wow, that was, uh... pretty lame. I guess I’m really just not repressing enough to be really violently hostile, because, yeah... I guess I’ve just reached My balance, and I’m trying to look at things the way She suggested in a recent letter. I quote (and here the ...’s are part of the quote, not an indication that I’ve left stuff out): “...Here’s an analogy that might apply: dormancy... the thing trees do in the winter... they slow down all physiological processes to weather the winter and ready for the spring. They hang tight... hold steady... incubate. All their sap flows deep into their trunk — they’re almost entirely closed-down... appear dead... but as Spring nears they gradually divert energy into forming buds... they are revitalized and flourish again. So think this is very much how I regard the present — a period of dormancy.

Tripe

Perhaps this is a way for you to think about things... or a way to explain the increasing distance you feel from me.” And then there’s a little picture of a tree.

Oh, my dear. You needn’t worry about me feeling any more distant. You’re locked up here very close in several dozen different ways — if one should falter, others will move in. Yeah... It’s the same kind of thing that does keep me from thinking seriously about suicide, or killing somebody in a fit of rage, or running off and joining the flea circus. There are quite enough fun insane things to do without undermining the purposes I do have... without raging against the things I really do *value*, whether I want to or not...

Um... Uh... This is sort of awkward. Um... You see, God has just entered the computer center, and He doesn’t look happy. No, folks, I don’t mean Him my rival, or another part of myself, or any of that crap. I mean the real Picard; I can tell by the beard. And though I’m kind of scrunching down in my seat, it’s pretty obvious that he sees me and is coming over here to kick my butt... As totally improbable as this might seem, I’m just going to ignore Him and continue typing, taking dictation for whatever He might say. I do this because I care about you, the reader, more than I care about my own life, or afterlife as the case may be.

“HEY, MARK. UM... I REALLY DON’T APPRECIATE YOU REPEATEDLY MAKING ME LOOK BAD AND BEING GENERALLY DISRESPECTFUL. ARE YOU LISTENING? AH, YES, I SEE THAT YOU ARE. WOW, THAT’S KIND OF COOL; ANYTHING I SAY GETS PUT ON THE SCREEN, AND I DON’T EVEN HAVE TO DO ANYTHING. BUT WHAT MADE YOU USE A SEMI-COLON THERE, INSTEAD OF JUST STARTING A NEW SENTENCE? AH, I GUESS I SHOULDN’T POINT, AS YOU’RE ONLY TAKING DOWN MY WORDS... THREE DOTS... COOL... COOOOOOOL...

Tripe

“OKAY, UM... DAMN... YOU’RE MAKING ME FORGET... OH, I CAN JUST READ WHAT YOU TYPED; MAN, THIS IS CONVENIENT! OKAY, SO, MARK. I AM VERY ANGRY WITH YOU AND WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO SEND YOU TO HELL, BUT NOT YET. I JUST DON’T APPRECIATE YOU DELVING INTO MY PRIVATE LIFE, AND THEN, LIKE, TELLING IT ALL WRONG, BECAUSE I KNEW EXACTLY WHAT I WAS DOING, OKAY? I’M NOT STUPID, AND I DON’T *NEED* HER EVEN THOUGH I WANT HER. OH, SHOULD I SPEAK MORE SLOWLY? SO YOU CAN DO MORE ITALICS AND STUFF? SO, LISTEN, JUST STOP IT, AND... WOW, YOU’RE REALLY QUAKING IN FEAR, AREN’T YOU? LISTEN, YOU DON’T HAVE TO DO THAT; I’M AN OKAY GOD, REALLY. I AM. LOOK, I WAS JUST KIDDING ABOUT THAT HELL STUFF... JUST, DAMMIT... STOP IT. THAT WAS A REALLY BAD IMITATION YOU DID OF ME, ALTHOUGH THE VOICE WAS PRETTY GOOD, BUT THAT DIDN’T GET TO PAPER, SO BIG WHOOP. SO JUST ADMIT THAT YOU WERE TOTALLY LYING AND NO HARM DONE OKAY? JUST SO LONG AS YOU’RE NOT ACTUALLY PUTTING MY NAME ON STUFF I DIDN’T WRITE, ESPECIALLY TRIPE LIKE THIS, WHICH FRANKLY I STILL DON’T REALLY SEE THE POINT OF. GOOD IS GOOD, WHICH IS WHATEVER I SAY IT IS, SO NYAH. AND THAT’S ALL ANYBODY NEEDS TO KNOW. JUST TRUST ME. HAVE FAITH. IS THAT TOO MUCH TO ASK? I GIVE YOU ALL THIS STUFF, AND YOU CAN’T EVEN GIVE ME THAT LITTLE COURTESY? THAT’S OKAY, MARK... STOP QUAKING... I WAS JUST...

Dammit, Man... It was just fucking Las Vegas with a God costume, which I eventually noticed by a) the rubber band on the back of the mask, and b) the fact that the bib-thing had a full *picture* of God, *including* the head, which I don’t *think* is what God usually wears. Damn cut-rate after-Halloween Halloween costumes. Look, I’m just... Aw, fuckit.

Tripe

Hello, disciples. Mark has been kind enough to allow me to write something here, or rather he is not stopping me as he seems to be sitting with his head down on the table sort of moaning or something. wait *moaning*. That is so neat. I like to use the roly thing to make italics. *yes yes yes* So now the happy play must end, even though it is not at an end, and (he's mumbling something now) he says that he dedicates this to Her and wants Her to be happy and stop banging Her head against the wall from all the most wearying ambivalence... and that He loves Her. Like that is such new news, Mister Giver of New Insights Man!

Now, kiddies? what have we learned? Or what have I learned at least, You being numinous... Well, I have learned how to choose a new font, but I have also and earlier learned that the REAL God did have every intention in the world of coming down here to kick Mark's butt (BUTT! this is *fun!!!*) But He was very satisfied with the sacrifice we performed for Him earlier of that cat whose name I can't recall at the moment, which brought Us All closer by affirming Our continuity of being. Yes, those things really do work. We also learned a bit about the romanticization of distance, which is only active when there is true distance; photos don't *have* to look like they're alive if you really have the missing, breathing person's gunk

Tripe

all over you; they can just be photos.* And We learned how to be cheezy and gushy without wanting to slap yourself, although *others* may still want to slap you. And we have learned all about the structures and patterns of mental health, or dialectics of thought or all that stuff, which is all the same and most cleverly and numinously described by Our author, who incidentally is not *really* that bad a guy and is not as generally insufferable as his writing style might lead you to believe. Everyone is wanting a eulogy, yes, Mark? ho ho ho. He cannot see what I write, so I can write anything I want, Yes? Yes!!! So I will write some appendices; you can go look at them if you like, but they are your appendix, so you will not need it, so you need not look unless it hurts...

Ah! That took far too long! I will not proofread another word of this, friend! Instead, I will go back and steal your woman, who is His woman! That would be an interesting twist of fate, yes? Ah, no worry. I have proposed to be married to Ms. Zelma, and I think She will ascent, though I must be careful, for She left Her last husband *just* because he watched too much TV! (<-This is true.) All of this fun is making me tired, so I'm going to go kill myself... Ah,

* *Author's insertion:* I actually was told pretty much this very thing by the aforementioned local wise scary-as-me omni-voiced man about a year and a half ago, but I was too much of a dunderhead to really get it at the time.

Tripe

I have made a joke, yes? It is okay if I die, honey, for I am only a minor character. So whatever... Maybe later...

Sitting Sitting, Specifically Sitting While Eating

“What *is* wisdom, anyway?” asked the Woman of Deepest Despair. I was taken aback. I had been using the term very loosely, and largely mockingly.

“...I think it’s... knowing where ideas lead... It’s... well, let me give you an example. This friend of mine, he was telling me about this book that he was reading, one of those self-help things, that encourages you to go around with all these sorts of daily affirmation-things that shape you into a totally nice, cheery person, someone who tries to understand everyone else before he tries to make himself understood, someone who doesn’t let himself be shaped by immediate environmental forces. ...And, well, I went through one of those stages myself, somewhere in late high school, where I read lots of chincy 60¢ books and tried out thirty different kinds of sainthood. ...And well... it’s a valuable process to go through, I think, but in the end, you just can’t walk around trying to control everything you do in that way; you can’t fool yourself into thinking that you *can* control even the majority of what you *feel* at least, at least not in a direct sort of way... and you wouldn’t want to... it just makes everything... icky. So, whatever... I was playing the wise man to him... though I don’t know how useful that is, because the person being told never listens, and doesn’t usually like what he hears. I guess you just have to find out stuff yourself.”

“So are you wise?”

Tripe

I really didn't know how to answer... "No... well, maybe... It's not really a self-ascriptive term; it's just a role you can play... And it's not a general term either. People have different experiences... if you happen to be talking to someone who's headed towards where you've been, then you're wise. So whatever... we're all specialists, which means that there's still a lot of stuff that we're totally clueless about."

...Just some old material I hadn't yet put anywhere in the book... The rest is fresh... or maybe not so fresh, as it's just a return to the primary question: Is this a Good Book? Obviously it's been good for some purposes, e.g. giving me something to do, but was it as good for you as it was for me? The aforementioned Woman o' Deepest Despair said to me that great literature occurs when the particular is made universal. Since she for one couldn't even slightly relate to my emotional reactions to these events, I s'pose I should conclude that this effort sure ain't great. But yeah well... half my point has been that people are generally pretty much totally out of touch with each other (and themselves) unless they do a hell of a lot of *work* to change that. But to give you a chance to do such work, to get my whole story and so be able to relate in a new and fulfilling way, I would have had to fulfill *my* obligations as writer... I stated this in sitting twenty-seven that this book owes you both honesty and respect, and I must say I've fallen short on both counts. I look at all the narrative detail here and I realize exactly how much stuff I made up, and how you'll never know what's true and what's not, and how much I as the main character and Tripely part of your brain and I as actual living person really have to do with each other... But such is the price of readability, and unless you're a nosy booger you probably don't care. But within the confines of the text: I did promise to finish with grace and closure, which I haven't really done, seeing that I refuse to give a detailed summary of the philosophical stuff: I frankly think I would just distort

Tripe

anything valid that might have been in it by squishing it into a nice edible package for you at this point. Don't expect *All* randomness to magically coalesce into a nice traditional literary tour de force ending. Pah. But You do deserve some closure, bein' human and all. Since the story is not actually over, I thought maybe as a special treat for you I'd grant you control over how it works out. I feel the need to do this, and to keep apologizing to you, and to take you out to eat, what? twice now? because of... well, it's that thing about respect... and trust. It has to do with what really happens every single break between sittings. You see, I have been coming out of the book, up through the pillow that you store it under, and *straight into your mouth...* I have been... *twisting your teeth*. Ya know: ruining your orthodontics so that Mine may thrive. I am **so** ashamed, I really can't tell you... And I know this apology doesn't excuse me, not with the damage I've done, with the way I've perfidiously betrayed you. I know what this means... you gave me plenty of chances, and I blew them. I am a bad writer and, yes, I'm worthless and... a bad person and... She laughed. So we've got to break up, you and I, because I love Her and not you, and I should spend my time conversing with real people... though, you know, I think that *now* I do at last respect and trust you, seeing how you were so eternally wonderfully nice enough to actually get through this voluminousness. ...But too late. Farewell, Fair Reader: I set your choice before you and the world is yours:

Tripe

This is a book of tripe. If you want to know what that is I will tell you, I mean specifically tell you. Webster's *New Twentieth Century Dictionary* (Unabridged; second edition— deluxe color, 1972) says, "**tripe**, n.... 1. the entrails generally; hence, the belly : generally used in the plural. [Obs] 2. part of the stomach of ruminating animals when dressed and prepared for food. 'How say you to a fat tripe finely broiled?' —Shak. 3. anything worthless, offensive, etc.; rubbish; trash. [Slang]." I also say this, though not as often or at such great length.

...Which brings up the point of what *kind* of tripe this book contains, or rather is. Is it the kind that, when excreted profusely, is strong enough to bind people in such a way as to bring them together despite the odds and imperfections and complexities... or does life just suck and there's no hope?

If you want Mark to get Da Girl, Go to the next page...

If you want Mark to not only not get Da Girl, but die in a bucket of His own filth, Go to page 328...

Tripe

Oh, did I say this page? I meant the *next* page... Go on...

CCCXXVII down, ∞ to go

Tripe

Epilogue

Chapter Nine Home-coming

After Tiny got back from taking the Viking Patrol's tents down (whitch still had their gear in it) We Took down the Tarp. We didn't eat any breakfast. We got driven home. (I had to be in the same car as Wayne) When I got dropped off at My house I rang the doorbell. No one was home! I was locked Out!

After two hours my mom got home.

"I hope you had fun... because there's another one next month!"

I blacked out.

THE END

Mark Linsenmayer

—11/8/93—

(the significant date)

Tripe

Appendix A:

Table of Contents part II (page numbers)

Yes, you do have to flip back and forth between here and page eleven to understand any of this. You're quite welcome.

I.	4
II.	323
III.	120-end
IV.	84
V.	192
VI.	261
V.	179
VI.	296
VII.	330
VIII.	54
IX.	268
X.	329

Tripe

Appendix B:

Words Used in the Text Which Are Not in the Spell Checker That You Should Add to Your Vocabulary to Impress People and Promote the Greater Good

FffUGYOU	`twixt	citree (city + tree)
fer Chrissake	betcha/doncha/etc.	spinning-cylinder-with-the-floor-
puđ	din't/cain't/etc.	dropping-out-so-everyone-gets-
Assumed	aditude	stuck-to-the-walls
pro- gressss	Anglish	lugeyng
mambo jambo	skanky disgutrimnt	eyeshot
bee-leedin'	exposargumentation	vaguification
reedereedeereedee -Buck?	Jahptre	omni-everything
enantiodromia	sicks	Ca-a-a-a-a-ats
teleologies	wus/wussed/wussies/	heart attack-ack-ack-ack-ack
humorize	wussinesses	Pyraminx
numinously	pissy/pissed/pissily	meese
perfidiously	stiffo	mondo
eech-eech-eech-etc.	phototechnics	whyfore
contradance	fuckit/lookit/etc.	yowza
pewlin'	splendiferously	ninnylike
mouching	obliviousness	shmogus
hissy-fit	overread	perv
Chee-tos	chincy	SpiceCabinetty
Awrru?	sicko	Nooooo/Yessssssss/cooooool/
identists	Bonger	gooooood/etc.
WFAP	Be-yO	EisKoream Cohn
PPN	Evil Otto	Cebo de Cabra
Tormatos	Brick-a-Brack and Mothra	Capitá n Terapíste
scrunchie	Godzillean	Mephisbeelzasmodeusatan
sicky-fun	Obsy	Lucimephistobeelzadmodeusatan
Aurora Boremealis	Tom Bosley	rolly thing
GaSein	Wah-Man	scritchd
`Strue	Chix	vile-fest
NONE!THE!LESS!	chickies	paraphilosophic
eager!ness	Man(Wo)	jeez/geez
gnomey	teensy weensy fancy feasty	identists
pronounal/pronounally	NewAgedly (Ageyness)	symbolicism
		Krisp

Tripe

gloomy gus
lil'
wheedlings
brimy
bedly
crueled/cruelin'/etc.
weirded
I'kin/'Das/'Tis/Doan'/etc.
fer Gadssake
iffingly
'ifternoon
giftly gift
trommelled
bejesus
erotes
whoop-de-whoop
schmere
bootch
hemispheridites
dufus
duh
swirlie
dummos
eee tee see
et Petercetera
non-etcetering
Mr. Palatohead
fanzine
connexions
Foody
dodgin' ll/s'pose/'Nuff/etc.
Daar-ling
hinny
aplenty
dura and/or pia matter
horsies/duckies/Markie
kinda/gonna/etc.
fantabulous
schmoralizing
middled

pretentiofication
hypostatized pneuma
real-ationship
Euro-cut
vibra-bed
friggin'/fricking/frigging
nyah
siddown
shaddap
Grrrowlette
crabbie
varietous
someteenth
porky
chocking
Luv (...no, forget that one)
Duh (again)
non-pathetico
spooktacular
afore-barely-mentioned
aforesortofcharacterized
programme
YyOoUuRrSs
concretization
plasticky
spake/quoth/etc.
artsy-fartsy
fart/turd/booger/boner/etc.
Hyar?
bigness/evilness/etc.
alienatingly/bonafidely/etc.
schemingly/gapingly/etc.
exteriorize
Wellah...
trichotomy
bastage
no(ron)
sicky
smiley
a'wasting/a'going/etc.

so's
walkees
young'uns/pa'dner/etc.
arse
mayhaps
tee hee
mayn't
'spect
yeow
shmooshing
pickins
thang
scummy/schmuck/putz/bacos/etc.
cluelessness
haves
abouts/gots/etc.
chaw
unjudgable
dumpage
Begone!
Baloney (no idea why this is here)
mmmmmm/Eeeeeeeeeee!!!!/Ay/ya/
yo'/Hnnnnnn/Hoo/lo!/huh/Awwwww/
eeew/eh/um/er/Ahhh!/Pah/eh?/
ta/Soooo.../yay/eeeeeeew/ah/
hah/etc.
wrackingly
itty bitty
bullpucky
tripery/tripeness/tripe-o-
matic/Tripely/Tripester/etc.
Crudiness/crudness/crudly/
Crudertainment/crudliness/
crudied/cruddying/etc.
cheeze
Mayor McCheese/Sr. Wences/
Scooby Doo/Shaggy/etc.
St. Augustine Orwell of the Circle
grody
Linsetc.